



The Enigma of Romans
Chapter Three...

And Other Textual Issues

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An investigation into textual problems in Romans Three & Ten

The Enigma Of Romans

Chapter Three...

The passage under review here is one of the most potent arguments in Paul's soteriology.¹ It is commonly used to show the total rottenness of the human race; for this is what this passage seems to indicate. However, a thorough investigation shows that this proof of man's utter depravity may not be as watertight as many think it is.

¹ Theology of salvation

In my way of thinking Biblical truth is an unshakable, unassailable and untouchable absolute. It must be that lest we vanish into the abyss of pagan myth and mythology; indeed, the greatest strength of Greek Philosophy is its relativity. If there is a gulf anywhere in human thought, it is between that relativity and the absoluteness of Biblical Truth.

Having said that, whenever we pick up a Bible we must have the assurance that we are not holding some Gnostic (or whatever) piece of writing, but the inspired, Living Word of the Living God of the Universe. Due to serious misunderstandings well-meaning people have taken it to themselves to produce their own interpretations of what that Word of God should say. That is not a new phenomenon, but one that can be traced back to the earliest times when men began to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek and other tongues.

I am offering the following study to my readers in an attempt to restore clarity to some key texts that may have been compiled to develop a certain theological pathway. That pathway may seem logical from a Greek perspective, but does not fit in the framework of the Hebrew Bible; especially if we bear in mind that *Salvation is from the Jews* (John 4:22). If that statement is taken at face value, then we must also allow it to speak out of the fullness of its implication.

I commend the following study to your gracious consideration!

Romans 3:10-18

- ¹⁰ '...as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one;
¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have
turned aside; together they have become worthless; no
one does good, not even one."
¹³ "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to
deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips."
¹⁴ "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."
¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood...
¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,
¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known."
¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Romans 3:10-18 is in many ways THE ideal Christian Gospel Message for embedded in it is the potential to frighten the living daylight out of any reasonably tender-hearted sinner.

At a closer look and with some deeper reflection, it becomes very obvious that the passage differs like night and day from the message proclaimed by Yeshua, viz. ‘...*turn back (repent) for the Kingdom of God is at hand (or near)...*’ Mark 1:14-15. The author of Romans, however, seems to be saying here that the entire human race is so utterly depraved that one cannot find even a scrap of goodness in anyone. Yet, by contrast, though Yeshua had some very strong things to say to the rulers of his people, at the same time he also called his followers and listeners ‘*salt of the earth*’ and ‘*a light to the world*’; Matthew 5:13-16; c/f. Job 6:6; Prov.4:18; Isaiah 42:6; 60:1-3 et al.

So, if we juxtapose this passage supposedly written by the founder and teacher of Protestant/ Evangelical doctrine with the overall approach of his master Yeshua, we find ourselves in considerable difficulties. The message of Romans 3:10 ff. is in many ways similar to the doctrine of total depravity of man taught by John Calvin during the Reformation and by his students ever since!

Furthermore, on the surface it appears that the verses quoted are nothing less than straight quotes from the T^enakh and/or the LXX. In this passage, however, resides a problem of no

mean magnitude, yet most Christians are prevented from verifying the veracity of that or any other Biblical text because increasingly fewer people acquire the skill to read Greek and Hebrew.

Colleges cease to place any kind of emphasis on learning the ancient languages. It is left to the ‘experts’, yet the numbers of Bible translations increase yearly and the reader has no option but to entrust his/her spiritual welfare to the publishers.

Romans 3:10-18 is a very problematic passage in that it is a construct from several verses of texts in the Hebrew Bible—the Tenakh. This practice, in itself, would normally not be an issue if the verses were in the right context. However, not only are the verses totally out of context, but the same verses also occur in the LXX as an insertion/addition into the Greek text of Psalm 13 (Ψ 14 in MT)² as if placed there in support of the Roman passage. Now, that too could be tolerated to some degree if an older Hebrew version did not exist. A look at the Hebrew version of Psalm 14 clearly shows that there is no parallel of such verses in the Masoretic text. In addition to that, vv.10 – 12 of the Roman passage also contain quoted text that is utterly misleading as it also is out of the context, in which they were written by their Hebrew author; i.e. David, a thousand years earlier.

What makes this passage difficult to deal with is the complexity of the construction, which reaches across from the New Testament into a mirror construction of the exact same

² The symbol Ψ is the academic abbreviation for Psalms.

words in the LXX that seems to have been totally ignored by the translators.³

In order to resolve this enigma I will seek to deal in depth with each verse across the Hebrew, Greek and English texts. However, before I do I need to look at the authorship of these passages— was it Paul, the Apostle, or someone else? If Paul was the author, or an *amanuensis*⁴ of his, then we are dealing here with a most terrible deception by a man who believed himself to be called of God to proclaim the message of salvation to the Gentiles (Rom. 1:1). Nevertheless, based on my studies of Paul up to this point in my life, I must I reject that possibility outright! If the text was edited during the early centuries, then the authorities who collated the material and compiled it into what was commonly promoted as ‘*God-breathed*’ scripture have misled countless souls. However, when it is all said and done, does it really matter all that much who wrote it in dim, dark antiquity, we are reading translations of those text that were supposedly made from the original languages by teams of reputable people. Surely, unless there was a theological agenda at stake that challenged almost 2000 years of Christian dogma, such teams ought to have picked up on the issue addressed here. It is impossible not to recognize this problem if a thorough search of the

³ It is a puzzling and disturbing matter that Christian translators could have studied both the Greek, as well as the Masoretic text and have never found it necessary to publish this most peculiar construction in the LXX.

⁴ **Amanuensis** (pronounced is a Latin word adopted in various languages, including English, for certain persons performing a function by hand, either writing down the words of another or performing manual labour.

ancient texts had been conducted with the intention to produce a clear and flawless translation for people who cannot access the Hebrew or Greek texts for themselves.

Therefore, the question I am asking here is, can a body of writings still be promoted as the infallible Word of God, when there is a clear manipulation of the text, to promote a given point of view?

It is a difficult concept to realize that the Scriptures may have been misrepresented when most believers are of the opinion that what they read is the inspired and infallible Word of God. What we have here in these verses is a composition of verses from various Psalms. Since virtually all of the verses quoted are out of context from the *Sitz im Leben*⁵ of the source text, the passage becomes an entity in and of itself thus creating a new meaning and application. They can no longer be read as relating to judgments on similar issues elsewhere.

Analysis of Romans 3:10 -18

v.10 ‘.... as it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one...’

There is only one reference in the Tenakh, which could be alluded to with this fragment, although the majority of translations use Ps.14 & 53 as a reference. That portion, however, occurs in Psalm 143:2 and most translations render the underlined portion from the Hebrew in a similar manner,

⁵ Contextual setting

i.e. *'Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no one living is righteous.*' However, the Hebrew does not say *'in your sight'*; it says *'before your face'*. Quite likely this could be an allusion to God's reply to Moses when he asked to see the face of God, viz. *"You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live."* Exod.33:20.

This is very important to understand as David emphasizes here the righteousness of YHWH over that of mortal man, which could also be rendered as, *'compared with you...'*. If that statement is taken at pure face value then the Roman passage would have some validity. But, that passage must be juxtaposed with many others in the Tenakh, which clearly indicate that there are righteous people living on the earth in God's sight. If that were not so, the Scriptures would be a minefield of confusion and unworthy to be called the Word of God.

For example, in the same epistle of Romans (1:17) we have the famous statement by Habakkuk, *'...but the just [righteous] shall live by his faith[fulness]...'* Hab.2:4. That verse shows the anomalies that exist in our translations. The Hebrew word *Tzaddik* (righteous one) is given here (NKJV) as 'the just', which can be read in English in the singular as well as in the plural, but appears in the singular in Hebrew. However, the two expressions do not always mean exactly the same— although they are related. What is important is the lack of consistency in translation and the effect it may have on the understanding of people who have

no training in distinguishing the nuances in meaning, but are governed by the actual words in their Bibles.

If it is true, as would seem from Psalm 143 that there is no righteous living being, then who are the righteous in Habakkuk, or in Psalm 1:6 '*...the Lord knows the way of the righteous*, for example? Or what is meant in Psalm 33:1, '*Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful...*'; and what about this passage in Job '*Yet the righteous will hold to his way, and he who has clean hands will be stronger and stronger.*' Job 17:9. Then here is the author of Proverbs '*...but the path of the just is like the shining sun that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day...*' Prov.4:18.

Furthermore, if the author of Rom.3:10 is correct with that statement, who is King David referring to in Psalm 14:5 when he says, '*There they are in great fear, for God is with the generation of the righteous...*' since he is purportedly the author of both Psalms?

Context shows that the exact same meaning cannot be ascribed to the word *Tzaddik* wherever it may occur in Scripture!

v.11 '...there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God...'

The first part of the verse is a cryptic statement and unrelated to any relevant passage in the Bible. Unless Paul (or the actual author) is ascribed the omniscience of God, how can he make such a claim in isolation from the rest of Scripture. The

second part of the verse is a distortion of Scripture when presented in isolation and out of the context of its own setting in the Tenakh. For example, King David cries out in Psalm 27:8 *‘When You said, “Seek My face”, my heart said to You, “Your face, LORD, I will seek.”* And again, in another Psalm of David we read, *‘Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; let such as love Your salvation say continually, “The LORD be magnified!”*, Ps.40:16. Then, the prophet Isaiah writes, *‘With my soul I have desired You in the night, yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early...’*, Isa 26:9 and again *‘Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the LORD ...’*, Isa. 51:1. Is [Paul] saying that none of his people ever sought the LORD? Highly presumptuous!

v.12 [a] ‘They have all turned aside; [b] they have together become unprofitable; [c] there is none who does good, no, not one.’

‘They have all turned aside; ...in the second book of kings, the following is said of Josiah, ‘And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.’ 2 Kings 22:2. What about NT figures like the John the Immerser [John the Baptist] and his parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, Anna the prophetess, Simon, the disciples and all their converts, the believers in Jerusalem and other parts of the Roman Empire? It is a phrase that is hurtful to all who have received their righteousness by faith as they have not

turned aside from God, but sought Him with all of their hearts and thus found Him. Again, we need to refer to Psalm 14:5, which says, '*God is with the generation of the righteous...*'; who are they? Perhaps Paul was writing about a definite group, but then it should not be applied universally!

...they have together become unprofitable. Psalm 14:2 speaks of '*...the sons of Adam...*', which in the T^enakh almost always refers to the gentiles. Please refer to Gen.6:4 where we read about the daughters of the sons of man. The entire Psalm refers to those outside the Abrahamic Covenant; that is where the fools are who say there is no God, etc and possibly refers to the natural descendants of Abraham apart from Isaac; e.g. Esau, Ishmael, etc.

...there is none who does good, no, not one." Again a reference to Psalm 14, however, a similar passage can also be found in Ecclesiastes 7:20, which states '*...for there is not a just man [Tzaddik] on earth who does good and does not sin.*' Are these two passages speaking about the same thing? As I said above, David is in all likelihood talking in Psalm 14 about the gentiles of his day, whilst King Solomon in all probability also has the Hebrews in mind, by emphasizing that even the righteous will fail at times in the sight of God. This is certainly an observable factor even today and it is the Gentiles today who have turned aside from the Almighty in huge numbers. Virtually all once Christianized countries have imposed bans on public demonstrations of a relationship with the God of the Bible and declared that we are now in a 'post-

Christian' era. Spiritually they have become unprofitable! However, as I said, Solomon, the son of David, is speaking about the children of Israel, when he says that there is not a righteous man on earth who, although he does good, who does not sin. There is a massive difference between the two statements, but they must be kept in tension as they address two different audiences. This passage in Romans literally denies that anyone in Paul's lifetime or beyond does any good or is even capable of changing. That cannot be a message of Good News, no; it is a recipe for despair and hopelessness, despite the fact that the entire T^enakh proclaims a God of incredible love, mercy and compassion.

...their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood... in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."(LXX Ps.13:3) This is essentially a description of the human race and a frightening indictment as seen from the perspective of the author of this passage; if indeed the passage were true and not a frightening deception in itself!

How can I make such an outrageous claim? Simply because the passage is a scandalous fabrication by 'whomsoever'.⁶ Therefore, if you are able to read Greek, then please get hold of a copy of the LXX and look up Psalm 13:3 (the Greek

⁶ It is vitally important to understand that this material originates from a time period when there was a massive pressure from among the Jewish people to align themselves with Greek culture and language.

numbering is different from the Hebrew, but some English versions align themselves with the Masoretic numbering) and compare the text there with any translation, as well as the Hebrew Bible. To your astonishment you will find yourself reading the text of Romans 3:13-18! Compare it then with an English translation⁷ and you'll find the same thing, viz.

³ ...their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.

How come? Good question! How does a passage from the pen of an Apostle of Yeshua end up in the Greek Version (LXX) of the Bible, which was allegedly copied, i.e. translated, word for word from the Hebrew several centuries before the birth of Yeshua (and Paul) and (allegedly) has remained unaltered since? How is it possible that teams of translators can pore over the ancient texts and NEVER notice this problem? So, how did it get there and how come Paul (if he is the author of the Romans passage) uses the exact words from the LXX? Let us assume that Paul had a copy of the LXX with that alteration to Psalm 14[read 13 in LXX] how come, as a Torah scholar he did not notice the aberration from

⁷ <http://ecmarsh.com/lxx/> English Translation of the Greek Septuagint Bible. The Translation of the Greek Old Testament Scriptures, including the Apocrypha. Compiled from the Translation by Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton 1851

the Hebrew text and thought, *'ah, that looks like a good inclusion for my letter...'*!

Granted, all kinds of textual manipulations may have taken place in ancient times. But surely, when people began to translate the Bible and allegedly used Hebrew and Greek texts as their sources, a problem such as this should have caused massive concern at some point from the time that Bibles have been translated in earnest over the last 1000 years!

Alas, no!

So, what is going on? And that is the question we need to investigate!

The LXX came into being approx. 250 plus years before the Christian era. Is it at all feasible that Psalm 13 [Masoretic Psalm 14] contained that inclusion, which is there today? In all likelihood no, since the verses are a collection from other Psalms and wisdom writings and should not be there.

The following segment from Romans 3:13-18 is from the NKJV:

'Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.'

And this one is a copy of Psalm 14:3b [Ψ13 in the Greek text] from the **English Translation of the Greek Septuagint**

Bible, The Translation of the Greek Old Testament Scriptures, Including the Apocrypha; as compiled from the Translation by Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton 1851

‘Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit the poison of asps is under their lips whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known there is no fear of God before their eyes.’

Here is the Greek text of Romans 3:13-18

3:13-18 τάφος ἀνεφγμένος ὁ λάρυγξ αὐτῶν, ταῖς γλώσσαις αὐτῶν ἐδολιοῦσαν, ἰὸς ἀσπίδων ὑπὸ τὰ χεῖλη αὐτῶν ὧν τὸ στόμα ἀρᾶς καὶ πικρίας γέμει, ὄξεις οἱ πόδες αὐτῶν ἐκχέαι αἷμα, σύντριμμα καὶ αλαιπωρία ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτῶν, καὶ ὁδὸν εἰρήνης οὐκ ἔγνωσαν οὐκ ἔστιν φόβος θεοῦ ἀπέναντι τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν.

And here is the text of Psalm 14:3b [13] from the LXX⁸

14:3 ...τάφος ἀνεφγμένος ὁ λάρυγξ αὐτῶν ταῖς γλώσσαις αὐτῶν ἐδολιοῦσαν ἰὸς ἀσπίδων ὑπὸ τὰ χεῖλη αὐτῶν ὧν τὸ στόμα ἀρᾶς καὶ πικρίας γέμει ὄξεις οἱ πόδες αὐτῶν ἐκχέαι αἷμα σύντριμμα καὶ ταλαιπωρία ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτῶν καὶ ὁδὸν εἰρήνης οὐκ ἔγνωσαν οὐκ ἔστιν φόβος θεοῦ ἀπέναντι τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν.

⁸ <http://www.septuagint.org/LXX/?ac=1>

I reproduced the Greek text here, because it is possible to compare the words— even without a knowledge of the language, and see that the passages are identical!

Now compare it with Psalm 14:3 in your Bible – irrespective of translation, all you will find is the following or similar, viz. ³*They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one... ’* and no more!

Yet the LXX has this: ³ *They are all gone out of the way, they are together become good for nothing, there is none that does good, no not one. [adding] Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. ’*

The question we need to ask, is it possible that the verses of Romans 3 were written back into the LXX in the early Christian centuries for reasons too remote for us to comprehend today? However, if they can exist in English versions of the LXX today, why is there no question raised over such a tremendous disparity between the LXX and the Masoretic text. Or is it that theologians still persist with the belief that the Greek text is more accurate and thus more reliable? But then, why is the text of Romans not footnoted that vv.13-18 are a direct quotation from the LXX and why do none of the vernacular translations show the LXX version of

that Psalm; why is there not even one to be found in a single Bible? The conundrum is that no such information is provided, although some versions have footnotes showing the texts as having their origin in several Psalms.

Final thoughts on the above:

In an increasing manner evidence is coming to light re the veracity and reliability of the Masoretic text. Those men and women who produced the translations of the New Testament, as well as the full Bible had an obligation to make a clear annotation of such a major divergence between the Hebrew and Greek texts. If the Apostle Paul wrote the entire book of Romans, then his discernment on inserting a text that cannot be found in the Scriptures of his own people, must seriously be questioned. We must also question the assumption that the Pauline Epistles are indeed ‘*God-breathed*’ as is commonly taught.

Of course, there are many who will claim that the LXX was the only version of the Scriptures in use by Yeshua and his disciples— as well as by the early church. What these people ignore is the fact that the thoughts and events recorded in the Bible did not originate in Greek minds, rather from a historical Hebrew reality. The Hebrew Canon was closed in the second century B.C.E. except for the Writings, which includes the Psalms. However, there was a strict criteria for these books to be included in the Jewish canon. The Sages of

Jamnia settled on four points and three of these were the following:

1. *The writing had to be composed in Hebrew. The only exceptions, which were written in Aramaic, were Daniel 2–7, writings attributed to Ezra (Ezra 4:8–6:18; 7:12–26), who was recognized as the founding father of post-Exilic Judaism, and Jer. 10:11. Hebrew was the language of Sacred Scripture, Aramaic the language of common speech.*
2. *The writings had to contain one of the great religious themes of Judaism, such as election, or the covenant; and*
3. *The writing had to be composed before the time of Ezra, for it was popularly believed that inspiration had ceased then.*

These criteria tell us that, no matter how popular the LXX may have been in certain circles, the Hebrew text must be accorded preference; especially if one understands the extreme devotion to accuracy among the Jewish scribes throughout the ages.

On the other hand, if the Apostle Paul did not write those verses, we must ask ‘who did’; and how and why are they included in Paul’s epistle? Furthermore, if Paul did not write these verses, why are they in the LXX and why were they composed in such a manner that they reflect the anti-Semitism of the church fathers and their hate-writings recorded for all of posterity? Verses 10-18 seem to point directly to the Jewish

people and have the potential of producing an utterly faulty perception of them and Judaism⁹.

It is a frightening thing to ponder that men who supposedly fear the LORD would deliberately distort Scripture to such an extent. What about those who should be aware of the problem, but proceed to cover up such distortions to disguise a most serious issue few Christian scholars and/or Bible translators would like to see highlighted in the public arena. Sadly, only a few Christians are equipped to investigate such matters, but the vast majority are entrapped by the available translations purporting to bring them the infallible Word of God!

Other issues in the Epistle to the Romans

Romans 10:1-13 NKJV

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel are that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to

⁹ Strictly speaking, Judaism is more than just another 'ism' – it is the faith of the Judean People after their return from the Babylonian Exile as established by Ezra.

establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

⁵ For Moses writes about the righteousness, which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them.” ⁶ But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down from above) ⁷ or, “ ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³ For, “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

‘For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness...’ I struggle to comprehend how a Pharisee like Paul could have written such an all-encompassing indictment against his own people. How can anyone claim that the Hebrew Sages were ignorant of God’s righteousness? Whom did Paul have in mind when he penned these lines? Surely he did not consider

the Pharisees or the Essenes as not understanding the righteousness of God? Did Paul consider himself wiser than his own teacher Gamaliel? The phrase is a questionable statement, since Paul considered himself ‘...as to the law, a Pharisee ... as to righteousness under the law (Torah), without fault...’ (Phil.3:5). Which is correct?

‘For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes...’ NKJV; but the NRSV puts it this way, *‘For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes’*. How does that measure up to Jesus’ own declaration that he had not come “... to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven... Matt.5:17-19. We must therefore ask the question, ‘how is that statement of Jesus to be understood in the light of the Roman passages?’ Again and again Jesus pointed his audience to the Commandments and other requirements of the Torah; e.g. when he healed the leper in Mark 1:44; viz. ‘...show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things, which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.’ (c/f. Lev.14:1-

32). And again, when Jesus was asked what was needed to enter into eternal life, the three Synoptics record the same answer, viz. ‘... *you know the commandments...*’ (Matth.19:16-22; Mk.10:17-19; Lk.18:18-23).

There is no indication anywhere in the Synoptic Gospels that Jesus EVER took a stand against the Torah of his people. So, where is the source that would support the claim of Romans? Secondly, if we compare the Greek text of Romans with our translations, a startling result comes to the surface. The Greek word *telos*, from which our translators get the word ‘end’ in this verse, can also mean purpose or goal, which makes a massive difference to the overall meaning of the verse. For suddenly we read, ‘*for Christ is the purpose of the law...*’. Could Paul have tried to tell his readers that the focus of the Torah (law) was the Messiah and by extension the Messianic age envisaged by the prophets?¹⁰

Romans 10:5-10

These verses are a distortion of Moses final address to the Israelites prior to his death (*see Deut. 30:1-20*). Moses addresses here the significance of the Commandments (c/f. Matt.5:19-19) as a means to a righteous life. “...*I have set*

¹⁰ The Jewish concept of Messiah has always been different in degrees to the Christian view. The question that needs to be raised here, is which should be regarded as true since Paul was a Hebrew? Although the Hellenistic view does have merit, should we discard the Hebraic view altogether, or should we at least study it in conjunction with the Christian angle? What needs to be born in mind is the fact that the Christian understanding of Messiah has not born any lasting fruit; if anything massive pain for the flesh and blood kinsmen of Jesus.

before you life and death...” and to choose the way of God is to choose life; identical with the words of Jesus 1500 years later.

“The man who does those things shall live by them...”

(see Lev.18:5), which the translators of the RSV render thus, ‘...*You shall therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances, **by doing which a man shall live**... or **one shall live*** (NRSV). I want to indicate that some translators clearly understood the correct meaning of the Hebrew and rendered it as such. This is contrasted by the common teaching on this passage that ‘...*Moses writes about [a] righteousness that is based on the law and that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. ⁶ But the righteousness based on faith says...*’ (ESV). Did not Jesus tell his listeners that eternal life came by keeping the commandments (c/f. Matth.19:16; Mark 10:17; Luke 18:18). It should become clear from these examples that a powerful process of re-engineering salvation history was set in motion here in these verses. Although the translators of most modern Bible versions seemingly understood clearly the sense of the Hebrew and thus provide a powerful support for my thesis, viz. ‘...**you shall keep my statutes and my ordinances; by doing so one shall live: I am the Lord...**’ NRSV (v.5), the theology of this portion of the Roman Epistle has not been questioned; even though alarm bells are ringing! The context of this passage two-fold! It points backward to the slavery Israel had to endure in Egypt, as well as forward to

the existing idolatry, its abominable sexual and sacrificial practices so common in the ancient world and lack of social order in Canaan; both of which are merely different expressions of bondage.

If one follows the Leviticus chapter to the end, it becomes quite obvious that v.5 prepares the children of Israel for what is to come. God's precepts and commandments will preserve them, whereas the Canaanite lifestyle is a harbinger of death. If we bring Paul's perspective from Rom.1:19 ff alongside, it becomes easy to understand that he too understood the meaning of Moses' injunctions. If one can see that, the verses under investigation here simply do not make any sense other than as a tool to derail the entire Mosaic Torah.

Moses also pointed out to Israel in Deut.4:7 that they were a unique people for there was no other people group who had their God as near as they; nor were there any other people who had such (ethical) ordinances as their God had given them. Our verse points to precisely that and has nothing to do with obtaining righteousness, but how to live as a righteous people in the midst of a pagan society they were likely to encounter in Canaan. The context of v.6-9 of that chapter is Moses' commandment to ***'...love the LORD your God to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess*** (c/f. Deut.30:15-16). As I said, the context has nothing to do with obtaining righteousness one way or

another, but the maintenance of an *ethical monotheism* centred in both God and man (c/f. Deut.11:13-21)!

What we have here is a serious distortion of what is written in the Torah to prove a non-existing theological point. Whoever wrote this had no hesitation distorting reality to get his view across. What disturbs me even more is the fact that Christian scholars have gone along with it for two thousand years!

“For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” (see also Rom.9:33; 10:11; c/f. Isa. 28:16); NKJV

Although this verse is taken from the NKJV, most translations relate it to Isaiah 28:16; viz. *‘Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily. ...’* The above quote in Romans, however, like many others is a translation from the LXX and its veracity needs to be seriously questioned. There is much evidence that a great deal of textual manipulation may have taken place with NT material until the actual Canon was formed in the fourth century.

The Greek text uses the pronoun *auto* in relationship to someone believing or trusting upon the precious foundation. That pronoun could mean he, she or it. Since a foundation is neuter, a neuter pronoun should also be applied, turning the NT quote into an allegorical reading. The context of the

entire chapter is enshrined in three things: *justice*, *righteousness* and *God's mercy*. Justice and righteousness will rule in Zion not to crush, but to restore. There is no talk about a person, but God's Torah bringing restoration to the people of God who had been deceived.

For "...whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Rom. 10:13

What does this statement mean? Who IS the Lord in this verse?

According to normative Christian thinking the 'Lord', of course, is Jesus! But is this correct?

There are two factors involved here, *firstly* the author relates his reasoning back to an earlier verse (v.9), i.e. '*...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead...*'. There can be no question here that the object here is God, for it is God '*Who raised him...*'. Paul is pointing out that God has done something never seen or heard of before; he raised a dead man to life without human mediation (v.13)!¹¹ Secondly, Paul seems to link salvation to '*calling upon the Lord...*'. The verse is a quote from the prophet Joel (2:32), but there it refers clearly to YHWH, the Tetragrammaton and sacred Name of God Almighty. The context of that verse in Joel

¹¹ It is worth noting that dead people had been returned to life even in the days of Elijah and Elisha, apart from Jesus' own miracles; even Peter and Paul raised people from the dead.

makes it unmistakably clear that salvation comes to those who call trustingly upon God's Name (i.e. YHWH).

Nevertheless, the setting of the Roman passage seems to say that whoever calls upon the Lord Jesus will be saved. So the question remains as to who is savior: God of Jesus?

The problem that exists here is that whoever wrote this portion of Romans already seriously distorts and mingles passages from Deuteronomy and Leviticus to make it appear as if Moses had foreshadowed these things 1500 years earlier. Then he mixes his doctrine of salvation by blending in a quote from Joel to make it seem that Jesus is the main instrument. This is present despite Luke's gospel record that even the mother of Jesus, Miriam, addresses God as her Saviour (Lk.1:47). For Joel it is YHWH, the Tetragrammaton, Who saves, whereas in Romans it is the *kyrios*.

It is generally assumed by many Christians that the two are identical, but that creates a considerable difficulty. Although it is true the Greek text of the Old Testament employs *kyrios* in place of YHWH, but *kyrios* is also used to call someone plain and simply 'master'. For indeterminable reasons, the Greek translators were incapable of finding a suitable Greek word to render YHWH into a suitable Biblical term. In the gospels, for example, the term *kyrios* is attached to Jesus, but there it is impossible to argue that it means YHWH. Here are some examples from the Old Testament when the term *kyrios* means 'master' and nothing else, viz. *Num.12:11* – Aaron calls Moses *kyrios*; *Psalms 110:1* – YHWH speaks to *kyrios*;

Gen.24:9 et al – Abraham is kyrios; Gen. 27:29 – Jacob is kyrios; Gen. 39:19-20 - Potiphar is called kyrios; 2 Ki. 8:12 – Elisha is called kyrios; 2 Ki.8:14 – Ben Hadad of Syria is called kyrios; etc., etc.

If we look for further evidence in the Old Testament, we find that King David saw only YHWH as his deliverer, redeemer and savior— there is no ambiguity; e.g.

‘David spoke to YHWH the words of this song, on the day when YHWH had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. And he said: “YHWH is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; the God of my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; my Saviour, You save me from violence. I will call upon YHWH, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies...’ 2

Sam.22:1-4

He repeats some of that confidence in Psalm 18, viz. *‘...The LORD (YHWH) is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold...’*. God is also *‘... the tower of salvation to His king, and shows mercy to His anointed, to David and his descendants forevermore...’* (2 *Sam.22:51*).

Returning to our verse from Romans, let us compare the full text of the Joel passage, *‘And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of YHWH shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as*

YHWH has said, among the remnant whom YHWH calls.'

Joel 2:32 . It is abundantly clear that Joel thought of no-one but the Almighty, yet the author of the Roman passage used the verse out of context to make his point.

We have to ask here, did Paul already have a fully developed Christology that allowed him to declare Jesus as God? If so, why did he not come out with it and make a direct statement. However, if that was not the case, then Paul could not have written the passage. So, is it possible that a much later editor may have added his thoughts to support a changing theological perspective in the Christian world. Do we have to assume outright malice here? Not necessarily if we can accept what I suggested earlier, that if the early Christian thinkers assumed that God had finished with the Jewish people, the construction of a new theology is not an improbable outcome.

In conclusion

The epistle to the Romans is a powerful document with the capacity of doing much good. However, it also contains issues of a highly destructive nature with the potential to set Jewish people and Gentiles against each other by distorting many key issues as outlined above.

Although the issue addressed in chapter three is of major magnitude, the points raised from chapter ten cut even deeper into normative Christian theology and Christology. One of the major issues in question here is as to who is saviour: Jesus or God? The word Lord [in lower case with capital L] is mostly assumed to mean God through its Greek from *kyrios*. The ‘*kyrios* –LORD [YHWH] – issue, however, is a terrible deception that has confused untold numbers of people because the conflict cannot be discerned from the vernacular versions of the Bible. It is commonly assumed that whenever the term *kyrios* is used it translates the sacred four-letter name of God – YHWH. However, the error only comes to light when the Hebrew, Greek and vernacular versions of the Scriptures are placed side by side. Without a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew the deception is almost impossible to discern!

A comparison of that nature would also bring to light that the Tetragrammaton is such an incredibly unique term that no equal can be found anywhere. Is that by chance, or did God fully intend to provide the Hebrews with a name for Himself that is unlike any other? Men have tried to do that term justice, but it cannot be translated, irrespective how sincere one might be. For that reason the Hebrews have substituted the Divine Name with the simple term: *HaShem*, meaning—*The Name*. They chose not to follow the Gentile convention, which rendered the Tetragrammaton as capitalized LORD. The same applies to the word Torah, which the Greeks translated as *monos* and the English, etc. as *law*. Although

Torah essentially means instruction and incorporates legal concepts, there is no adequate terminology that would give us the true meaning. It is a matter of the heart and embedded in absolute justice that is tempered with divine compassion.

God is the Master of the human race, but the term Master is unfitting for Him because He is someone no human being can ever hope to emulate. He also said, '*My glory I will not give to another...*' (Isa.42:8; 48:11), which makes the Greek *kyrios* an unfitting title for the Sovereign of the Universe, because it is a title that can be applied to whomsoever. YHWH is unique, it is absolutely holy, because it belongs to One alone and He alone is the *Asher Ehye Asher Ehyeh* (Exod. 3:14) Who defined Himself as YHWH for all eternity. That term also cannot be adequately translated into Greek or any other language. None of these titles that God set apart for Himself are meant to be translated, because once they are, they will lose their intrinsic and absolute holiness that is reserved for the Only ONE Who Is absolutely ONE!

Therefore, if we have a document that confuses the identity of the Eternal One with other beings, it needs to be seriously questioned and brought under careful re-examination of its veracity and fitness to serve as a guide to lead gullible humans to their eternal home. And that, dear reader is the problem we have encountered in the points addressed in this document.

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