

THE DEATH OF CHRIST AND ITS MEANING FOR MELANESIANS FROM PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS: FROM FEAR TO FREEDOM

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INTRODUCTION

This article explores the teachings of Galatians on the nature of the elemental principles, the extent to which Christ's death offers believers power and freedom from their influence, and in what ways justification for sin may also relate to such spiritual powers. The freedom experienced through the gospel of Christ is often perceived as freedom from sin, but there seems to be a sense of doubt regarding freedom from the spirit powers in animistic societies, like those found in Melanesia. Many Christians, in Melanesia, often succumb to the fear of spirit powers, and even seek discernment from them to deal with dilemmas that seem unnatural. This paper looks at some of the governing powers, or elemental principles, that Melanesians lived under before the arrival of the gospel of Christ. While under their rule, Melanesians were convinced that these principalities had intrinsic power, and were able to bring prosperity and calamities. This paper considers what the scripture says regarding these principalities, in order to address these issues for Melanesian Christians on how they should view these forces. Therefore, Paul's letter to Galatians is used to find parallels between the dominating forces outlined in Papua New Guinean societies, and those at work among the Galatians. From his theistic and Christological convictions, Paul views these dominating forces as guardians and supervisors, awaiting the revelation of Christ. Through His death, Christ has freed believers from slavery to sin, and elemental principles. This

paper presents the different concepts Paul used to convey the gospel to the Galatians, thus, he portrays these dominating forces as impotent and beggarly. Turning to them to find freedom, after experiencing the power of the gospel, would mean separation from the grace of God, and a return to their former way of life. This paper concludes that the elemental powers that Melanesians were under are *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*) (elemental principles), and they no longer have any authority over Melanesians who are in Christ, and Christians should not fear them.

The death of Christ on the cross is God's mandated ground of justification and freedom for fallen and enslaved humanity. The Apostle Paul, on the road to Damascus, met the risen Christ, and received justification and freedom. This single event dramatically changed his life from being zealous for his fathers' traditions (Gal 1:14), to being zealous for the cross, leading him to proclaim the gospel of justification and freedom, through faith in Christ, in the Hellenistic Roman world. His first missionary journey took Barnabas and him to the cities of Galatia, where he preached the gospel of Christ crucified (Gal 3:1; Acts 13-14). God opened the hearts of the Galatians to understand and respond to the gospel by faith, and they experienced justification and freedom from sin and elemental principles. This gospel is still preached to all humankind, and is bearing fruit, and growing everywhere (cf. Col 1:6; 1 Thess 1:8).

However, how do the animistic people of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Melanesia perceive the death of Christ? Do they only see that the death of Christ is to justify them from the penalty of sin, or also to free them from bondage to spirit powers? Christians from animistic backgrounds are more conscious of spirit powers, and some are fearful of them, and even seek their assistance. This paper addresses questions, such as, "Are spirit powers real, and what is their status, in the light of Christ's death and resurrection?" "What did Paul say of the spirit powers in Galatians, and what message does Galatians have for spirit-cognisant people?" "What is the Melanesian view of spirit powers?" This paper will explore the teachings of Galatians on the nature of elemental spirits, and the extent to which Christ's death offers believers power and freedom from their influence, and also explores in what ways justification from sin may relate to such spiritual powers.

The author will use Paul's letter to Galatians to present his case, however, further scriptural evidence, and explanation of the issues will require citing of other scriptures from the Pauline corpus, the Gospels, and from the Old Testament. The paper firstly highlights some elemental principles governing Melanesians before the arrival of the gospel. The parallel principles governing the Galatians, before Paul and his companions preached the gospel to them is then presented. Thirdly, the benefits of Christ's death for humanity, which bought their freedom from sin and elemental principles, is presented. Fourthly, the transforming effects of the gospel to the Galatian converts are presented. Finally, there is a proposition of how Melanesian Christians should view the elemental principles that they once were under. This paper is approached theologically, and it will present a logical conclusion from the exegetical summaries, before drawing a contextual conclusion for Melanesian converts.

THE GOVERNING POWERS FROM A MELANESIAN WORLDVIEW

Melanesia is comprised of Fiji, New Caledonia, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea,¹ and the Papuan Province of Indonesia. Melanesians are religious people. As Bernard Narokobi states, Melanesians are "born into a spiritual and religious order", and so, they spend much of their lives promoting that order.² Religion is a way of life, and there is no dichotomy between the sacred and profane. Melanesian epistemology is based on religious knowledge, thus they see and interpret life through religious eyeglasses, by which religious beliefs are the logic of reasoning, and explanation of life's dilemmas.³ Therefore, this section will highlight some of the main governing principles in Melanesia before Christianity and colonisation. We shall begin with the belief of Melanesians in the ancestors.

¹ Throughout the rest of the paper, the initials PNG will be used.

² Bernard Narokobi, "What is Religious Experience for a Melanesian?", in *Point* (1&2/1977), p. 8.

³ Cf. Peter Lawrence, "Religion and Magic", in *Anthropology in Papua New Guinea: Readings from the Encyclopaedia of Papua and New Guinea*, Ian Hogbin, ed., Carlton Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1973, p. 201, states that virtually all serious events in PNG society are seen in some ways connected to their religion.

ANCESTRAL SPIRITS

The ancestors⁴ are the pillars and foundations on which Melanesian society stands. It was the ancestors who were responsible for laying the foundations of Melanesians' spiritual worldviews and cultures, and subsequently became the spiritual guardians for their descendants. Thus, Melanesians approach life through a worldview that includes spirits. Beliefs in ancestral spirits are the compass to guide and lead the living into the unknown. Ancestors are the source of blessing, prosperity, and protection from the enemies. So, Melanesians enter life with their backs to the future. In other words, Melanesians look to their ancestral heritage to gain insights and foresights to face the future. It is respect for the ancestors that influences the plans and decisions for today and tomorrow.⁵ Melanesians rely on religious or ancestral knowledge to know and understand the world in which they live.⁶ The ancestral spirits are believed to control the whole of life. They have superior knowledge, and power to make things happen.⁷ The ancestors seem

⁴ "Ancestors" or "ancestral spirits", used in this paper, refer to the first, or founding, ancestors of the family, clan, and tribe, and those who had peculiar gifts, were known for giving the family, clan, and tribe its historical, social, and religious identities. These ancestors are honoured, and called upon to help the living, in their times of need, and not just every ancestor.

⁵ John M. Hitchen, "Mission to Primal Religious Groups in a Postmodern Context", class handout for the course: R608.830 "Message and Mission in Galatians: New Testament Exegesis and Biblical Interpretation", Banz PNG: Christian Leaders' Training College, August-September, 2011; now published in "Mission to Primal Religious Groups in a Postmodern Context", in *Mission and Postmodernities*, Regnum Edinburgh 2010, Rolv Olsen, ed., Oxford UK: Regnum, 2011, p. 14. Hitchen, looking at Harold W. Turner's analyses of the worldview-level transformation necessary in primal societies for gospel penetration, highlighted the need to add history to the myth in dealing with time. He states that it is the respect for the ancestors that regulates and legitimises the present, Harold W. Turner, "The Relationship Between Development and New Religious Movements in the Tribal Societies of the Third World", in *God and Global Justice: Religion and Poverty in an Unequal World*, Frederick Ferre, and Rita H. Mataragnon, eds, New York NY: Paragon House, 1985, p. 6.

⁶ Darrell L. Whiteman, "Melanesian Religions: An Overview", in Ennio Mantovani, ed., *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions, Point 6* (1984), p. 87.

⁷ Cf. Joshua K. Daimoi, "An Exploratory Missiological Study of Melanesian Ancestral Heritage from an Indigenous Evangelical Perspective", PhD dissertation, Sydney NSW: University of Sydney, 2004, p. 51.

kind, thus the “living-living” seek the “living-dead” for their wisdom, power, and blessing, in every aspect of life.⁸

Also, Melanesians believe that life continues after death,⁹ as is the case in all primal religions.¹⁰ Those who have died do not depart or leave for some distant place. The spirits of the ancestors, and the deceased,¹¹ are believed to be present invisibly with the living, as noted among the Huli people.¹² This belief in the presence of ancestral spirits is supported by their experiences of having physical encounters with ghosts/spirits,¹³ and through dreams.¹⁴ The ancestors contribute to the livelihood of the living

⁸ Cf. Daimoi, “An Exploratory Missiological Study”, pp. 4, 8; Peter Lawrence, and M. J. Meggitt, “Introduction”, in *Gods, Ghosts, and Men in Melanesia: Some Religions of Australia, New Guinea, and the New Hebrides*, Peter Lawrence, and M. J. Meggitt, eds, London UK: Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 13.

⁹ Daimoi, “An Exploratory Missiological Study”, p. 4.

¹⁰ Hitchen, “Mission to Primal Religious Groups”, p. 10; Harold W. Turner, “The Primal Religions of the World and Their Study”, in *Australian Essays in World Religions*, Victor C. Hayes, ed., Bedford Park SA: Australian Association for the Study of Religion, 1977, p. 32.

¹¹ The term “deceased”, used in this paper, refers to any member of the family, clan, or tribe, who have died, and who are not known for giving any specific family, clan, or tribal identities.

¹² R. M. Glasse, “The Huli of the Southern Highlands”, in *Gods, Ghosts, and Men in Melanesia: Some Religions of Australia, New Guinea, and the New Hebrides*, Peter Lawrence, and M. J. Meggitt, eds, London UK: Oxford University Press, 1965, pp. 30-31.

¹³ The author remembers, as a boy, his grandfather and his father telling him that the spirits of the dead were around and visible. His father told him of some of his uncles’ encounters with a visible dead spirit of one of their relatives, who died during childbirth, and who fought with them when they were returning home from their hunting trip. The ghosts of the dead, who manifested visibly, were often unfriendly. This was one of the reasons why the author’s people (the Mundugomor) built their houses on high posts, and had mobile ladders, to keep the visible dead out of the houses at night. One day, all the visible dead just disappeared, and they were not to be seen again. In recalling these stories, the author wonders whether these were really the spirits of the dead relatives and ancestors, who were allowed to manifest themselves visibly in their exact human forms to the living, until the time came for their departure to an unknown place.

¹⁴ Daimoi states that the dreams were a real part of life for the primal people. In dreams, the people entered the realm of the spirits, and had audience with the “departed or with gods”, “An Exploratory Missiological Study”, pp. 66-67, which indicates that spirit beings do communicate with humans, through dreams.

descendants. When the “living-living” need help in hunting, fishing, tribal fighting, etc., the living-dead are ritually invoked to assist, and give success in these adventures. Thus, the ancestors are the source of power and strength for the living-living.

Belief in the ancestral presences, and their participation in everyday living, causes Melanesians to define “community” differently. “Community” is defined as comprising of the living-dead and the living-living. J. Knoebel notes that Melanesian communities are held together by three cohesive elements: kinship bond or consanguinity, affinity, and residence pattern.¹⁵ Since community is comprised of the dead and the living, relationship with the dead is another cohesive element for the communal well-being. These elements hold Melanesians together, and cause them to participate in communal ritualistic activities for gardening, housing, hunting, marriage, caring for the elderly, and warfare.¹⁶ The success of every communal activity depends on the rituals that are attributed to the ancestors. In coastal areas of PNG, sacred ancestral objects, or *tambaran* and paintings, are kept in a *haus boi* (men’s house), or *haus tambaran* (spirit house), in Maprik.¹⁷ Most of the rituals were performed in the *haus boi* or *haus tambaran* to seek the power and the blessings of the ancestors.¹⁸

Furthermore, ancestral names are very special, as the monuments of a family, clan, and tribal history. To trace family, clan, and tribal genealogy, or migratory history, or to claim ownership of land, and other properties, the ancestral names are landmarks.¹⁹ For these reasons, ancestral names are protected, and strictly used by the descendants of the ancestor(s), as is the

¹⁵ J. Knoebel, “Melanesian Communities”, in *Point* (1/1972), pp. 37-38.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-42.

¹⁷ G. W. Trompf, *Melanesian Religion*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 26-27.

¹⁸ Daimoi, “An Exploratory Missiological Study”, p. 36. There were occasions, where rituals were performed in deep jungles, or on the site, where the new spirit house was to be built. In the Maprik area, rituals were performed on the piece of land chosen for planting yams, and it continued through to the harvesting and storing away of yam tubers in yam houses.

¹⁹ Cf. Festus F. Suruma, “Toabaita Traditional Beliefs and Worship of Ancestral Spirits and God’s Word”, BTh thesis, Banz PNG: Christian Leaders’ Training College, 1979, p. 1.

case in the author's Mundugumor society. Some ancestral names are not publicised. Only the leaders and leading orators of the family, clan, or tribe know them. The reason for ancestral names being a secret is to protect one's history and property ownership, due to land and property conflicts. If the names are disclosed, those who have a conflict of interest in the land or property, thereof, could craftily produce a story using the names to falsely claim ownership. In addition, to settle land and property disputes, ancestral names are an important source of evidence the land mediators use to decide who is the rightful owner. The right to own the land, sago palm patch, fishing lake, etc., is vested and sanctioned by ancestors and spirits (see below) so no living descendant, or successive generation, or authority has the power to change it.²⁰ Any changes would displease the ancestors and spirits, and invite their wrath. In all aspects of life, respect for the ancestors is vital. It is believed that disrespect for them brings sickness and death.²¹

NATURE SPIRITS OR *MASALAI*

In addition to believing in ancestral spirits, is the belief in territorial spirits, or, what Bartle calls "nature spirits",²² or *masalai*,²³ in Pidgin. Melanesians believe in the existence of *masalai*. *Masalai* can be friendly or unfriendly,²⁴ and are believed to rule over certain places, like forests, lakes, rivers, creeks, sago palm patches, mountains, caves, rocks, etc. How did the people know, or find out, that the *masalai* lived there? Is it through philosophy, or

²⁰ In Melanesia, people own the land, and not the government. There is a very close relationship with land and the people. If the land is taken away from the people, it is the end of their history and livelihood. In PNG, about 97 percent of the land is owned by the people. This makes it difficult for the government to mobilise land for development projects. Only recently, the government released a policy called "Incorporated Land Group" (ILG), where the people can register and make their land available on a lease agreement with developers.

²¹ Philip Gibbs, and Josepha Junnie Wailoni, "Sorcery and a Christian Response in East Sepik", in Franco Zocca, ed., *Sanguma in Paradise: Sorcery, Witchcraft, and Christianity in Papua New Guinea*, Point 33 (2009), pp. 62-62; Theodor Ahrens, "Christian Syncretism", in *Catalyst* 4-1 (1974), pp. 18-19.

²² Neville Bartle, *Death, Witchcraft, and the Spirit World in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea: Developing a Contextual Theology in Melanesia*, Point 29 (2005), p. 42.

²³ *Masalai* in PNG pidgin could be either singular or plural.

²⁴ P. Ben Idusulia, "Viewing His Sacrifice through Melanesian Eyes", BTh thesis, Banz PNG: Christian Leaders' Training College, 1974, pp. 9-15.

mysticism, or myth?²⁵ Most Melanesians claimed receiving such knowledge through dreams, and *masalai's* names as well.²⁶ John Hitchen highlights four categories of dreams, and a dream of this sort would probably fall into the “communicatory” category.²⁷ Some traditional names, which Melanesians use, are the names of *masalai*. Through knowing and using their names, an alliance is formed between the person/people and the *masalai*. The family or clan of the person, to whom the *masalai* have revealed itself, are able to manipulate the *masalai* to their benefit, through ritual. Knowing the *masalai's* name is also a stamp of ownership to that place or property.

No one is to trespass on the *masalai's* territory. Where the *masalai* is believed to abide is a no-go zone, or *ples tambu*. The person, to whom the

²⁵ Ignatius Ketobwan, “The Trobriand Understanding of Gods/Spirits Compared with the Christian Concept of God”, in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 9-1 (1993), p. 23.

²⁶ In 2005, the author left the Christian Leaders’ Training College and returned home to Biwat village. Biwat village is situated along the Yuat River, and it is under the Angoram District Administration in East Sepik Province. Since Biwat people live along the river, they have to make and use canoes to travel. So, the author had to make one canoe for his family. He went into the jungle and felled a big tree that was long enough to make two canoes. The author invited some of his kin and village men, to come and help him to make the canoes. It happened that the day they started making the canoes, the Yuat River started overflowing. His mother and sisters prepared food for the workmen, and three of his sisters carried the food, and tracked inland to where they were making the canoes. To avoid the already flooded bush tracks, they decided to follow another track that was on the higher ground. As they were making their way inland, they came across a huge death adder (*skuak* in Mundugumor language), fast asleep near the track, and it was snoring. With fear and bewilderment, they called out to some youths from a village inland (Fundokuang), who were making their way home, who were right behind them. They came and killed the snake. The moment they killed the snake, a huge pig, sleeping about four meters away from the snake, jumped out from the small bushes, and took off into the thick jungle. That night, the author’s elder sister had a dream that the snake was not just a snake. It was a *masalai* (or *majime* in Mundugomor language). In the dream, she saw the relatives of the *majime* come with ground rubbed over their bodies, mourning for the deceased. One lady in the dream told the author’s sister that we killed one of our own kin. In the dream, the author’s sister was given the names of the three female relatives of the *masalai* that were killed. The three names are Kunetrengbe, Gindakpe, and Sarikpe. Subsequently, two of my nieces are named Kunetrengbe and Sarikpe respectively.

²⁷ John M. Hitchen, “Dreams in Traditional Thought and in the Encounter with Christianity in Melanesia”, in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 27-2 (2011), p. 10.

masalai has revealed itself, is the only person authorised to enter the *masalai's* territory, and perform rituals to appease and manipulate the *masalai*. It is his/her responsibility to slowly introduce the members of his/her family to the *masalai*. Before anything is taken out of the *masalai's* territory, it is a prerequisite that a prescribed ritual be performed to appease the *masalai*. Otherwise the *masalai* will be enraged for such disrespect, and will bring harm to the trespasser.²⁸

MAGICAL POWERS

Belief in magical powers is widespread in Melanesia. With magical powers, or the powers of hidden forces, they are able to do things that are not ordinary, and change the course of natural events. Some people claim to have magical power in them. They could command and control spirit powers to make things happen, according to their wishes. Others have, and use, magical spells and chants to do magic. Still others possess and use objects or material elements that are deemed to contain supernatural powers to do magic.²⁹

Many traditions about magic show that magic originated with the ancestors, or from the mythological ancestors.³⁰ It is not the work of some impersonal force. One example is the yam magic used in planting and harvesting of yams among the Abelam people of Maprik in the East Sepik Province. The yam magic has its origins in *Wapeiken*, the mythological figure of the yam myth. *Wapeiken* is believed to possess a special innate ability to make crops grow, without labour, in his parent's garden. He made yams (*dioscorea alata*) to grow in his parent's garden, which was unknown among the

²⁸ Cf. Trompf, *Melanesian Religion*, p. 66; Gibbs, and Wailoni, "Sorcery and a Christian Response in East Sepik", p. 62; Idusulia gave an account of a policeman, who went and relieved himself under a tree that was believed to be a *masalai's* residence. After returning home, the policeman had a headache, and died that afternoon, Idusulia, "Viewing His Sacrifice through Melanesian Eyes", p. 12.

²⁹ Nick Schwartz, *Thinking Critically About Sorcery and Witchcraft: A Handbook for Christians in Papua New Guinea*, Occasional paper 14, Goroka PNG: Melanesian Institute, 2011, p. 5.

³⁰ E. E. Evans-Pritchard, "The Morphology and Function of Magic: A Comparative Study of Trobriand and Zande Ritual and Spells", in *Magic, Witchcraft and Curing*, John Middleton, ed., Austin TX: University of Texas Press, 1967, p. 10.

Abelam people. He committed suicide when his parents broke the taboos. The yams were harvested and distributed among the Abelam people.³¹ The yam magic the Abelam people have to this day has its origins in *Wapeiken*. In the author's Mundugomur society, bones of *Vlisuak*, who was known to have peculiar ability, are ritually used to harm others, and to give victory in battles.³² There are rituals associated with some magic. For instance, to make the magic effective, the magicians abstain from food that is believed to have neutralising effects on their magic. Others abstained from sex, or from having a bath, before performing the magic.³³ However, in some parts of Melanesia, magic is not separated from impersonal forces. Impersonal forces are believed to be involved. Performance of magical rituals, or reciting of magical charms, is not to appease the spirit beings, but to ensure that they immediately carry out the desire of the magician, or the people.³⁴

There are two types of magic, called "black magic" and "white magic". Black magic is destructive, and deadly in character. People fear black magic, such as *sanguma* (see below), and it is used primarily in warfare, and as a martial law, to control non-ethical behaviours. Black magic is not used against anybody within a tribe without a cause and consensus. On the other hand, white magic is not feared. White magic is "protective and productive in character".³⁵ White magic is used for healing the sick, in gardening, in hunting and fishing, to find love, to control the weather, etc. Magic, to Melanesians, is not wishful thinking, as some would say. One first-year

³¹ Dirk Smidt, and Noel McGuigan, "An Emic and Etic Role for Abelam Art (Papua New Guinea): The Context of a Collecting Trip on Behalf of the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde", in *Artistic Heritage in a Changing Pacific*, Philip J. C. Dark, and Roger G. Rose, eds, Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1993, pp. 128-129; George Mombi, "Jesus is our *Wapeiken*: The Model of Holiness and Moral Ethics", major essay for MTH Course R604.830 "Contextualisation of the Gospel in Primal Societies", Banz PNG: Christian Leaders' Training College, 2008, pp. 10-12.

³² Trompf was right in noting that *Vlisso* was mostly considered as a god of war and hunting (Trompf, *Melanesian Religion*, p. 13). With the introduction of games, like soccer, volleyball, etc., *Vlisso* is also used as a god of sports. The only correction to make is his spelling of *Vlisuak* as *Vlisso*. The former is the correct spelling, and plate 2, inserted between pp. 132-133 of the book, shows *Vlisuak's* mask.

³³ Evans-Pritchard, "The Morphology and Function of Magic", p. 4.

³⁴ Lawrence, "Religion and Magic", p. 202.

³⁵ Evans-Pritchard, "The Morphology and Function of Magic", p. 4.

theological student from the Solomon Islands, at the Christian Leaders' Training College, shared his experience while as a pastor. He went out fishing in the company of a man who had a magic for fishing. The man, with his magic caught many fish that day, while the student/pastor caught nothing. Later, the man shared his catch with the pastor/student. Could this be a good luck? Could it be that the man was at the right spot, where there was a school of fish, or at their feeding ground, or on their route of travel, or had he the right bait? These questions reflect what a modernised outsider would suggest are the causes of the fisherman's success. However, Melanesians would say it is due to the fishing magic that influenced the spirits to fulfil the wish of the fisherman.

WITCHCRAFT (SANGUMA) AND POSIN

Sanguma (Bartle, "occult powers"; Glick, "assault sorcery"; Ahrens, "ritual murder")³⁶ beliefs and practices were widespread, and deep in Melanesia, especially in PNG, before the introduction of Christianity and colonial governments. Even after independence, and the indigenisation of Christianity, belief in *sanguma* has not disappeared. In tertiary institutions, *sanguma* was, and is, a topic of discussion.³⁷ In recent times, seminars have been organised to provide insight into the *sanguma* phenomena, and to set the stage for research work.³⁸ *Sanguma* is an issue, for which lawmakers are hard pressed to frame laws to address it properly.³⁹

³⁶ Bartle, *Death, Witchcraft, and the Spirit World in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea*, p. 43; Leonard B. Glick, "Sorcery and Witchcraft", in *Anthropology in Papua New Guinea: Reading from the Encyclopaedia of Papua New Guinea*, Ian Hogbin, ed., Carlton Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1973, p. 182; Ahrens, "Christian Syncretism", p. 19.

³⁷ Glick, "Sorcery and Witchcraft", p. 182.

³⁸ Franco Zocca, ed., *Sanguma in Paradise: Sorcery, Witchcraft, and Christianity in Papua New Guinea*, Point 33 (2009), is a product of the seminars held at Goroko, Eastern Highlands Province PNG, and Casper Damien's research titled, "Kumo: Witchcraft in Simbu Province", in *Catalyst* 35-2 (2005), pp. 114-134, which was also an outcome of these seminars.

³⁹ There is a Sorcery Act, introduced in 1971, but it is inadequate to deal with sorcery and witchcraft, or *sanguma*. The Sorcery Act is accused of popularising *sanguma*, and it is currently under review (Schwarz, *Thinking Critically About Sorcery and Witchcraft*, pp. 59-61).

Sanguma beliefs and practices are complex in Melanesia. However, most people believe that *sanguma* is real,⁴⁰ and it “is one of the forces most feared by people in many parts of PNG”.⁴¹ Neville Bartle, through his informant, learned that in Simbu and Western Highlands Provinces, the *sanguma* spirit took the form of an animal, and persuaded humans to harm others.⁴² Among the Boiken and Arapesh language groups of East Sepik, humans possessed or acquired *sanguma* power, and used it to harm others. In other words, the *sanguma*’s capacity to harm depends on one’s “abilities to control intrinsic powers”.⁴³ As we can see from these two cases, *sanguma* meddles with spirit powers. The *sanguma* spirit either manifests itself in the form of an animal, or is housed in people, who consciously seek after it. The *sanguma* spirit could do nothing without human availability, and willingness to be its vessel. It seeks to use humans as its instruments to harm, and a *sanguma* spirit is subjected to human will and control. Given that *sanguma* is under

⁴⁰ Schwarz listed 14 items that keep sorcery and witchcraft beliefs strong in PNG. These are: (1) People view magic as real, and an everyday reality; (2) There is confusion between reality and fantasy of magical images in television programmes and movies; (3) Children are being indoctrinated by their parents and elders; (4) People’s lack of knowledge about natural causes of bad things; (5) Natural explanation of bad events needs concrete evidence and backup, to be convincing; (6) Selective memory of a sorcerer’s success lingers on; (7) Fear of the consequences of unbelief in sorcery and witchcraft that will leave one vulnerable; (8) New beliefs are hard to prove, as a faith-based explanation cannot be proven; (9) There is a tendency to ask “who”, and not “what”, causes the bad things to happen; (10) Due to the culture of shame, honour, and payback; (11) Rumours and gossip are given credibility in linking the cause of sickness and death to *sanguma*; (12) Highly-educated people continue to believe in *sanguma* power; (13) Thoughtless talk by doctors and nurses, who don’t have the diagnostic equipment to properly deal with the sickness, thus they refer to the sick as *sik blong ples* (sickness from the village); and (14) The Sorcery Act seems to approve sorcery and *sanguma* beliefs (Schwarz, *Thinking Critically About Sorcery and Witchcraft*, pp. 31-39).

⁴¹ Bartle, *Death, Witchcraft, and the Spirit World in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea*, p. 43; cf. Vic Johns, “Sanguma and the Power of the Gospel in Reference to the Guimine People (Simbu People)”, in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 19-1 (2003), p. 64.

⁴² Bartle, *Death, Witchcraft, and the Spirit World in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea*, p. 43.

⁴³ Glick, “Sorcery and Witchcraft”, p. 182.

human will and control, it is used as a control mechanism to control wealth distribution (equality), and social disorder,⁴⁴ like the Lele of Congo.⁴⁵

Glick, in analysing sorcery, states that there are two forms of sorcery, which he called “projective sorcery” and “assault sorcery”.⁴⁶ Projective sorcery has three distinct characteristics. The sorcerer is an individual, who works on behalf of other people, or for personal interest. The sorcerer does not attack his or her victims directly. The sorcerer uses some form of remote-directed or projective actions to harm, like cooking the victim’s bodily refuse, or food scraps, with a poisonous substance.⁴⁷ In the process of making sorcery, the sorcerer chants magical spells or incantation to make the sorcery take effect on the victim. Without magical spells, the sorcery itself has no effect. In PNG Pidgin, this sort of sorcery is called *posin*. *Posin* and poison in English are not identical. Poison in English means to use poisonous chemicals or drugs, mostly in the food, to harm or kill another person. But *posin* means to use the bodily refuse, or food scraps, of the victim to harm or kill, combined with magical spells, directed from a distance. Glick states that in assault sorcery or *sanguma*, it is the reverse. *Sanguma* is used mainly for “aggression or revenge, on behalf of their own descent group, against that of their victim”. He further states that the victim is suddenly attacked viciously through ambush, overpowered, and injected or jabbed with poison directly into the victim’s body, sometimes twisting and ripping out the internal organs. Then, *sanguma* will ask simple questions of the victim, to make sure the victim does not remember anything, before they let the victim go staggering home, as an empty shell, where the relatives can do nothing to reverse its course.⁴⁸ Glick’s analysis of sorcery is a general observation of two types of sorcery in Melanesia, and may not specifically apply to individual societies, embroiled in *sanguma* phenomena. Some *sanguma* are able to combine projective and assault sorcery, like the Bukie and Arapesh. The Bukies have people who can produce herbal drinks

⁴⁴ Schwarz, *Thinking Critically About Sorcery and Witchcraft*, p. 27.

⁴⁵ Mary Douglas, “Other Beings, Postcolonially Correct”, in *Mission and Culture*, Stephen B. Bevans, ed., Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2012, p. 50.

⁴⁶ Glick, “Sorcery and Witchcraft”, p. 182.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 183; cf. Johns, “Sanguma and the Power of the Gospel”, p. 49.

⁴⁸ Glick, “Sorcery and Witchcraft”, pp. 183-184.

ritually that can make a *sanguma* victim recover.⁴⁹ In general, *sanguma* uses different methods to attack their victims. *Sanguma*, in Simbu and Western Highlands, attack their victims by staring at them,⁵⁰ while others are believed to perform a spiritual operation on their victims, by removing their internal organs. The latter is the case in the Sepik region, and may apply to some coastal areas of PNG, too. Some *sanguma* are believed to possess the ability to change themselves into other creatures, and travel to attack their victims.

Fear of *sanguma* has a strong grip on many Melanesians. The fear syndrome is enforced by the experiences and talk of *sanguma*. As people talk more about *sanguma*, the fear of *sanguma* dominates their lives. Even with the influence of modernity and Christianity, fear of *posin* and *sanguma* is still dominant among Melanesians.

CUSTOMARY LAWS –“LO”

In Melanesia, there is no standardised set of customary law(s), or *lo*, for every clan or tribe. Each clan or tribe has its own set of *lo* governing the moral behaviour and social actions of the people with the people, environment, ancestors, and spirit beings. How did the ancestors produce the *lo*? Who and what guided the ancestors of each clan and tribe to produce a set of *lo* that suited their context? There are no easy answers, but the possible guides could have been the spirits, totems, myths, and the law of conscience. Why these four could be possible is because, when Melanesians orate, follow, and transmit the *lo* to the succeeding generation, these four guides are used as references or authorities to verify the origins of the historical traditions and customs that they now have.

Lo, as Theodor Ahrens defines it, is the “moral actions and social behaviour, accepted and expected by the group, kept secret from other groups, endorsed

⁴⁹ Being married to this people group, the author learned from his informants, especially his in-laws, how *sanguma* belief and practice works among this people group, and how to restore *sanguma* victims.

⁵⁰ Cf. Bartle, *Death, Witchcraft, and the Spirit World in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea*, m. 43; Glick, “Sorcery and Witchcraft”, p. 182.

by the forefathers, and approved by the ancestral spirits”.⁵¹ Ahrens’ definition can be summarised in one word – “relationship”. The basic function of the *lo* is to maintain, strengthen, and protect every relationship with the living and the dead.⁵² And *lo* has a long history. It originated with the ancestors, and was passed down through the succeeding generations.⁵³ The ancestral spirits, who approved and sanctioned the *lo*, are its guardians, and they make sure the living are careful to follow the *lo*.⁵⁴ If one part of the *lo* is broken, the offender is required to make amends, if not, the offender is subjected to an ancestral curse or punishment.⁵⁵ It is reckoned, then, that every sickness is a punishment from the ancestors and spirits for breaking the *lo*.⁵⁶ No sickness in the precontact era was thought of as being caused by germs, parasites, or viruses. Even today, if scientific knowledge and medicine fails to cure a sickness, it is seen as being caused by spirits.

Melanesians are obligated to follow the *lo* to appease the ancestors and the spirits, in order to bring success and prosperity. Some *lo* are derived from the myths that people have, especially the ones to do with a prosperous life that was lost as a result of an ancestral mistake or failure. Careful observation of *lo* brings prosperity. Among the Ambelam people of Maprik, the customs and rituals of yam developed from a yam myth. “Every [custom and] ritual observed in this [yam] religion wholeheartedly is an imitation of Wapeiken’s life, to have a successful and abundant harvest of yams.”⁵⁷ A single mistake would lead to a bad harvest. Therefore, the *lo* is endorsed and sanctioned by the ancestors. If it is observed faithfully, it will bring

⁵¹ Ahrens, “Christian Syncretism”, p. 13.

⁵² Cf. Gernot Fugmann, “Salvation Expressed in a Melanesian Context”, in *Point* (1&2/1977), pp. 124-125

⁵³ Cf. Daimoi, “An Exploratory Missiological Study”, p. 22.

⁵⁴ Cf. Ahrens, “Christian Syncretism”, p. 13.

⁵⁵ Cf. Narokobi, “What is religious”, p. 9; Fugmann, “Salvation Expressed in a Melanesian Context”, pp. 124-125.

⁵⁶ Ahrens states four kinds of sickness that Melanesians reckoned were caused by the four powers: (1) *Tewel sik* – sickness caused by the spirit of a dead ancestor; (2) *Masalai sik* – sickness caused by a spirit for trespassing on its territory; (3) *Posin sik* – sickness caused by black magic; (4) *Sanguma sik* – sickness caused by sorcery and witchcraft (Ahrens, “Christian Syncretism”, pp. 18-20).

⁵⁷ Mombi, “Jesus is our *Wapeiken*”, p. 11.

success and prosperity to the Melanesians, and will usher in a utopian age, where the dead and the living will be reunited.⁵⁸ This ideology is also noted among the Astrolabe Bay people of Madang, that careful observation of the *lo* has “eschatological implication”.⁵⁹

The *lo* has moral, social, and ritual aspects. Generally, the moral aspects of the *lo* would be quite similar in every ethnic group, and some parts of social laws, but not so with the ritual *lo*. The moral sections of the *lo* regulates people’s behaviour towards kin. Immoral sexual behaviours are denounced, and caring for aging parents and relatives is commended. *Lo* also provides the basic guide to the social structures of each groups. Some clans or ethnic groups have egalitarian leadership structures, while others have hereditary leadership structures. Under these leadership structures, property inheritance, or rights, are passed on, either matrilineally, or patrilineally. Rituals pertaining to initiation of young men and women, childbirth, gardening, hunting, bereavement, etc., vary from clan to clan. Among the Boiken people group, a young girl, experiencing her first menstrual cycle, is secluded from the rest of the family. It is the same for the Lower Sepik people of Angoram. However, in the former, the father pays the girl’s maternal uncles, as required by the *lo*, and the amount he spends is included in her bride-price payment, when she is married.

SIN AND SHAME

It is hard to give a specific definition of sin in Melanesia. In some local vernaculars, there are no words for sin. Sin is defined using phrases or metaphors. A behaviour or action, of which one clan or tribe disapproves, might be accepted or approved by another, and this poses a problem. Melanesians’ concept of sin is very different from Western and biblical concepts of sin.⁶⁰ What is sin? Sin, in pidgin, is *pasin nogut*, or bad behaviour or action. So, for Melanesians, sin is behaviour or action that contradicts the *lo*. Shame has a close connection with sin in face-to-face

⁵⁸ Marvin J. Nevell, “The Belief System of the Biak/Numfoor People”, in *Catalyst* 19-3 (1983), pp. 266-267.

⁵⁹ Ahrens, “Christian Syncretism”, p. 13.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

societies, like those in Melanesia. Sin means an unacceptable behaviour or action that brings shame on the offender when it is known.

How and when do the people know they have sinned? Customs, or *lo*, play an important role in helping people know what is accepted, and what is not. Any act or behaviour that goes against the *lo* is condemned by the society. A sudden and prolonged sickness is perceived as a consequence for wrong behaviour or action, and/or breaking of the *lo*, thus, the offender incurs punishment from the ancestors and the spirits. The sick or afflicted is questioned to find out the wrong committed.⁶¹ Having learned of one's wrong, atonement is needed to restore the afflicted. There are provisions in the *lo*, which give specific detail on what is needed to be done. On the testimony of the afflicted person or sinner, a specific ritual is performed, pertaining to the particular *lo* being broken, and food items are offered to the ancestors or spirits to forgive, and restore the person to health. If a person admits trespassing into a spirit's territory, then ritual is performed, and offering is made to that spirit. Sin is offending the ancestors and spirits in breaking or trespassing the *lo* they have sanctioned.

What if a person is not physically afflicted? How is adultery, or stealing, a sin? It is sin when one is caught in the act.⁶² Otherwise it is not. And sin is not about feeling guilty, or having a guilty conscience. Sin, in this case, is associated with the shame one brings upon himself or herself for being caught and publicised. It is also to do with the annoyance for being caught red-handed.⁶³ Shame, brought about by one's sin, puts one's kin under its shadow. To be free, a ceremony is performed to *rausim sem* (remove shame). Shame is also associated with showing disrespect for important relationships, and a failure to fulfil one's relational obligations. There are some relationships that are to be revered at all times. War allies, or *wan spia*, will not betray their relationship by accusing one's ally of wrong, or reveal each other's secrets. If a situation is created, a quick fix is sought. A reconciliation ceremony is held to restore the relationship. Children are required to show respect for their paternal and maternal uncles. Culturally,

⁶¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁶² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁶³ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

all Melanesians strive to live free from shame, and sometimes the kinsmen serve as a proxy, to protect the kinsman who has committed the offence, from being shamed.⁶⁴ Also, in close relations, like in-laws, if one's in-law does something wrong, or is involved in *sanguma* activity, one will not admit or speak out, because of shame and fear. In other words, one's knowledge of a wrong, when it is not admitted and resolved, makes him or her feel ashamed.

It is clear from the above point on shame that one's conscience is at work, to cause guilty feelings. Even though a person is not publicly known for the wrong, but one's conscience is still troubled. If the person wants to put it right, and clear one's conscience, it is often done secretly, or through a proxy, to avoid public knowledge; otherwise, it will bring shame on him or her. For the Astrolabe Bay people, to have a good conscience is a "feeling of having a good, undisturbed relationship with the ancestral spirits, and with other human beings".⁶⁵ The point is that a good conscience means harmonious relationship with ancestors, spirits, and other people.

SUMMARY

Melanesians are governed by the principles discussed above. By living under these principles, Melanesians find their worth and identity. These principles are responsible for the formation and shaping of Melanesian worldview and religions. Respect for ancestors and spirits is fundamental for prosperous living. *Sanguma*, *posin*, and magic (black and white) are used as means to achieve one's ambitions, and for social control. Relationship with the dead and the living is prioritised, in order to enjoy peace and prosperity. We will now turn to the scriptures to consider what it says regarding these principles, to guide us in addressing the issue of spirit powers for Melanesian Christians, on how they should respond to these forces. We will use Paul's letter to the Galatians to find parallels between the dominating forces, we have outlined in PNG societies, and those that were at work among the Galatians.

⁶⁴ Kenneth McElhanon, and Darrell L. Whiteman, "Kinship: Who is Related to Whom", in Darrell L. Whiteman, ed., *An Introduction to Melanesian Cultures*, Point 5 (1984), p. 108.

⁶⁵ Ahrens, "Christian Syncretism", p. 18.

THE GOVERNING POWERS IN GALATIANS

The Galatian church was comprised of Jewish and Gentile converts. These converts came from two distinct backgrounds – Jews were from a monotheistic background, whereas the Gentiles were from a polytheistic background. Having heard the gospel of Christ preached to them, the Jews turned to Christ for justification, and freedom from sin, through faith, apart from the works of the Law, and the Gentiles were justified from sin, and freed from slavery to elemental principles, and were made God’s people. This chapter will highlight the principles that governed the Galatians before the preaching of the gospel. Without any commendation for Galatians, Paul highlights sin as the first ruling power over humanity.

SIN

There are five Greek words for sin, used in the New Testament.⁶⁶ The most popular one is ἁμαρτία (*hamartia*), and it means “missing the mark”, or “the failure to reach the goal”.⁶⁷ Sin is the power that holds human beings back from giving their best, and keeps causing them to miss the mark or target of God’s standards.⁶⁸ In Gal 1:4, Paul indicates that the first power that ruled over all humanity is sin, when he stated that Christ “gave Himself for our sins”, or “gave Himself for *my sins*” (Gal 2:20, paraphrase mine in italic). Later, in Gal 3:22, he states it more explicitly that “the scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin”. It is the scripture that consigns everyone a sinner.⁶⁹ Sin is a universal problem, and every human being, regardless of whatever race or colour, is a sinner. Paul probably

⁶⁶ The five Greek words for sin are: ἁμαρτία (*hamartia*) – “missing the target”, or “the failure to attain a goal”; ἀδικία (*adikia*) – “unrighteousness”, or “iniquity”; πονηρία (*ponēria*) – “evil of a vicious or degenerate kind” (it speaks of “an inward corruption or perversion of character”); παράβασις and παράπτωμα (*parabasis* and *paraptōma*) – “a trespass”, or “transgression”, “the stepping over a known boundary”; ἀνομία (*anomia*) – “lawlessness”, “the disregard or violation of a known law”. “In each case, an objective criterion is implied, either a standard we fail to reach, or a line we deliberately cross” (John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, Downers Grove IL: IVP, 1986, p. 89).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁶⁸ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998, p. 112.

⁶⁹ Ps 14:3; Rom 3:9-18, 23; 11:32.

draws his analysis from Gen 1-3,⁷⁰ to show that it was in Adam that humankind fell. In other words, every human being, as Adam's progeny, shares in the fate of their ancestor, and is enslaved to sin, not just one particular person, or group of people. Sin, therefore, is portrayed as a "personified power".⁷¹ It entered the world through one person, and it reigned by means of death (Rom 5:12). Not only humanity was subject to the power of death, the cosmos was subjected to its power as well.⁷²

The Jews were no better than Gentiles, even though they had the true revelation of God. They may have thought that they had no problem with sin. The problem of sin, the Jews thought, was peculiarly for Gentiles, was why they were called "Gentile sinners" (Gal 2:15). The Jews seemed to claim justification as a birthright (cf. Gal 2:15), that, through their faithfulness to the works of the Law, their justified status was maintained. However, Paul argued that it was impossible to be made righteous through Law-keeping, which implies that the Jews were sinners, just like Gentiles, and needed Christ, too (Gal 2:17; 3:11, 21). The Law, though righteous and holy, made humans become conscious, and prisoners of sin, instead of bringing justification, and freedom from sin. The Law gave power to sin, and sin empowered death to reign.⁷³ Both Jews and Gentiles were kept in the prison of sin.

EVIL AGE

The next ruling power, mentioned in Gal 1:4, is the "present evil age". Biblical scholars have different opinions of what the "present evil age" means. Some (Stott, Ridderbos) suggest that the "present evil age" is the world systems, or the age of wickedness, where the devil is its lord,⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 111.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁷³ Cf. 1 Cor 15:56; Rom 7:7-13.

⁷⁴ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, Bible Speaks Today, J. A. Motyer, ed., Leicester UK: IVP, 1968, p. 18; cf. Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, F. F. Bruce, ed., Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1968, p. 43.

Hansen suggests it is the “dehumanising system”.⁷⁵ While others (Longenecker, Campbell), basing their argument on the context, suggest that it is the Old Testament Law.⁷⁶

In support of the latter view, N. T. Wright states that, in Gal 3:10-14, Paul expounds the covenantal theme, as demonstrated in his reference to the covenant (Deut 27-30), which stipulates blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience, and, thus when Israel was oppressed under foreign rule, or sent into exile, it was an indication of a covenantal curse. Christ took on the curse of the covenant, as a substitute for His people, by dying on the cross, “so that the blessing of covenant renewal might flow out the other side, as God always intended”. Many Jews in 1st-century Palestine could easily doubt that the “prophecies of return” had been fulfilled, when they saw Herod and Pilate in control of Palestine. Therefore, even though the covenantal curse had reached its climax in Christ, many saw the “present evil age” as meaning Israel was still in exile.⁷⁷

However, how does it apply to Gentile Christians, who, in their former way of life, were not under the Old Testament Law, and did not regard themselves as being in exile? Which system were they under, before Paul and Barnabas brought the gospel to them? Clearly, they were under the worldly system, where Satan is its head. Therefore, on the basis of what Paul has said, they were under spirit powers (Gal 4:3, 8-9). How does the death of Christ for sin affect the spirit powers, if the “present evil” age refers to them? Is there a connection or relationship between sin and the spirit

⁷⁵ G. W. Hansen, *Galatians*, IVP New Testament Commentary, Grant R. Osborne, ed., Downers Grove IL: IVP, 1994, p. 34.

⁷⁶ Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary vol 41, David A. Hubbard, and Glenn W. Barker, eds, Dallas TX: Word Publishing, 1990, pp. 8-9; Donald K. Campbell, *Galatians*, Bible Knowledge Commentary, John F. Walvoord, and Roy B. Zuck, eds, Colorado Springs CO: Victor Books, 1983, p. 590.

⁷⁷ N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology*. Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 1991, p. 141. Israel went into exile, starting with the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC, and was followed by the Southern Kingdom of Judah in 586 BC. Christ was born while Israel was still subject to foreign rule, with many Jews living in foreign lands.

powers? So, the “present evil age” means the age of the Law for the Jews, and for the Gentiles, it is the world system, where Satan is its head.⁷⁸

JEWISH TRADITIONS OR JUDAISM

From Paul’s testimony of his former life, we see the influence the Jewish traditions had over every pious Jew, like Paul, himself. Paul stated that he was very advanced in his knowledge and practice of Judaism. What then is Judaism? “Judaism is the religion of the Jews, in contrast to that of the OT.”⁷⁹ It started with the “Babylonian Exile, but, for the period up to AD 70, the term is best reserved for those elements, which are either modifications or extensions of OT concepts”.⁸⁰ B. D. Chilton states that Judaism is a complex phenomenon “involving religious, social, economic, history, and ethnic aspects of life of a people, whose influence has greatly exceeded their power”.⁸¹

Without going into all the different aspects of Judaism, we will explore its religious aspect. As Chilton notes, “Judaism, in every period, is rooted in the notion that Israel is chosen”,⁸² or elected. This conviction of Israel as being divinely chosen is supported by “two connected and complementary acts”.⁸³ God chose Abraham, and called him out of Ur, and promised to give him Canaan. He made an everlasting covenant with him, and promised him many descendants, and that his seed would be a blessing to all nations.⁸⁴ Circumcision was given as a sign of this covenant (Gen 15:1-21; 17:1-14). The second act, as Chilton states, is the redeeming of Israel from slavery in Egypt through Moses, as Abraham’s descendant, and the renewal of the

⁷⁸ Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1982, p. 76.

⁷⁹ H. L. Ellison, “Judaism”, in *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, part II, J. D. Douglas, ed., Leicester UK: IVP, 1980, pp. 826-827.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ B. D. Chilton, “Judaism and the New Testament”, in *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament*, Daniel G. Reid, ed., Downers Grove IL: IVP, 2004, p. 603.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Gen 11:31-12:7; 15:17; 22:15-18; Neh 9:7; Is 41:8.

covenant at Mt Sinai.⁸⁵ Israelites look to these two events “as having created the nation (cf. Is 43:1; Acts 13:17)”.⁸⁶ Out of His own love, God chose Israel, purposely to bless the nations. He made Israel His holy priest out of all the nations, to use her to reveal His glory to the nations. Through Moses, God gave the religious and ethical regulations of the Law, to distinguish them from other nations, as His covenant people, and for them to be in non-conformity to the lifestyle of its surrounding nations. Within the framework of this covenant, God chose individuals among their own race to perform specific tasks, as an affirmation of His election of Israel. God promised to bless them, if they remained faithful and obedient to the covenant, but disobedience and unfaithfulness to it would lead to curses, and deportation from the Promised Land.⁸⁷

In view of their election, the Jews maintained that, regardless of whatever happened to them, they were God’s chosen people (Rom 11:28-31). Wherever they lived, they were devoted to their monotheistic faith, and maintained high moral standards, which appealed to, and attracted, some Gentiles to Judaism. Allowance was made for Gentiles to be Judaized, and to participate in covenant Judaism, if they relinquished their identities, and accepted Judaism, by undergoing baptism, circumcision, and adhered to all its teachings.⁸⁸ These Gentile proselytes were now known as God’s chosen, or elect, through Judaism, however, they were far from being qualified for eternity with Him (Matt 23:15). Judaism was outwardly attractive, but, inwardly, it was a stumbling block for the adherents to have a real relationship with God.

In Judaism, all pious Jews strictly observed their traditions. Temple worship became duty-bound, rather than being a joyful occasion. Pharisees exalted synagogues as the chief means of worshipping God, and the study of the

⁸⁵ Ex 3:6-10; Deut 6:21-23; Ps 105.

⁸⁶ J. I. Packer, “Election”, in *New Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd edn, J. D. Douglas, ed., Leicester UK: IVP, 1982, pp. 314-315; cf. Chilton, “Judaism and the New Testament”, pp. 603-605.

⁸⁷ Packer, “Election”, pp. 315-316.

⁸⁸ R. A. Steward, “Proselyte”, in *New Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd edn, J. D. Douglas, ed., Leicester UK: IVP, 1982, p. 987.

Torah.⁸⁹ The Torah was more than just the moral aspect of the Law. It was all of Israel's beliefs, and way of life.⁹⁰ The role and value of the Torah was exalted, so that, by keeping it, it "became the explanation and justification of Israel's existence".⁹¹ In the face of opposition, the Torah was given a cosmic position. To keep it was a personal concern for every pious Jew.⁹² More importantly, it was thought that, by keeping the Mosaic Law thoroughly, it would usher in the messianic age.⁹³ Every pious Jew was, therefore, bent on guarding their traditions, and any opposition or betrayal of it was severely dealt with, as demonstrated by Paul, who sought to destroy the church of God in his preconverted life (Acts 7:58-8:3; 9:1-3).⁹⁴

Besides the inscribed Torah was the oral Torah. An example of the oral Torah is the washing of hands tradition, which was said to reach back to Moses on Mt Sinai.⁹⁵ In Jesus' time, the oral Torah seemed to overshadow the inscribed Torah, and He was indignant with this development. Consequently, Jesus criticised the Jewish religious leaders for enforcing man-made traditions more than God's Word. Their worship of God was out of duty, and was rendered as a lip-service to Him (Matt 15:1-9). Judaism was a system that kept the Jews and proselytes away from God. Judaism did not make its adherents acceptable before God.

WORKS OF THE LAW

The issue of the works of the Law, as addressed in Galatians, is still within the framework of election, or Judaism. In the above discussion, we highlighted the place of the Torah in Judaism. However, in this section, we will briefly comment on the works of the Law, based on Paul's correspondence to the Galatians, without going into many of the scholarly debates on this issue. Judaisers insisted that, unless the Galatians kept the

⁸⁹ Ellison, "Judaism", p. 828.

⁹⁰ Hansen, *Galatians*, p. 43; cf. D. E. H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St Paul*, Oxford UK: Basil Blackwell, 1964, pp. 76-77.

⁹¹ Ellison, "Judaism", p. 828.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 828-829.

⁹³ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 28.

⁹⁴ Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, p. 31.

⁹⁵ Ellison, "Judaism", p. 829.

Law and its works, they were either partially saved, or not saved at all. In other words, “Moses must be allowed to finish what Christ had begun.”⁹⁶

How did Paul respond to the Judaistic message? Paul rejected their equation of faith, plus the works of Law, equals salvation. It is faith alone that saves, through hearing and believing in the gospel of Christ, as they had experienced (Gal 2:15-16; 3:1-5), and as exemplified in Abraham (Gal 3:6-9). He was declared righteous by faith, before circumcision and giving of the Law. God did this on the basis of His promise to Abraham, which the Law, given later, did not nullify (Gal 3:17-18).

Paul’s stern rejection of the Law, as a means of salvation, has made some scholars perceive him as an antinomian, which is not the case. What he did is to show that the Law does not justify, only faith does, with the Law having only a secondary function. How could this be? The Law was given, through intermediary figures to Moses (Gal 3:19), and it functioned as a jailor or prison warden – *παῖδαγωγός* (*paidagōgos*) (Gal 3:21-24).⁹⁷ As Dunn states, the Law is a kind of power, and a guardian angel, over Israel. Their relationship, under the Law, was only temporary,⁹⁸ and the Law was given to regulate and prosper life for God’s covenant people. Through faithful observance of the Law, they would live in the land, and enjoy long life (Lev 18:5).⁹⁹ The Law was never meant as a substitute for faith, but to function as a guide to righteous living and conduct, for all who profess faith in God.

The works of the Law, which Judaisers were imposing on Hellenistic Roman Christians, living in Galatia, were food laws, observance of sacred festivals, and circumcision.¹⁰⁰ These rituals were Judaising, or initiation requirements, for Gentiles converting to Judaism, and chief among these rituals was circumcision. Without circumcision, it was impossible for Gentiles to be

⁹⁶ Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, p. 133.

⁹⁷ Cf. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, pp. 140-141, cf. pp. 152-153; Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*, Exeter UK: Paternoster Press, 1965, p. 197.

⁹⁸ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, pp. 142-143.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-154.

¹⁰⁰ Gal 2:11-14; 4:10; 5:11, 12; 6:12, 13; cf. 3:3.

truly accepted into Judaism, and be qualified as the elect. To demand Gentile Christians to adhere to the works of the Law was a demand to return them to their inglorious life (Gal 4:8-10). Or probably, it was an effort to make Christianity a sect within Judaism, like the Essenes. In reply, Paul stated that the works of the Law could not make its adherents righteous before God, only through faith in Christ. Works of the Law seemed to parallel the idolatrous religions of the Gentiles.

IDOLATRY

Gal 4:8 gives a hint of idolatry, or idol worship, among the pagan Gentiles of Galatia, and idolatry is an act of the sinful nature (Gal 5:20). When they did not know God, they were enslaved to those “beings, which, by nature, [were] not gods”.¹⁰¹ What then was Paul’s perception of idols? Paul’s monotheistic tradition made him take a radical stand against idolatry, and he denied the existence of other gods, except Yahweh. He also acknowledged the existence of good and bad angels, and stated that, behind every idol worship, is hidden demonic forces (1 Cor 10:19-20).¹⁰² Paul could be suspected of not having clear beliefs, regarding the heavenly powers, like what he had for the gods, on the grounds that he gave only two references to the rulers, authorities, and principalities in his undisputed letters (Rom 8:38-39; 1 Cor 15:24).¹⁰³ What about his regular usage of Satan in the undisputed and disputed letters, as a name given to spiritual forces that he was aware of, which sought to test God’s servants? Why would he use terminologies, concepts, and metaphors, portraying the existence of angelic powers (good and bad), and to equate the death of Christ as partly to deal with the evil powers, if they were nonsense?¹⁰⁴ Paul’s treatment of what the Gentiles acknowledged as gods, from his monotheistic worldview, is not a denial of the existence of spirit powers, to which the Gentiles rendered their allegiance. The spirit powers, in Yahweh’s cosmology, were His creatures,

¹⁰¹ Cf. J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1957, p. 170.

¹⁰² See Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, pp. 33-38.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109; cf. Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 179.

¹⁰⁴ Rom 8:38; 16:20; 1 Cor 10:20; 2 Cor 4:4; 11:13; 12:7; Eph 6:10-12; 1 Thess 2:18; Col 2:15; are some of the scriptures, referring to evil spirit powers.

and none were equal with Him, except that humans, in their fallen state, had elevated spirit powers to the position of being gods.

In Galatia, the objects the Gentiles worshipped as their gods were idols.¹⁰⁵ Too often, idols refer to images that people worship, without considering the unseen forces behind these objects. An idol is anything that humans value as a source of their lives and well-being, whether it is a system, or an object, representing an invisible deity – rather than the undivided love and devotion to God. The idols of Galatia were Cybele, the mother goddess of Phrygia and Zeus (Acts 14:13), and they were passed on to the Greeks. “The Phrygians excelled in metalwork and wood carving, and are said to have originated the art of embroidery”,¹⁰⁶ and may have used their art of embroidery to ornament images of Cybele and Zeus. Ancyra became the capital of the Roman province of Galatia, and there emperor worship was also established.¹⁰⁷ The Gentiles worshipped many so-called gods, and they welcomed new cults, like the emperor cult. The more gods they had meant success and prosperity in every aspect of life, as each so-called god was responsible for one aspect of life.¹⁰⁸ Before the introduction of the gospel, the Gentiles worshipped many so-called deities, which were represented by different images. These so-called gods were part of what Paul called the basic principles or στοιχία (*stoicheia*).

στοιχία (STOICHEIA) – ELEMENTAL PRINCIPLES

There are four instances where τὰ στοιχία τοῦ κόσμου (*ta stoicheia tou kosmou*) is used in the New Testament (NT),¹⁰⁹ and each of them is subject to exegetical debate among biblical scholars. From the scholarly debate, there are three possible interpretations of τὰ στοιχία τοῦ κόσμου (*ta stoicheia tou kosmou*) according to Reid.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Hansen, *Galatians*, p. 125.

¹⁰⁶ “Phrygia”, in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edn, Chicago IL: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1953, p 9:408.

¹⁰⁷ Hansen, *Galatians*, p. 396.

¹⁰⁸ John Drane, *The New Lion Encyclopaedia of the Bible*, Oxford UK: Lion Publishing, 1998, pp. 68, 74.

¹⁰⁹ Gal 4:3, 9; Col 2:8-10, 20; Heb 5:12; 2 Pet 3:10, 12.

- (a) The basic elements of religions – these are the “basic set of philosophical and religious principles”, or the ABCs of religions.
- (b) The essential components of the universe – these are earth, water, air, and fire.
- (c) The elements as spiritual powers – these are the star deities, demonic powers, and local tribal deities.¹¹⁰

Some biblical scholars prefer to have star deities, or heavenly bodies, as a fourth interpretation. The heavenly bodies were used to mark times and seasons, and were venerated and worshipped (Gal 4:10; cf. Gen 1:14-18).¹¹¹ Which one of these meanings did Paul have in mind?

The letter to the Galatians was probably written with a particular focus on Gentile converts, who were being distracted by Judaistic teachings, or covenantal nomism, and, therefore, Paul’s careful choice of concepts was to transmit the meaning of the gospel, contextually to his audience. This is not to say that there were no Jewish converts in Galatia (Gal 2:10-14); however Paul was using inclusive concepts and terminologies, like *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*), probably an astrological language, as Whiteley¹¹² remarks, to show that everyone was under the supervision of some form of elemental principles, before the coming of Christ (Gal 4:1-7). To restrict the meaning of *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*) to mean the Law does not fit the Galatian context, where most of the congregation were pagan converts, who, in any case were not under the Jewish Law. In this context, it is better to understand “being under basic principles” as referring to elementary stages of religious experience, where, for Jews, it meant being under Judaism, or Law, and, for the Gentiles, it meant being under their heathen religions.¹¹³ Longenecker

¹¹⁰ D. G. Reid, “Elements/Elemental Spirits of the World”, in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid, eds, Downers Grove IL: IVP, 1993, pp. 229-233.

¹¹¹ M. H. Cressey, “Elements”, in *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd edn, J. D. Douglas, ed., Leicester UK: IVP, 1982, p. 317; cf., Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, p. 104.

¹¹² Whiteley, *The Theology of St Paul*, pp. 23-25.

¹¹³ Campbell, *Galatians*, p. 601.

rightly states, *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*) means under the “basic principles of religions” – the Jews, under the supervision and condemnatory role of the Mosaic Law, and Gentiles under the supervision of their pagan religious rituals.¹¹⁴ However, τὰ *στοιχεῖα* (*ta stoicheia*) are not just religious philosophies and rituals. In his other letters, Paul mentions principalities and powers (Eph 6:12), and demonic powers behind pagan worship (1 Cor 10:20), and he goes on to portray the death of Christ as a victory over powers and authorities (Col 2:15). Then τὰ *στοιχεῖα* (*ta stoicheia*) would also mean “the spirits, who inhabited the elements”,¹¹⁵ or as a “reference for all the nameless forces that kept people awake at night in fearful trepidation”.¹¹⁶

The relationship of both the Jews and Gentiles to the basic principles, or *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*), was a state of slavery. They were both enslaved to supervisory knowledge of their religions, other than the true, superior, and liberational knowledge of God, revealed through Christ.¹¹⁷ Enslavement, though, is not a peculiar experience of one group of people, or only for the generations past. Enslavement is, indeed, a universal phenomenon, even before and after the cross of Christ. When Paul highlighted the enslaved state of the Galatian Gentiles, he was not implying that the Jews were an exception. The Gentiles were enslaved to spiritual elements of the cosmology, which were represented by images, and the Jews, to the elements of the Law. Human beings, in their fallen state, were ruled by both external and internal principles, such as *σάρξ* (*sarx*).

σάρξ (SARX) – FLESH

In Gal 5:13-6:10, the word *σάρξ* (*sarx*) is mentioned eight times, and it is translated “sinful nature” in the NIV and NLT.¹¹⁸ Dunn states that *בָּשָׂר* (*bāsār*) in Hebrew has the idea of flesh, as a material body, while *σάρξ*

¹¹⁴ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 166.

¹¹⁵ Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*, p. 203.

¹¹⁶ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 109.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Hansen, *Galatians*, p. 116.

¹¹⁸ NIV and NLT stands for New International Version and New Living Translation, respectively.

(*sarx*) in Greek has the idea of the flesh being antagonistic to God.¹¹⁹ Which of these two did Paul have in mind in Galatians? Some theologians think of “σάρξ (*sarx*), in Paul, as a cosmic power, like, but hostile to, πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) (spirit/Spirit)”,¹²⁰ σάρξ (*sarx*) as a “principle of sin”,¹²¹ or σάρξ (*sarx*) as “something like a Gnostic aeon”.¹²² σάρξ (*sarx*) is aligned with “sin and death – flesh and sin as powers to which man has fallen victim”.¹²³ But, coming to the antithesis of flesh and spirit, the two are not merely hostile, but exclusive: when a person is in Christ, he or she is no longer in the flesh. There are others, who regard “σάρξ (*sarx*) in Paul in more psychological than cosmological terms. The idea of σάρξ (*sarx*) as the seat of sensuality, summed up in the phrase the pleasures of the flesh, goes back to ancient times.”¹²⁴

In this context, σάρξ (*sarx*) is contrasted with πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) (spirit/Spirit). It is “that aspect of our being that is opposed to the Spirit of God (5:16-17), and produces all that is evil and destructive in our human experience (5:19-20)”.¹²⁵ Geerhardus Vos states σάρξ (*sarx*), as a synonym

¹¹⁹ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 62; Longenecker states that בָּשָׂר (*bāsār*) could mean “physical body” (human or animal), ‘blood-relations’ or kindred, “collective use of flesh for all living beings”, “euphemistic use of flesh for the male genitals” (Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 240).

¹²⁰ F. C. Baur, *Paul: The Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine*, 2 vols, London UK: Williams & Norgate, 1875, 1876, p. 2:51; B. Weiss, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols, Edinburgh UK: T. & T. Clark, 1882, 1883, p. 2:63; cited in Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 62.

¹²¹ O. Pfleiderer, *Paulinism: A Contribution to the History of Primitive Christian Theology*, 2 vol, London UK: Williams & Norgate, 1877, pp. 2:29-31; Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, John Richard De Witt, tran., Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1975, pp. 103-104; cited in Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 62.

¹²² E. Kasemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, London UK: SCM Press, 1964, p. 105; cited in Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 62.

¹²³ R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament I*, vol 1, London UK: SCM Press, 1952, p. 1:245, cf. pp. 197-200; cited in Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 62.

¹²⁴ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 62.

¹²⁵ Hansen, *Galatians*, p. 163.

for sin, is incorrect.¹²⁶ The likely synonyms of σάρξ (*sarx*) are “the natural man” or “the old nature”.¹²⁷ σάρξ (*sarx*) has a variety of connotations. David B. McWilliams points out that σάρξ (*sarx*) could mean “man’s corporeal nature” (human being as a complete person – body, soul, and spirit) or racial solidarity (Dunn, “physical relationship or kinship”); but, in Paul’s usage, it means “the present sphere of existence, determined and conditioned by sin and death, an environment, or, more precisely, can be considered as the functional equivalent to aeon, or world order, bringing along with it an ethically-deprecatory connotation (Rom 8:6-8)”.¹²⁸ McWilliams also argues that the NIV translation of σάρξ (*sarx*) as “sinful nature” is misleading. It gives the impression that “each individual is divided into two natures, a higher or spiritual side, and a lower or fleshly side, which vie for control”. He further argues that what Paul meant is “two realities, on which individuals can base their existence, two directions towards which they can move or . . . two mutually-exclusive spheres of existence or environments that constitute exclusive ages, or world orders”.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1961, p. 298.

¹²⁷ James Montgomery Boice, “Galatians”, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 10 vols, Frank E. Gaebelin, ed., Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1976, p. 10:494.

¹²⁸ David B. McWilliams, *Galatians*, A Mentor Commentary, Fearn UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2009, p. 199.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200; Dunn also raises the issue of the translation of σάρξ (*sarx*) in English. He states it is problematic. σάρξ (*sarx*) has the connotations of “physical body”, or “physical relationship”, or “kinship”, in typical “Hebraic thought of weakness (Rom 6:19)”, which will not inherit the kingdom of God, because it is perishable and mortal (1 Cor 15:50). In some passages, where σάρξ (*sarx*) is used, it gives the sense of weakness “in contrast to a superior realm or mode of being” (Gal 1:16; 2:20; Philem 16; 2 Cor 12:7-9; Phil 1:22-23). In other passages, σάρξ (*sarx*) is given moral connotation (Rom 3:20; Gal 2:6; 1 Cor 1:29; Rom 8:3, 8). More alarming of its usage is that σάρξ (*sarx*) is the “sphere of sin’s operation” (Rom 7:5, 18, 25; 8:3). The negative force of σάρξ (*sarx*) becomes more apparent, not only as “mortal, but also defective, disqualifying, or destructive, when set in antithesis to πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) (Rom 2:28; 8:6; Gal 3:3, 5:16-17, 19-23).” σάρξ (*sarx*) is characterised as a source of corruption, and is hostile to God (Rom 8:7; 13:14; Gal 5:24; 6:8). Not the least, but most important, is the connotation of important relationship, Jesus, as Son of David and Son of God, Abraham, the father of all who believe, slaves’ relationships with their masters, and, more importantly, their relationships with Christ their master in heaven (Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, pp. 63-66); cf. R. J.

In support, F. F. Bruce states that flesh (*σάρξ* (*sarx*)) is the “self-regarding element in human nature, which has been corrupted at the source, with its appetites and propensities, and which, if unchecked, produces the ‘works of flesh’ listed in vv. 19f”.¹³⁰ However, other commentators state that *σάρξ* (*sarx*), in this context, is a fallen, corrupt, or sinful nature, inherited at birth from Adam, the progenitor of all human beings, “distinguished from human nature, as originally created by God”,¹³¹ contrasting to the new nature received through regeneration by faith in Christ (cf. Gal 2:20; 6:15).¹³² Longenecker remarks that flesh itself is not the culprit, “but, as a captive of sin” . . . and acts on behalf of its captor, and so produces “desires and passions (cf. 5:16-17, 19-21) that work against the Spirit”.¹³³ Hansen says that this was one reason why the Galatians were attracted to the Law, to “restrain and control the passions and desires of the flesh”.¹³⁴ The sinful or fallen nature is in every human being, and is aligned with sin. So long as humans are outside of Christ, they are obligated to such nature. There is no escape from *σάρξ* (*sarx*), and human beings are circumscribed by it. From the *σάρξ* (*sarx*) comes every evil act, including witchcraft.

WITCHCRAFT (SORCERY)

Clinton Arnold states that magical practices were widespread in the Hellenistic world,¹³⁵ including witchcraft.¹³⁶ In Gal 5:20, Paul listed witchcraft as an act of the flesh. What is witchcraft? Witchcraft is the use of evil, magical powers, or “secret tampering with the powers of evil”,¹³⁷ to harm others. The noun “witchcraft” is used three times in the Bible.¹³⁸ “Witchcraft” in Greek is *θαρμακεία* (*pharmakeia*), from which comes the

Erickson, “Flesh”, in *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament*, Daniel G. Reid, ed., Downers Grove IL: IVP, 2004, pp. 388-390.

¹³⁰ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 240.

¹³¹ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 239; cf. Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, p. 140.

¹³² Campbell, *Galatians*, p. 607; Boice, “Galatians”, p. 10:494.

¹³³ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 240; cf. Hansen, *Galatians*, p. 163.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Clinton E. Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in light of its Historical Setting*, 2nd edn, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992, p. 14.

¹³⁶ In this paper, the terms “witchcraft” and “sorcery” are used interchangeably.

¹³⁷ Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St Paul to the Galatians*, p. 211.

¹³⁸ 1 Sam 15:23; 2 Chr 33:6; Gal 5:20.

word “pharmacy”, and it refers to the “use of drugs”.¹³⁹ *θαρμακεία* (*pharmakeia*) has three meanings. Firstly, *θαρμακεία* (*pharmakeia*) means the use of drugs for different kinds of medical treatment. Secondly, it relates to the abuse of drugs, to poison, instead of curing. Thirdly, *θαρμακεία* (*pharmakeia*) denotes sorcery and witchcraft.¹⁴⁰ Hansen states the most common meaning is the use of drugs in sorcery and witchcraft to poison people,¹⁴¹ which is probably the meaning Paul had in mind.

Witchcraft is an act of committing murder, through the use of poisonous drugs.¹⁴² Murder is breaking of God’s sixth commandment.¹⁴³ Cain physically attacked, or used his might, and killed his brother Abel (cf. Gen 4:8). In contrast, witchcraft is the use of poisonous drugs to murder, without having to use physical might. Witchcraft murder is a premeditated and a conscious decision that one makes to take someone’s life, mostly through food poisoning. Witchcraft and idolatry are labelled as religious sins against God,¹⁴⁴ but we should also say witchcraft is a sin against humanity, where a person, as a gift to the human family and society, is removed from completing one’s mission for God, family, and society. Witchcraft is manslaughter, and, therefore, under Roman rule, witchcraft was a serious offence, and witchcraft cases were “dealt with by a standing court”.¹⁴⁵ Consequently, rulers were concerned with what they ate, for fear of being poisoned. To protect themselves from being poisoned, they had

¹³⁹ William Barclay, *Flesh and Spirit: Examination of Galatians 5:19-23*, London UK: SCM Press, 1962, p. 36; cf. McWilliams, *Galatians*, p. 202.

¹⁴⁰ Barclay, *Flesh and Spirit*, p. 36.

¹⁴¹ Hansen, *Galatians*, p. 175.

¹⁴² Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 255.

¹⁴³ Ex 20:13; Deut 5: 17.

¹⁴⁴ Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St Paul to the Galatians*, p. 211. Witchcraft or sorcery, as a religious sin, turned people away from believing in the power of God (Acts 13:6-11a). This vice is also seen in the account of Egyptian sorcerers countering the miracles Moses performed through the power of God, causing Pharaoh to harden his heart from letting the Israelites go free (Ex 7:8-25). Acts 8:9-11 illustrates the relationship of magic and pagan religions, or spirits behind pagan cults. With magic, one was able to control the supernatural powers (cf. E. Ferguson, “Religion, Greco-Roman”, in *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament*, Daniel G. Reid, ed., Downers Grove IL: IVP, 2004, p. 894).

¹⁴⁵ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 248.

cup-bearers, like Nehemiah, to taste their food and drinks before they consumed them.

However, witchcraft is classified, along with idolatry, as a religious sin. How is it a religious sin? What connection does it have with idolatry? Witchcraft may have a connection with the cults of Galatia, like the magic and the cult of Artemis of Ephesus.¹⁴⁶ To worship the gods, the worshippers depended on other powers, like the power of drugs, or of occult practices,¹⁴⁷ and magic, to encounter the spiritual forces. As Campbell states, “[i]n ancient times, the worship of evil powers was accompanied by the use of drugs to create trances”.¹⁴⁸ Arnold states

[t]he goal of a magician was to discern the helpful spirits from harmful ones, and learn the distinct operations, and the relative strengths and authority of the spirits. Through this knowledge, means could be constructed (with spoken or written formulas, amulets, etc.) for the manipulation of the spirits, in the interest of the individual person.¹⁴⁹

Then, this could be true that the witchcraft connection to the known cults of Galatia had the objective of connecting to the spirit powers. As Clark Pinnock states, in witchcraft, magical charms and superstitious rites were “designed to tap the powers of the spirit world”¹⁵⁰ behind the cult. Ed Murray remarks that sins of idolatry and witchcraft “if entered into in ignorance, openly invite religious evil spirits into contact with the life of the individuals involved”.¹⁵¹ In witchcraft, the practitioner tampered with the spirit powers, with the intention of bringing harm to others. It is apparent that witchcraft developed from just the use of poisonous drugs, to engaging and using evil spirit powers to harm others. This form of witchcraft, in our

¹⁴⁶ Arnold, *Power and Magic*, pp. 22-26.

¹⁴⁷ Hansen, *Galatians*, p. 175.

¹⁴⁸ Campbell, *Galatians*, p. 607.

¹⁴⁹ Arnold, *Power and Magic*, p. 18.

¹⁵⁰ Clark H. Pinnock, *Truth on Fire: The Message of Galatians*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1972, p. 77.

¹⁵¹ Ed Murray, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1992, p. 158.

modern understanding, is called occultism. For Paul to have placed witchcraft alongside idolatry is to show that witchcraft practices involved the manipulation of evil spirit powers.

SUMMARY

Both Jews and Gentiles in Galatia were under bondage to sin, and to the different governing powers, discussed above. For the Jews, it was to Judaism, and for the Hellenistic Gentiles, it was to paganism. Hence, it can be argued that the Law was a spiritual power to the Jews, in contrast to the spiritual powers that bound the Gentiles. Both Jews and the Gentiles were governed by these powers, which enslaved them to sin. Sin, as a power, had had everyone under its grip since Adam, and nothing could restrain and overcome it. But the Galatians were not meant to remain enslaved to sin, which was at work through its agencies. How will they be freed, and who will set them free from its power? Could it be the gospel of the crucified Christ?

THE BREAKING NEWS PART 1: THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

The centre of gravity for Paul's theology is not found in the teachings of Christ, but in the death and the resurrection of Christ,¹⁵² on which "the salvation for all believers depends".¹⁵³ How does Paul explain the multifaceted death of Christ to the Galatians, who were struggling for their theological identity as Christians? To help them, he used different concepts. This section begins with the concept of "substitution", as revealed in Gal 1:4 – Christ "gave Himself for our sin".

SUBSTITUTIONARY SACRIFICE

Christ "gave Himself for our sin" (Gal 1:4; 3:13), or "gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:20), implies that He became the substitutionary sacrifice for humankind's sin. Bruce explains the phrase "for our sin" means "for the forgiveness or expiation of our sins".¹⁵⁴ In this respect, Dunn states that

¹⁵² Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 208.

¹⁵³ Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*, p. 216.

¹⁵⁴ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 75.

“expiation” is a sacrificial term, rooted in the Jewish cult.¹⁵⁵ Thus “Paul saw Jesus’ death as an atoning sacrifice” from his “fairly well-defined theory of sacrifice”, and thereby described the “effect of Jesus’ death”¹⁵⁶ as an atoning sacrifice for past and present sin.¹⁵⁷ Therefore, passages, like Gal 3:13-14, are seen as Christ becoming an expiatory sacrifice for sin – “Christ, accursed on the cross, plays this same role as the decisive resolution to the problem of how the blessings of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, for whom it was also intended”.¹⁵⁸ However, Herman Ridderbos sees Jesus’ death as a “propitiatory” sacrifice, “that God made [Christ] openly to be a means of propitiation in [H]is blood”.¹⁵⁹ His death is seen as a means of reconciliation, and His blood as a means of justification. Through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, God has manifested His “deferred righteousness”.¹⁶⁰ Without favouring one concept against another, we would acknowledge propitiation and expiation “as belonging together in salvation”¹⁶¹ history. Christ died to avert God’s wrath against sinners (propitiation), and for the forgiveness of sin (expiation).¹⁶²

Therefore, the first benefit Paul wanted the Galatians to grasp is that Christ died voluntarily for everyone’s sins, whether Jew or Gentile. Paul emphasised this idea in his other epistles that Jesus died as a sin offering

¹⁵⁵ See Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, pp. 213-214.

¹⁵⁶ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 218.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 208; Ridderbos, *Paul*, p. 190.

¹⁵⁸ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 108.

¹⁵⁹ Ridderbos, *Paul*, p. 187. Ridderbos develops his argument from the writings of Paul, particularly his Letter to Romans. He argues for a propitiatory meaning, based on Rom 3:25, 26, and draws support from Paul’s other letters (Ridderbos, *Paul*, pp. 186-193). Stott also supports the propitiatory view, and he states that it is God’s anger against sin which needs to be averted, and God Himself undertook to propitiate His holy anger through His Son, who died to propitiate for our sins. Through His grace, mercy, and love, He took the initiative to appease His own righteousness (Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, pp. 168-175).

¹⁶⁰ Ridderbos, *Paul*, p. 189; cf. pp. 161-166.

¹⁶¹ Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, p. 175.

¹⁶² M. A. Seifrid, “Death of Christ III: Acts, Hebrews, General Epistles, Revelation”, in *IVP Dictionary of the New Testament*, Daniel G. Reid, ed., Downers Grove IL: IVP, 2004, p. 300.

(Rom 8:3).¹⁶³ The atoning concept could be seen in its primitive stage in the Garden of Eden, when God made clothing for Adam and Eve from an animal skin, which indicates the death of an innocent animal for their salvation (cf. Gen 3:21). In the Jewish cultus, sinners brought animal sacrifices, to make atonement for sin, and, once every year, the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the sins of Israel. The writer to the Hebrews made this link to Christ, as a Great High Priest, He entered the Holy of Holies, to make atonement for sin, not with the blood of animals, but with His own blood, once and for all (Heb 9:1ff; Lev 16:11-19). Christ died, and, by His blood, He made atonement for sin.¹⁶⁴

Christ died, not just for sin, but for sinners. Ridderbos states that Christ's death on the cross is "substitutionary" in character, and, thus, this concept recurs in other Pauline epistles – "died for our sins" (2 Cor 5:14), "died for us", and "gave Himself up for our sins", or "for me".¹⁶⁵ These phrases show that Christ died in our place, and "in our favour".¹⁶⁶ He further states that there is no doubt as to the substitutionary significance of the death of Christ, which is again revealed in 2 Cor 5:21, God made Him become sin for us. In His death, He identified with sinful humanity (Rom 8:3).¹⁶⁷ Christ, God incarnate, took our punishment, and died our death. In this respect, the death of Christ is seen as penal substitution.¹⁶⁸ However, Dunn rejects the notion of Christ's death as substitutionary, saying; it is "inadequate", and "tells only half the story". He argues that Paul was not saying Christ died in the place of others, so that they may escape death; rather, Christ shared in

¹⁶³ "He was delivered over to death for our sins" (Rom 4:25); "Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom 5:6); "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor 15:3); "That the death He died, He died to sin once for all" (Rom 6:10); "one [Christ] died for all" (2 Cor 5:14); "He died for us" (1 Thess 5:10); God sent "His own son in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*, p. 217; cf. Charles B. Cousar, *A Theology of the Cross: The Death of Jesus in the Pauline Letters*, Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 1990, p. 55).

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St Paul to the Galatians*, p. 73.

¹⁶⁵ Rom 5:6, 8; 14:15; 1 Thess 5:10; Rom 4:25; 8:32; Gal 1:4; 2:20.

¹⁶⁶ Ridderbos, *Paul*, p. 190; Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*, p. 217.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 220.

¹⁶⁸ Steven Jeffery, Mike Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution*, Nottingham UK: IVP, 2007, has given a good overview of the biblical foundation and historical pedigree of penal substitution.

their death, making it possible for them to share His death. Furthermore, he sees other related terminologies, like “representation”, “participation”, or “participatory event”, and also “inadequate”, to convey the whole story.¹⁶⁹ Dunn’s view emphasises Christ identifying with sinful humanity, in His death and resurrection.

Why would Christ identify with sinful humanity? Sin has made all human beings powerless (cf. Rom 5:6), and slaves to it. But sin is not alone. Sin, as a power, is in partnership with death, and it gives power to death to reign over humanity (cf. 1 Cor 15:54-57; Rom 6:23). When Christ died and rose from the dead, He conquered sin and death.¹⁷⁰ Before the cross, there was no hope for humanity, when faced with death. No atoning sacrifices, prescribed in the Jewish cultus, fully dealt with sin. Animal sacrifices, offered under the Old Covenant, only covered people’s sins before the holy God, and kept at bay God’s wrath against sinners. The bitter cup of God’s wrath against sinners was poured out fully on Christ, the sinners’ substitute, to provide forgiveness of sin.¹⁷¹ Also, the cross demonstrated God’s love for humanity (cf. Rom 5:6-8; 8:39; John 3:16). It is God’s *agape* love for fallen humanity that placed Christ on the cross. Nor did humanity ask or implore God to send Christ, to deliver them from the power of sin and death, but His love compelled Him to give His Son (cf. Gal 1:4) to reconcile humans to Himself. So, the first thing that Paul emphasised is that Christ died as an atoning sacrifice for sin.¹⁷² How is Christ’s death for sin related to evil spirit powers?

RESCUED FROM THE PRESENT EVIL AGE

In Gal 1:4, Paul answered a possible question regarding the spirit powers and societal evil, to which the Galatians were subject, and were being haunted by. What about these principles, to which they were accustomed? His answer to this question is that, through His death, Christ has rescued “us

¹⁶⁹ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 223.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*, p. 218.

¹⁷¹ Matt 26:27-28, 39, 42; Mark 14:24, 35-36; Luke 22:20, 42.

¹⁷² Cf. Leon Morris, “Atonement”, in *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd edn, J. D. Douglas, ed., Leicester UK: IVP, 1982, pp. 104-106.

from the present evil age”. In Luke’s account of the early church,¹⁷³ where the rescue concept is used, it “denotes not removal, but rescue, from the power of. So the deliverance spoken of here is not a removal from the world, but a rescue from the evil that dominates it.”¹⁷⁴ In our context, Christ died to rescue us from the “the present evil age”.

Earlier on, Paul highlighted the fact that Christ died for sin, and for sinners. When he stated that Christ “rescued us from the present evil age”, it could mean rescued from God’s wrath and the power of sin (cf. Gal 3:22), which he has already mentioned. But, here, he alluded to the basic principles, or elemental powers (Gal 4:3, 9). The cross not only dealt with sin, but also the elemental spirit powers, or the host of fallen angels, which were the agents of sin and death. When Christ obediently died the death of sinners, He defeated sin and death, and, subsequently, God made all principalities and powers to be subjected to Him (Eph 1:20-22). In Col 2:13-15, Paul gave a clear portrayal of Christ’s death, as atonement for sin, and a victory over the principalities and powers, which, in a way, expounds Gal 1:4. The latter is probably what Paul meant when he wrote “to rescue us from the present evil age”. Through His death, Christ has released those held captive to the works of the Law, and those under the basic elemental spirits. The cross has brought to an end the state of bondage to cosmological powers.¹⁷⁵ Now that He rescued believers, they are under His rule.

Also, J. B. Green states that the cross of Christ draws our attention to its “apocalyptic importance: set within the apocalyptic horizons, the cross has cosmic repercussions”. Green shows that this is elucidated by language, such as, “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15), signifying the importance of Jesus’ death, which terminated the old epoch, “the end of the rule of apocalyptic powers” (cf. Col 2:15), and “deliverance ‘from present evil age’ ”.¹⁷⁶ Those who follow Christ have embodied in their lives the new

¹⁷³ Acts 7:10, 34; 12:11; 23:27; 26:17.

¹⁷⁴ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 8.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St Paul to the Galatians*, p. 73.

¹⁷⁶ J. B. Green, “Death of Christ II: Paul”, in *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament*, Daniel G. Reid, ed., Downers Grove IL: IVP, 2004, p. 287; See J. C. Beker, *Paul the*

creation, revealed by the cross. Beverly R. Gaventa, following the line of interpretation, pioneered by J. Louis Martyn,¹⁷⁷ remarks that Paul's response to the issue of Law is not derived from his interpretation of the Law, but from his Christological conviction, therefore, the theological reflection of Galatians is "first of all, about Jesus Christ, and the new creation God has begun in Him (1:1-14; 6:14-15)".¹⁷⁸ Hays also states that the death and resurrection of Christ "has put an end to the world as it was, and has adumbrated the 'new creation' (Gal 6:14-15; see also 2:20), but the present time is a temporal anomaly, an in-between time, in which the community awaits the hope of righteousness (Gal 5:5)".¹⁷⁹ Through the death of Christ, a new age was inaugurated, and the result of the new creation has made the previous identifications null and void.¹⁸⁰ "On the other hand, we see, in Paul's understanding of the cross, his own reflection on Israel, and particularly his inclusion of believing Gentiles in the 'Israel of God' (Gal 6:10)." [Gentiles] now share in the "benefits of the new creation".¹⁸¹

JUSTIFICATION/RIGHTEOUSNESS

Justification is a judicial concept, which Paul used, to reveal that God's demand for justice has been met by the cross. "Justify" (קָדַשׁ (*tsādaq*) in Hebrew, and δικαιόω (*dikaioō*) in Greek) is a forensic term, and it means "acquit", or "declare righteous". It is an act of a judge to give a verdict.¹⁸² Scripture designates God as a Judge, which is a legal title (cf. Gen 18:25; Ps

Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought, Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1980, pp. 189-192.

¹⁷⁷ J. Louis Martyn, "Apocalyptic Antinomies in Paul's Letter to Galatians", in *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985), pp. 410-424, cited in Richard B. Hays, "Crucified with Christ: a Synthesis of the Theology of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, Philippians and Galatians", in *Pauline Theology, vol 1: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon*, Jouette M. Bassler, ed., Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 1991, p. 239.

¹⁷⁸ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "The Singularity of the Gospel", in *Pauline Theology 1: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon*, Jouette M. Bassler, ed., Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 1991, p. 149, cf. p. 154.

¹⁷⁹ Hays, "Crucified with Christ", p. 233.

¹⁸⁰ Gaventa, "The Singularity of the Gospel", p. 233.

¹⁸¹ Green, "Death of Christ II", p. 287.

¹⁸² J. I. Packer, "Justification", in *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd edn, J. D. Douglas, ed., Leicester UK: IVP, 1982, p. 646.

7:11), and, as a Judge, He makes judgment according to His law, thus declaring the accused innocent or guilty.¹⁸³ Paul's earlier statement on Christ giving "Himself for our sin" (Gal 1:4), alludes to the reality that everyone is a sinner, and no one is just or righteous before God.¹⁸⁴ Before the Judge, all progeny of Adam are sinners. They are guilty, and must serve their sentence – death. No matter how hard humans tried to free themselves from the death sentence, they failed miserably. Based on these insights, Paul drew attention to a courtroom scenario, to show how God, in Christ, justifies, or declares sinners righteous in His sight. God made the decision to pardon guilt, because Christ fully met His justice. It is, therefore, a legal declaration that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to sinners, changing our status from being condemned to death to life and freedom.

However, E. P. Sanders argues that the Jews were already God's covenant people, or were characterised by "covenantal nomism".¹⁸⁵ Law was an expression of God's covenant with them, and, thus, defined God's expectation for the Jews, and how they should behave, as His covenant partners. Sanders states that "righteousness is thus defined as behaviour, or attitudes, that are consistent with being the historical people of God". Works of the Law "are an expression of the fact that the Jews already belonged to the covenant people of God, and were living out their obligations to that covenant".¹⁸⁶ In this religious pattern, "righteousness was seen as a way of maintaining the covenantal relationship, and never as a means of

¹⁸³ Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 3rd edn, London UK: Tyndale Press, 1965, pp. 253-254.

¹⁸⁴ Gal 2:15-17; 3:22; Rom 3:9-18.

¹⁸⁵ The issue of "covenant nomism" was introduced to the theological discipline by E. P. Sanders. Sanders argues for "justification" to be viewed from the historical context of 1st-century Judaism, instead of a Lutheran's view. In his book, Sanders argues that the Law is God's expression of His covenant with the Jews, intended to show what God expected of them. The Jews were already God's people and, therefore, righteousness was a gift of God to them, as a nation, and not as individuals (E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1983, pp. 37-38). Thus, by practising the works of the Law, the Jews will maintain the covenant (Alistair E. McGrath, "Justification, Paul", in *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament*, Daniel E. Reid, ed., Downers Grove IL: IVP, 2004, p. 634

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

obtaining, or earning, a relationship with God”.¹⁸⁷ In response to Sanders’ argument, Alister E. McGrath highlights three aspects, which Sanders failed to address properly:

- (a) Why Paul was convinced that Christianity was superior to Judaism.
- (b) Sanders argued that Paul and Judaism regarded works of the Law as “the principles of continuing in the covenant. However, Paul regarded good works as evidence, rather than instruments, of salvation.” Only through faith can one enter the realm of the covenant.
- (c) Sanders placed Paul’s doctrine of justification in a negative light, challenging it with his view of nationalism and ethnic election, portraying that Israel has “special religious rights on account of its national identity”. He failed to give a fair hearing of Paul’s doctrine of justification, which redefined how Jews and Gentiles would partake of God’s promise to Abraham.¹⁸⁸

If Law was given as the means of maintaining justification, then the death of Christ has no value. The only way to be justified would be by being born as a Jew, or by becoming a proselyte. Justification would be based on works, but nothing of what we could do would satisfy God’s demand for justice.

Paul interpreted that God’s promises to Abraham (particularly the promise in Gen 12:3, “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you”) were made to Abraham and his seed – namely Christ (Gal 3:16-18), probably from his Christological convictions, as Gaventa argued. The seed-giving promise to Abraham parallels Gen 3:15, in that one of his seed will bring salvation to all humanity (cf. Gen 22:18). This promise to Abraham was later sealed

¹⁸⁷ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1977, pp. 205, 544, cited in C. C. Newman, “Righteousness”, in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, Ralph P. Martin, and Peter H. Davids, eds, Downers Grove IL: IVP, 1997, p. 1055.

¹⁸⁸ McGrath, “Justification, Paul”, p. 635.

with the ancient binding covenant of the blood in Gen 15,¹⁸⁹ which was reflected upon by the author to Hebrews as an oath that God made.¹⁹⁰ God's covenant of promise to bless the families of the earth was His "last will and testament",¹⁹¹ which took effect only when the person making the will died. Therefore, God's will to justify the nations, and make them His children, took effect when Christ died.¹⁹² The good news, announced to Abraham beforehand, was that all peoples would be justified through faith in Christ (Gal 3:8). The Law, given 430 years later, did not nullify the promise, and its inheritance (Gal 3:17-18). Paul saw in the gospel, God's way of righteousness was through faith,¹⁹³ against the notion of justification by works of the Law, which was advocated by the Judaisers.¹⁹⁴ God's standard of justification is through faith in Christ, alone.

Only Christ faithfully fulfilled God's will and the Law, and His substitutionary sacrifice for sinners satisfied God's justice. Therefore, faith in Christ, as Paul stated, is the only ground of justification before God (cf. Gal 2:16; 3:1-5), as exemplified by Abraham, the father of all who believe, both Jews and Gentiles (cf. Gal 3:6-9, 29). The significant distinctions of those who have been justified, and declared righteous before God through faith, apart from works of the Law, is the Holy Spirit in the life of believers (cf. Gal 3:1-5), and the inclusion of Gentiles into the "Israel of God".¹⁹⁵ God's principle of justification, or righteousness, is always through faith in His mercy, as seen in the Old Testament and the New Testament, it is through faith in Christ.¹⁹⁶ Thus, it appears in Galatians, that God's gracious act of justification for believing sinners is an execution of His covenant

¹⁸⁹ The author is aware that all the promises that God made to Abraham in Gen 12:1-3 were sealed with the blood covenant of Gen 15. However, our focus is on the promise of being a blessing to the nations.

¹⁹⁰ Lawrence O. Richards, ed., "Covenant", in *The Applied Bible Dictionary*, Eastbourne UK: Kingsway Publications, 1990, p. 257.

¹⁹¹ Robert S. Rayburn, "Hebrews", in *Baker Commentary on the Bible*, Walter A. Elwell, ed., Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1989, p. 1142.

¹⁹² Cf. Heb 9:16-18; Gal 3:26-27.

¹⁹³ Rom 1:17; Gal 3:8, 11; Hab 2:4.

¹⁹⁴ Gal 2:16; 3:1-5; 3:24; 5:4.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Gal 3:8-9, 14; 6:16.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Gal 2:16; 3:1-5, 11, 22.

made to Abraham. Paul, having understood God's way of justification, was not ashamed to preach the cross of Christ in the Hellenistic-Roman world.

CHRIST PORTRAYED AS CRUCIFIED

Christ "portrayed as crucified" is another important concept Paul used to reveal the complete effectiveness and timeless saving power of the gospel, for all who hear and believe. "Portrayed as crucified", means either to "write beforehand, or show forth, or portray publicly, as on a placard",¹⁹⁷ or "to write up in public".¹⁹⁸ However, the notion to "write beforehand" is rejected on the basis that Paul is not speaking of prophecies or predictions, and, therefore, the latter notion is preferred.¹⁹⁹ "To write up in public, as on a placard", "described all public notices . . . of trial and condemnation",²⁰⁰ which were publicly announced, or put on a public notice board. Hence, Paul's use of the term "portrayed" means "his preaching was like painting a picture with words, or putting up a public poster for all to see".²⁰¹

The four gospels have narrated the public crucifixion of Christ on the cross, and every one, who was present, or passed by, saw it.²⁰² However, Paul did not witness the crucifixion personally, but may have learned of it during the time when he was leading the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem, on the road to Damascus, and from Barnabas, his colleague and mentor. But, through revelation, he received the meaning of Christ's death on the rugged cross (cf. Gal 1: 11-12). He was able to declare publicly the gospel of the crucified Christ. Pinnock commented that the verb "crucified" is probably referring to the "content of Paul's preaching",²⁰³ and it "tells of something that has been accomplished, and is now settled".²⁰⁴ Hansen further states that "[t]he perfect tense of the verb *crucified* indicates that Paul's vivid

¹⁹⁷ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 100.

¹⁹⁸ Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St Paul to the Galatians*, p. 134.

¹⁹⁹ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 100; cf. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St Paul to the Galatians*, p. 134; Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 148.

²⁰⁰ Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St Paul to the Galatians*, p. 134.

²⁰¹ Hansen, *Galatians*, p. 78.

²⁰² Matt 27:27ff; Mark 15:21ff; Luke 23:26ff; John 19:17ff.

²⁰³ Pinnock, *Truth on Fire*, p. 35.

²⁰⁴ Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, p. 112.

portrayal of Christ crucified, was not only of the historical event, but also of the present saving power of the cross of Christ, for all who believe in Him”.²⁰⁵ It is the eternal truth, and the only basis for salvation.²⁰⁶ Stott sums it beautifully that Christ, “portrayed as crucified”,

is not a general instruction about the Jesus of history, but a specific proclamation of Jesus Christ as crucified (cf. 1 Cor 1:23; 2:2). The force of the perfect tense of the participle (ἔσταυρωμένον (*estaurōmenon*)) is that Christ’s work was completed on the cross, and that the benefits of His crucifixion are forever fresh, valid, and available. Sinners may be justified before God, and by God, not because of any works of their own, but because of the atoning work of Christ; not because of anything that they have done, or could do, but because of what Christ did once, when He died. The gospel is not good advice to men, but good news about Christ; not an invitation to us to do anything, but a declaration of what God has done; not a demand, but an offer.²⁰⁷

The centrality of Paul’s preaching is Christ crucified, and it is the power of God for the salvation of humankind (cf. Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18, 24), and, accepting it by faith, is the only way to be saved. Paul made it his ambition to preach Christ crucified to people everywhere, especially to those who have not heard the gospel. His desire to preach everywhere links up with the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). No matter whatever the circumstance he was in, Paul kept on preaching the gospel of Christ crucified until his death. His resolution was to know and preach Christ crucified to all people everywhere, in and through the power of the Holy Spirit, and not through persuasive words and human wisdom (cf. 1 Cor 1:18-25; 2:2). The

²⁰⁵ Hansen, *Galatians*, p. 78; cf. Donald Guthrie, *Galatians*, New Century Bible Commentary, Ronald E. Clements, and Matthew Black, eds, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1973, p. 92; Boice, “Galatians”, p. 10:454, remarked that the “perfect tense of the verb is important as it indicates that the act, completed in the past, has continuing significance.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Leon Morris, *Galatians: Paul’s Charter of Christian Freedom*, Leicester UK: IVP, 1996, p. 94.

²⁰⁷ Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, p. 70.

preaching of the gospel should be free of charge, without fear and shame, for people to hear and make their decisions.

Preaching of the crucified Christ, as the only ground of justification, was met with stern opposition from the Judaisers. It was labelled incorrect, and incomplete, to justify without the Law, and the messenger was portrayed as an inferior apostle. In response, Paul stated that the gospel of Christ crucified, as atonement for sin, that he received through revelation, was correct. It was affirmed by the so-called superior apostles of Jerusalem, and it was complete and final (cf. Gal 2:1-5). Nothing could be added to it, or subtracted from it. Any addition or subtraction to it is not the good news, and whoever does that is cursed (cf. Gal 1:8-9; Rev 22:18-19). The cross of Christ is God's mandated means to redeem the lost world.

REDEMPTION

Gal 3:10-14 is a passage that has drawn a lot of scholarly debate, which the author will not analyse at length, as it is not the objective of this paper.²⁰⁸ For example, Green, in analysing Gal 3:10-14, sees a combination of images, Paul used to present the benefits of the cross. Christ is presented as a

representative of Israel, through whose death the *covenant* reaches its climax; *justification* (Gal 3:11); *redemption* (Gal 3:13), evoking exodus and exilic themes (cf. the corollary of *adoption* in Gal 3:26-29); *substitution* ("for us", Gal 3:13); *sacrifice* (implicitly, Gal 3:13); the *promise of the Spirit* (Gal 3:14); and the *triumph over the powers*.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Cf. Tom Thatcher, "The Plot of Galatians 3:1-18", in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40-3 (September 1997), pp. 401-410; Don Garlington, "Role Reversal and Paul's Use of Scripture in Galatians 3:10-13", in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 65 (1997), pp. 85-121; David Brondos, "The Cross and the Curse: Galatians 3:13 and Paul's Doctrine of Redemption", in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 81 (2001), pp. 3-32; Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, p. 137-174.

²⁰⁹ Green, "Death of Christ II", p. 287.

The Law is presented as a force, like the elemental spirits of this world, holding the Jewish people captive (Gal 4:1, 3), who need to be redeemed.²¹⁰ Some of these images have been analysed already. In this limited space, we will consider Paul's use of "redeemed", and the "curse" concepts in v. 13, to explain the death of Christ, as a price paid to free fallen humanity.

Paul used redemption terminology to showcase the redeeming dimension of the cross. From the NIV translation, the verb "redeem(ed)" is mentioned three times (Gal 3:13, 14; 4:4). "Redeem" or "redemption" is used to describe the paying of a ransom to release from bondage to (evil) powers. A prisoner of war, or a slave, was released on the payment of a price called "ransom".²¹¹ According to Dunn, "in a slave-owning society, the imagery of manumission and liberation was one which could hardly fail to appeal to gospel proclaimers".²¹² Throughout Christian history, theologians have used the redemption, or atonement, theories to interpret what Paul said.²¹³ Thus, Dunn states that Paul's choice of the redemption image was strongly influenced by the history of Israel being ransomed from Egypt.²¹⁴ Some suggest that Christ suffered God's punishment of exile in its fullest sense, as alluded to in Is 53.²¹⁵ He was exiled on behalf of His people; not merely a physical exile, but "spiritual alienation in penal death, to which physical exile points".²¹⁶ In doing so, He exhausted the curse of the Law in His body, and became the penal substitution.²¹⁷ Yet those, who oppose the satisfaction and substitution notions, but still remain within the general understanding of

²¹⁰ There are scholars, whom Green cites, who proposed these images – *representative* (Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, pp. 137-156), and the notion of *interchange* (M. D. Hooker, "Interchange and Atonement", in *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 60 (1978), pp. 462-481; M. D. Hooker, "Interchange in Christ", in *Journal of Theological Studies* 22 (1974), pp. 349-361; *sacrifice* (Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, p. 153; Green, "Death of Christ II", p. 287).

²¹¹ Cf. Leon Morris, "Redeemer, Redemption", in *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd edn, J. D. Douglas, ed., Leicester UK: IVP, 1962, p. 1013; cf. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 227.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 228.

²¹³ Brondos, "The Cross and the Curse", p. 3.

²¹⁴ See Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, pp. 227-228.

²¹⁵ Cf. Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 7.

²¹⁶ Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, p. 94.

²¹⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*; Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, p. 151-132.

the doctrine of redemption, state that Christ's death redeemed human beings from the curse of the Law by setting an "example of obedience, and kindling in them a greater love of God", making it possible to live a new way of life.²¹⁸ However, in recent Pauline scholarship, there are disagreements as to the source of Paul's ideas.²¹⁹

Christ portrayed His own death as redemption, in functional terms, as Longenecker states:

He "gave Himself" (cf. 2:20; also Eph 5:2, 25; 1 Tim 2:6; Titus 2:14) – or alternatively, was given by God (cf. Rom 4:25; 8:32) – "for our sins". Both of the expressions "to give Himself" (δοῦναι ἑαυτόν (*dounai heauton*)) and "for our sins" (ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν (*hyper tōn hamartiōn hēmōn*)) are rooted in Jesus' statement, as later recorded in Mark 10:45, about the purpose of His mission: "to give His life (δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ (*dounai tēn psuchēn autou*)) a ransom for many" (λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν (*lutron anti pollōn*)). In turn, Jesus' statement seems to have been derived from Isaiah's fourth Servant Song (cf. esp. Is 53:5-6, 12), which He used to highlight His own consciousness of being God's Righteous Servant.²²⁰

In Galatians, Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13; 4:1-3, 8-10).²²¹ The pronoun "us" is a thorny issue in the interpretation of Gal 3:13. It seems to refer to the Jews. But, how is their redemption a key to the Gentiles' redemption? It seems as though Gentiles had no problem of a curse; only the Jews had, and, therefore, redemption from the curse of the Law has a markedly Jewish focus. How do we establish compatibility in this exegetical dilemma? In Adam, humanity, as a whole, failed to keep God's law, and came under the curse – if you eat from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you will surely die (cf. Gen 2: 17). Adam and Eve's disobedience in keeping God's command severed their intimacy with the holy God. Work, as a gift to be enjoyed, was made burdensome to bear.

²¹⁸ Brondos, "The Cross and the Curse", p. 4.

²¹⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

²²⁰ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 7.

²²¹ Cf. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 227.

However, a promise was given to the first humans that the seed of the woman, who will be born as a member of fallen humanity, would ultimately defeat the serpent, who is the head of the evil kingdom (cf. Gen 3:15; Gal 1:4). The promise of a seed was uttered once again in the call of Abraham (Gen 12:3; 22:18). The Law, given 430 years later, to the nation of Israel, as God's covenant people, also stipulated blessings for obedience, and curses for disobedience. Israel failed to obey God, and was sent into exile. Following this line of thought, we see a link in Galatians that Christ is the promised seed (cf. Gal 3:15-18). He was born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those under the curse of the Mosaic Law (cf. Gal 4:4-5), and, as a member of fallen humanity, to redeem the whole of humanity under the curse of sin (cf. Gal 1:4). Leon Morris also expressed that God made Christ to bear humanity's sin and curse on the cross. He stated that God made Christ sin (Gal 1:4), and a curse for us (Gal. 3:13). And this curse related to the manner of His death, as stated in the Law.²²² Christ bore humanity's curse, and died their death, thus, implying that sin is completely dealt with, and the curse is removed forever. Christ, through His death, has redeemed everyone under the curse of sin, who are made conscious by the Law, and He has rescued us from the elemental principalities.

²²² Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*, pp. 222-223. In Deut 21:22-23, it states that anyone who commits a capital offence should be hung on the tree. Considering Christ's charges, the first crime He was charged with before the Sanhedrin was blasphemy (Matt 26:66; Mark 14:64), and the penalty for blasphemy was death by stoning outside of the camp (Lev 24:13-16; Acts 7:54-60). However, under Roman rule, the Sanhedrin, or the Jews' courts, were not allowed to sentence anyone to death, except Rome. The Sanhedrin also knew that the Roman government (court) would not sentence Jesus to death, on religious grounds. So, before Pilate, they accused Christ of committing a political crime against Rome (Luke 23:1-5), and political crime was a capital offence. Instead of Christ being stoned to death as a blasphemer, He was crucified on the cross (tree) outside the city of Jerusalem by the Roman soldiers as a political criminal. Christ, crucified as a political criminal, is apparent from the sign Pilate had nailed on the cross – "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek (John 19:19-20; Luke 23:38; Mark 15:26; Matt 27:37)). Christ went on trial in two different courts (Jewish and Roman), and He was falsely convicted of committing religious and political crimes, respectively. However, both courts fulfilled the Law, by sentencing Christ to take upon Himself the curse of the Law, on false accusations, and to bear the sins of the world on the cross, according to God's plan (Matt 26:27-28, 39, 42; Luke 22:20, 42; 24:46-47; John 1:29; Acts 2:23; 2 Cor 5:21; Col 2:13-14).

SUMMARY

Christ died as a propitiatory and expiatory sacrifice for sin. His substitutionary sacrifice is the only ground of justification and redemption from sin, and all the evil forces that kept humanity under bondage, and stood in opposition to God's purpose for creation. In Christ, the way of righteousness and freedom is made available. New life in Christ is experienced through hearing and believing in the message of the crucified Christ. It is a timeless truth, and the power of God to save all who believe. It is bearing fruit everywhere, bringing hope in the face of despair, and life in the face of death. This was the gospel that brought freedom to the Galatians.

THE BREAKING NEWS PART 2: TRANSFORMING THE GALATIAN WORLDVIEW

Having heard and experienced the power of the death of Christ in their lives, how should the Galatians view and respond to the Law, and *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*), which were urging them to submit to their rule? The Galatians had experienced the saving power of the cross, and had been made God's children and heirs, as promised to Abraham, through faith in Christ. They could not deny their salvation experience, and needed to see Christ as the only giver of freedom.

CHRIST – THE SUM TOTAL AND REALITY

Paul declared to the Galatians that the gospel he preached was the true gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ (Gal 1:6-7), who gave Himself for their sins, to rescue them from the elemental principles. Paul admonished the Galatians to acknowledge Christ alone, as the sum total, and reality, that made them become God's children, through faith in Him. He is the incarnated son of God. Ennio Mantovani states that "God's communication and revelation of Himself, through Christ, is the final one that cannot be surpassed".²²³ It is God's undeserved gift to humanity, to enter into relationship with Him, beyond their expectations and achievements.²²⁴ The

²²³ Ennio Mantovani, "Traditional Religions and Christianity", in Ennio Mantovani, ed., *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions, Point 6* (1984), p. 13.

²²⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

promise, made to Abraham, to bless the Gentiles, was made possible through the death and resurrection of Christ, which Judaism could not do. Since Adam, the whole of humanity has been held prisoner to sin, until Christ came. God's promise to deal with sin, and to justify sinners, was fulfilled in Christ (Gal 3:22). As Hays states, Christ, in His act of simultaneous obedience to God (Phil 2:8; Gal 1:4), and "love for those whom He died to save (Gal 2:20)", has achieved God's purpose through His death on the cross (Gal 3:1, 13). Therefore, the death of Christ is "an act of 'faithfulness' ", thus, bringing to fulfilment God's promise to Abraham to bless the Gentiles (Gal 3:14). So, Jesus' death is described as deliverance from the "present evil age" (Gal 1:4), and also a "means, through which the community has received the gift of the Spirit (Gal 3:14), and life with Jesus (1 Thess 5:10; Gal 2:20), with its blessings of freedom (Gal 5:1) and righteousness (Phil 1:11; 3:9; Gal 2:20)".²²⁵

In Christ, the Galatians were justified, or declared righteous, when they believed the gospel of the crucified Christ. Experientially, they knew it was true that they were justified, through accepting the message of the crucified Christ (Gal 2:16; 3:1-5). They were not saved by their own efforts, as they have come to know. Through faith in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles were blessed, along with Abraham, as a man of faith, and they received the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 3:8-9, 14). The promised gift of the Holy Spirit, which they received, was an evidence of the forgiveness of their sins, and it confirmed their justified status before God. God graciously made this promise to Abraham and his seed – namely Christ (Gal 3:18).

It is only the death of Christ that brought justification and freedom from *στοιχεία* (*stoicheia*), sin, and *σάρξ* (*sarx*). Failure to adhere to Christ meant alienation, severance from God's grace, and a returning to the inglorious days of slavery to *στοιχεία* (*stoicheia*) (cf. Gal 5:4; 4:8-11). In

²²⁵ Hays, "Crucified with Christ", pp. 232-233. Hays, in his thesis, stressed on the "faithfulness" of Jesus as a way of understanding the key phrase "faith of Christ" in Paul's writings, not as referring to the faith we put in Christ as the way to receive righteousness. I agree with Hays's statement in this quote, without necessarily endorsing all his interpretation, because I prefer to read Paul's phrase as often meaning "faith in Christ", even though the phrase could also mean "the faithfulness of Christ". It is through faith in Christ that we are declared righteous.

Christ, circumcision and works of the Law have no value. What was important before God was faith, expressing itself in love (Gal 5:6). In Christ, a new era has dawned.

NEW EPOCH, NEW CREATION

Christ's coming, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, inaugurated a new era. It marked the end of an old epoch, and the beginning of a new epoch. The first Adam was the head of the old era, which was dominated by sin and death. Humankind, as a whole, turned their backs on God. His gracious interventions in human history were marked with increasing human forgetfulness and rebellion by people. He chose Israel out of all the nations, on the basis of His covenant with the patriarchs. Israel had God's special favour, and enjoyed the privilege, guidance, and protection of God, enshrined in the Law given at Mt Sinai.²²⁶ The God of the universe was their God, whom Israel, as a nation, failed to honour, by keeping their part of the covenant. This led to the prediction of a new covenant. What was then envisaged in the Creator-Israel relationship was a transition from the old epoch to a new epoch, which would affect the whole creation, in the ages to come.²²⁷ Christ, the promised seed, was born as a Jew, lived, ministered, and died under the Jewish Law. In His death, He exhausted the curse of the Law, sin and death, and defeated the rulers of the present evil age (Gal 1:4), and is the head of the new epoch. This decisive cosmic event is understood in the theological discipline as an apocalyptic and eschatological breakthrough. Sin, death, and Satan no longer have the upper hand. Through His death, Christ made atonement for sin. His resurrection was a declaration that life has triumphed over sin and death, and Satan is disarmed (Col 2:15). However, given that Christ has won the ultimate victory, believers continue to struggle with their sin nature, experience physical death, and face satanic opposition, to some degree. The Second Coming of Christ will be the last chapter for the three defeated enemies (Satan, sin, and death), and they will be assigned their place in the lake of fire for eternity.

²²⁶ Cf. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 318.

²²⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*

Everyone who believes in Christ is a new creation. “New creation”, in Greek, *καινή κτίσις* (*kainē ktisis*), expressed in 2 Cor 5:17 and Gal 6:15, is closely related to an expression “‘new human(ity)’ *καινὸν ἄνθρωπον* (*kainon anthrōpon*) in Eph 2:15; 4:23-24, and Col 3:9-10”.²²⁸ In Judaism, it was believed that God, in His wisdom, made everything good, and Paul identified Christ as the Wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:17-15; Col 1:15-20). The creation was marred, because of sin, creating a state of disillusionment, which led to the conviction and expectant hope of a new creation, where everything would be restored to its state of original perfection.²²⁹ The scope of the new creation, to Paul, meant that repentant sinners were a new creation,²³⁰ created in the image of Christ. When Christ died their death, they died with Christ, and when He rose again, they, too, rose with Him, to newness of life – so they no longer live, but Christ lives in them (Gal 2:20). The new creation, or humanity, had a new life of the indwelling Christ (cf. 2 Cor 3:17), through His Spirit (Gal 3:1-5; 5:22-23),²³¹ and they had a new nature. The new creation’s scope was also a communal reality, where the new creation was defined as the “Israel of God” (Gal 6:15-16), comprised of communities, and not just individuals (cf. Eph 2:14-16). In Christ, there was no distinction between Jews and Gentiles. The divisive wall of religious conventions and social ethics was abolished, when they became God’s children, through faith in Christ (cf. Gal 3:26-28). As a new community, characterised by faith in Christ, who abolished their differences, believers were not called to completely abandon their cultural identities, and create something new. From whatever race they were from, they were not to change their identities, but were to discontinue in “old divisions and inequalities”.²³² In Gal 6:15, in the new creation, “neither circumcision . . . nor uncircumcision” had any value.²³³ What mattered was the circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit of God (cf. Rom 2:29). New humanity had a new

²²⁸ J. R. Levison, “Creation, New Creation: Paul”, in *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament*, Daniel G. Reid, ed., Downers Grove IL: IVP, 2004, p. 249.

²²⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*

²³⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*

²³¹ Cf. Scot McKnight, *Galatians*, NIV Application Commentary, Terry Muck, ed., Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1995, p. 124.

²³² Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 156.

²³³ Cf. Levison, “Creation, New Creation”, p. 250.

life in the Spirit, and was sustained by the Spirit (cf. Gal 3:1-5). Furthermore, new creation is eschatological – the anticipation of a new heaven and a new earth. It would be a time of final resurrection of the dead, and liberation of the natural world, which, at present, is subjected to decay (cf. Rom 8:20).²³⁴ The Galatian Christians were a new creation, and a new community of God’s people, redeemed through the blood of Christ.

ADOPTED INTO GOD’S FAMILY

Paul’s use of the Greek word “*υιοθεσία (huiiothesia)*, in the sense of adoption”, is disputed, in favour of “sonship”. However, “overwhelming lexical evidence” does not support this contention.²³⁵ Adoption is used “either of the Israelites (Rom 9:4), or of the believers (Gal 4:5; Rom 8:15, 23; Eph 1:5)”.²³⁶ Paul was the first to use “adoption” in the theological context, and he gave no explanation of what it meant. Since Paul gave no explanation, a number of scholarly suggestions have been made as to where he got his idea, or what the background was of this terminology.²³⁷ The first suggestion is linked to the Greco-Roman mythologies. Paul used the concept to mean divine adoption, but there is no solid evidence from a Greco-Roman background.²³⁸ Another suggestion is in relation to the legal practice of adoption in the Greco-Roman world. In Hellenistic law, adoption was connected with inheritance, and “Galatians 4:5 speaks of the adoption that makes believers heirs”.²³⁹ The proponents of this view have elaborated that, in “Roman ceremony, in which the minor to be adopted was emancipated from the authority of his natural father, [was] often for the purpose of social and/or political manoeuvring”.²⁴⁰ But the witness of the Holy Spirit,

²³⁴ Cf. Ibid.

²³⁵ J. M. Scott, “Adoption, Sonship: Paul”, in *IVP Dictionary of the New Testament*, Daniel G. Reid, ed., Downers Grove IL: IVP, 2004, p. 40.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ From a theological abstraction, adoption is considered as a synonym of freedom; “adoption as a forensic-eschatological term, parallel to ‘righteousness’”; and a secondary deduction of Paul’s Damascus Road Christophany of the risen Christ “as the image of God, or the Son of God” (Ibid.).

²³⁸ Ibid., pp. 40-41.

²³⁹ L. Wenger, “Adoption”, in *Reallexikon fur Antike und Christentum*, p. 1:100, is used by Scott, of whom I am citing his summary of Wenger (Scott, “Adoption, Sonship”, p. 41).

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

mentioned in Gal 4:6, has cast doubt on this position. Also, circumstantial evidence, regarding Paul's Roman citizenship, and the prevalence of Roman adoption in Paul's day, fails to substantiate the case for legal adoption.²⁴¹ Scott, therefore, suggests that the root of "adoption" is in the Old Testament/Jewish background. His exegetical and theological argument for this position, and particularly for Gal 4:5, looks convincing.²⁴²

Adoption is an important concept, conveying how the Galatians were brought into God's family, to a promised inheritance, through faith in Christ, and not just through baptism, as Scott stated.²⁴³ Scott's argument of adoption, stemming from OT/Jewish background would have little effect on Galatian Gentiles, if the Judaistic understanding of the concept was unpopular to them. If Paul used the concept against an OT/Jewish background, without giving any explanation, obviously the concept would have been familiar to his audience.²⁴⁴ Even if the Gentile Christians had a slightly different understanding of the concept from the Jews, the implications of it were compatible. They were redeemed, or released, from slavery to elemental principles by a ransom, just like being redeemed from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13), and adopted into God's family. They had a

²⁴¹ Cf. *Ibid.*

²⁴² Scott, in arguing for the Old Testament/Jewish background of adoption, states that the immediate context of Gal 4:5 is a decisive clue – Gal 4:1-2 is an allusion to the OT, and Gal 4:5 is framed within Exodus typology (Gal 4:1-7). Just like the Israelites were heirs to the Abrahamic promise, and were redeemed from slavery in Egypt at God's appointed time (Gal 4:1-2; Hos 11:1; Gen 15:13), the believers are also redeemed to adoption from slavery to elemental principles, to be heirs at the fullness of time. This is further substantiated by Rom 9:4, and the broader context of Gal 3-4 made it clear "that believers are sons and heirs, as they participate by baptism (Gal 3:23) in the Son of God, who was sent to redeem them (Gal 4:4-5; cf. Gal 3:13-14)". Christ is the seed promised to Abraham (Gal 3:16), and "the messianic Son of God promised in 2 Samuel 7:12 and 14, respectively. Seen in context, therefore, 'the adoption' in Galatians 4:5 must refer to the Jewish eschatological expectation, based on 2 Samuel 7:14." Therefore, Gal 4:5 gives no reason to suspect adoption is from a Greco-Roman background, when considering the whole line of argument (*Ibid.*). Longenecker also states that adoption is a word "unique to Paul's lips", and it was probably a "word used within Judaism in Paul's day" (Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 172).

²⁴³ Scott, "Adoption, Sonship", p. 41. Baptism does not make a sinner become a child of God. It is through repentance and faith in God's Son. Baptism is a public, and an outward, declaration of the already state of life for the repentant sinner.

²⁴⁴ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 172.

new name, legal standing, family relationship, and a new image – the image of Christ (cf. Rom 8:29).²⁴⁵ As Christ's image, they had His Spirit, or the Spirit of adoption, in their hearts, crying out to God – Abba, Father (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15). Now that they had a new relationship with God, what about their old relationship with the Law and στοιχεῖα (*stoicheia*)?

LAW AND ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΑ (STOICHEIA) ARE TEMPORARY

The Law only performed a secondary role as a παιδαγωγός (*paidagōgos*), until Christ appeared at God's appointed time (cf. Gal 3:23-25; 4:4-5). When Christ appeared, the Law stepped aside, so that the long-awaited or deferred righteousness, and the promises given to Abraham, to make believing Jews and Gentiles heirs through faith can be fulfilled. The Law, for the Jews, and the religious elements and elemental spirits, for the Gentiles, were only custodians and managers. As custodians and managers, they exercised their duties and functions during their allotted time, to prepare humanity for the coming of the promised seed. In Gal 3:15-4:7, Paul has clearly spelt out to the Galatians the Law's responsibility, until the appearing of Christ. Paul began with a covenant illustration. From human experience, no covenant partner could alter the covenant particulars, once it was made. The same applied to the Abrahamic (promise) covenant, and the Mosaic (Law) covenant. The Abrahamic covenant was in no way superseded by the Mosaic covenant. In fact, the Abrahamic covenant was unconditional, and was a one-sided covenant; God was the only party to it, and was obligated to keep its particulars (Gen 12:1-3; 15:1ff). It was universal in scope. Israel, as Abraham's descendants, was singled out as a nation, and was called to be a party in the Mosaic covenant, with the intention of Israel being God's channel of blessing to the nations. The making of the Mosaic covenant was to bring to fulfilment to the Abrahamic covenant of justification through faith alone (cf. Gen 15:6). Paul argued that the promise to bring justification, and reconciliation of the nations to God, was made exclusively with Christ, and not to all Abraham's seed in general (Gal 3:15-18; Gen 22:18).

²⁴⁵ William Hendriksen, *Galatians*, Geneva Commentary, London UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 1968, p. 160.

Therefore, the Law was not enacted to justify, or declare righteous, fallen humanity, before God, but to lead them to the promised seed, for redemption, through faith in Him. Gal 3:19 shows that the Law is temporary. Longenecker notes, from Gal 3:19, that the aorist passive verb “it was added”, which has the singular prefix “it”, introduces the important temporal point of Law: “the Mosaic Law brought, into effect by God, subsequent to His covenant of promise”.²⁴⁶ The Law was given, because of transgression (Gal 3:19), which means to “bring about a consciousness of sin in sin-hardened humanity”.²⁴⁷ He further states that another important clause to the temporality of the Law is “until the Seed, to whom the promise referred, had come”. The use of the conjunction “until” reveals the temporary nature of the Law, given through Moses, and God intended it to be effective until the arrival of Christ.²⁴⁸ In addition, the Law was delivered through intermediaries – through angels (Gal 3:19). This thought, as Longenecker states, needs to be understood historically. In Ex 19:18, there is no mention of God being accompanied by the angels on Mt Sinai to give the Law. However, Deut 33:2 states that God “came with myriads of holy ones”, while Ps 68:17 “refers poetically to an accompanying retinue of chariots, in giving of the Law, but not angels”. However “in later rabbinic thought, Ps 68:18 was even more important than Deut 33:2 for the association of angels with giving of the [L]aw.”²⁴⁹ The Law was not meant to oppose the promise. Its purpose was not to impart life, and to make sinners righteous (cf. Gal 3:21). Even though the Law was righteous and holy, it could not overcome the power of sin at work in the members of the human body. The Law’s function was to keep every human being locked up in a prison of sin, as a prison warden (Gal 3:22-23). It was in charge of fallen humanity, while awaiting the coming of Christ (Gal 3:23). Fulfilling

²⁴⁶ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 138.

²⁴⁷ Ibid. Also Stott remarked that Paul further developed this thought in Romans: “through the law, we become conscious of sin” (Rom 3:20); “where there is no law there is no transgression” (Rom 4:15); “I would not have known what sin was except through the law” (Rom 7:7). Therefore, “the law’s main work was to expose sin” (Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, p. 90).

²⁴⁸ Longenecker states that Paul deviated from the Judaistic understanding of the law as imperishable, and changeless in nature, from a “Christocentric perspective” (Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 139).

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

what was required by the Law was a preparatory stage for the coming redemption. Now that Christ has come, the Law stepped aside, so that humanity would no longer be under the supervision of the Law, but under Christ (cf. Gal 3:24). Also, the *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*) functioned as custodians of God's children until the time He set for them to inherit the promised blessings (Gal 4:1-3).

While being under the Law and *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*), human beings were kept as children, or minors, with regard to their inheritance. Though they were heirs to the promised inheritance, which would only come through faith, they were no different to a slave, while living under the guardianship and trusteeship of the Law and *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*), until the date God set (Gal 4:1-3).²⁵⁰ When Christ came, He redeemed humanity from bondage to the Law and *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*), so that they would receive the full stature of sonship/daughtership and heirs (Gal 4:5-7). The Galatians were now under Christ, their true Master and Saviour.

στοιχεῖα (STOICHEIA) AS BEGGARS

In Gal 4:9, the elemental principles or forces that the Galatians were turning to, after responding to the gospel of Christ, are rendered, “weak and miserable principles”.²⁵¹ Before the arrival of the gospel, the Galatians were under bondage to elemental principles, or “forces of the world, until Christ released them from their bondage, and disabled the elemental forces”.²⁵² τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (*ta stoicheia tou kosmou*), as disclosed in Gal 4:3, which controlled human beings, were described as powerless, feeble, poor, beggarly, and impotent, in contrast to the liberating power of Christ's death. Those who have trusted in Christ were freed from *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*). As Bruce states, “[a]gainst those who enjoy ‘the liberty of the glory of the children of God’ (Rom 8:21) the *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*) [translated] are powerless; they cannot reassert their authority over them, unless these

²⁵⁰ Cf. Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, p. 104; Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 30.

²⁵¹ The Greek word for the adjective “weak” (Gal. 4:9 NIV) is also translated as “powerless” and “feeble”. Also the adjective “miserable” (Gal. 4:9 NIV) is translated as “poor”, “beggarly”, and “impotent” (Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 181).

²⁵² Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 203.

deliberately put themselves back under their power”.²⁵³ For, if the converts were to accept the works of the Law, like circumcision and observance of Jewish religious occasions, as though these were “the essence of gospel faith, and church membership, was a retrograde step”²⁵⁴ (cf. Gal 4:10); they were making it a personal choice of returning to slavery, to principalities that were already made weak and beggarly, through the cross.²⁵⁵

In the light of the gospel, the elemental principles had no power over believers, but were begging for power, through the advocates of works of the Law, to heed their plea to empower them once again, so that they could have power over believers. Sin and satanic forces, defeated through the death of Christ (cf. Gal 1:4; Col 2:13-15), were begging to be empowered, by appealing through the Judaisers. *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*), like “those who by nature are not gods” (Gal 4:4), had no intrinsic or inherent power, but only had power ascribed to them by their followers or adherents. Like beggars, they needed others to give them any power, or strength, which was not theirs, by inherent nature. Yielding to their plea would be the biggest mistake the Galatians could make. It would mean the denial of the redemptive power of the cross of Christ.²⁵⁶ The Galatians were freed from *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*), who did not give them freedom, rather *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*) kept them in bondage or prison until Christ set them free.

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

By now, the Galatians should have realised that, while they were under custodians and trustees, they were not free to inherit the promise made to Abraham, until Christ came. Through the redeeming work of Christ, they have received their share of the promised inheritance (cf. Gal 4:1-7). Christ was the key, who unlocked the door to God’s storehouse of the promised inheritance, and, by virtue of His death for sinners, He had the indisputable authority to dispense the promised gifts to sinners who trusted in Him.²⁵⁷ Their conversion experience was an irrefutable and undeniable proof of their

²⁵³ Ibid., p. 204.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 29.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 30.

²⁵⁷ Cf. Gal 3:8-9, 14; Eph 4:7-8.

freedom, through hearing and believing in the gospel Paul preached. It was not the works of the Law that bought their justification and freedom, but by believing in the gospel of the crucified Christ. Paul made this contrast in his allegory of Hagar (Ishmael, Mt Sinai, corresponding to Jerusalem in Israel) and Sarah (Isaac), to show that the Law did not bring freedom, but it was as a result of the death of Christ, who is the promised seed (cf. Gal 4:21-31). Therefore, freedom was enjoyed by the children of the free woman, who were also the heirs of the promised inheritance, given to Abraham, and not to those of the slave woman.²⁵⁸ Those who turned to the old covenant, or to the Law, were returning to a life of slavery.

Christ has set them free, therefore, they were to remain firm, and not to become burdened again by the yoke of slavery (Gal 5:1). Paul urged them to stand fast in the true freedom they have experienced through the gospel of Christ, which would safeguard them against submission to legalistic requirements that will lead to slavery. They were to stand firm in the gospel (Gal 5:1), in faith (1 Cor 16:13), and in spirit (Phil 1:27). If they subjected themselves to the works of the Law (cf. Gal 5:11), they were alienating themselves from Christ, who has set them free from sin, the curse of the Law, and from slavery to elemental . They had rejected the grace of God (Gal 5:4), and were making themselves slaves again to sin and στοιχῆια (*stoicheia*) (Gal 4:9).²⁵⁹ Their sin-guilt consciences have been set free, freed from the tyranny of the Law, but not so with the will, as Stott states.²⁶⁰ The will appears to be neutral. Either they use their will to choose to remain in the freedom, or to be enslaved again to sin and στοιχῆια (*stoicheia*).

The Galatians were called to freedom, and freedom in Christ was not a licence for them to indulge in their sinful nature, and in biting and devouring each other, but to serve one another in love (Gal 5:13-15). Christian freedom was a spiritual freedom, governed by a new moral law – the law of love. It was not a lawless freedom, as some would assume, and misuse it to satisfy their sinful passions and desires. Love was the sum total of the Law, which should govern their ethical conduct. It was only effective through

²⁵⁸ Cf. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 226; Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 223.

²⁵⁹ Cf. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, pp. 226-227; Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 224.

²⁶⁰ Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, p. 132.

submission to the Spirit (Gal 5:16), instead of submitting to the external features of the Law, like circumcision and observance of the special days. In Judaism, submitting to the Mosaic Law, as God's expressed will, regulated the ethical conduct of the Israelites, but, for Christians, it was the law of love, expressed in serving others, which regulated their conduct.²⁶¹ Christian freedom, as Bruce states, "is a call to oneness in Christ, and to loving service within the believing community. The liberty of the gospel is not to be exercised in isolated independence",²⁶² but in the community of believers. To live out Christian freedom, the Galatians were to guard against elements that sought to remove it.

IN A SPIRITUAL BATTLE

Christ has won their freedom, through His death on the cross, as their substitutionary sacrifice for sin, and He has rescued them from slavery to the elemental spirits of the universe (Gal 5:13-15). However, the Galatians were not to relax, as if there was no battle to fight. Galatian Christians needed to know that they were in a spiritual battle (Gal 5:16-18). Even though they were redeemed from sin and demonic bondages, their sin nature, as a captive to sin, has always aligned itself with sin, to satisfy sinful passions and desires, and was still working through the members of their bodies, which they were to subdue. The conflict between Spirit and the *σάρξ* (*sarx*), which the believers were experiencing, was an experience pertaining to the " 'eschatological' tension, which, so long as believers remain in the mortal body, is inseparable from their life in Christ (2 Cor 4:16-5:5)".²⁶³ The tension between the Spirit and the *σάρξ* (*sarx*) was a tension of a lifetime, for every believer to wrestle with. And, as Stott remarks, "the conflict between them [*σάρξ* (*sarx*) and the Spirit] is fierce, and unremitting . . . this is a specifically Christian conflict . . . we assert that it is fiercer in Christians, because they possess two natures – flesh and Spirit – in irreconcilable antagonism".²⁶⁴ The idea that Christians possess two natures, as Stott states, is a controversial statement, which will not be

²⁶¹ Cf. Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 241.

²⁶² Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 241.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

²⁶⁴ Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, p. 146.

discussed here in detail. However, a possible explanation, as Longenecker states, is to understand *σάρξ* (*sarx*) and the Spirit as “two ethical forces that seek to control a person’s thought and activity”.²⁶⁵ The *σάρξ* (*sarx*), as a defeated power, which once held the Galatian converts captive, was opposed to the new ruling power of the Holy Spirit, which gave them new life, through faith in Christ, and made them God’s people. The Galatians needed to know the battle they were in, and they needed instructions on how to overcome the *σάρξ* (*sarx*).

To win this battle, the Galatians were urged to “live by the Spirit” (Gal 5:16, 25). The synonyms of “live by the Spirit”, are “led by the Spirit” (Gal 5:18), and “keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal 5:25), are figurative speech, implying that the Galatians were to conduct their lives as a new creation, which was a new reality for them, which they experienced through the presence of the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:2-5), and to live by faith, as they were already doing (Gal 5:5).²⁶⁶ Consistent obedience to the Spirit, and remaining loyal to the gospel of Christ, would keep them from satisfying the “desires of the sinful nature” (Gal 5:16). Though they were saved from the enslaving power of the *σάρξ* (*sarx*), it was still part of them, and would continue to oppose the new life in them. To subdue the *σάρξ* (*sarx*), the Law – particularly circumcision, which was perceived to expunge “pleasure and all passions”,²⁶⁷ under which they were exhorted to come, and with which some were already complying – could not keep *σάρξ* (*sarx*) defeated, rather it only sought to empower *σάρξ* (*sarx*), and return them to their former way of life. The way of the Spirit was the true way of freedom and love for God and neighbours, which no external forces could sanction or compel, other than the Spirit within.²⁶⁸ The Galatians needed to be careful, because works of the Law sought to satisfy the sinful nature. Salvation from sin, and elemental spiritual powers, was according to God’s grace and promise, and to submit to the works of the Law was a portrayal of conducting one’s life according to the sinful nature. Living according to the Spirit was the only way to rebut the *σάρξ* (*sarx*), and its passions and desires.

²⁶⁵ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 245.

²⁶⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 244-245.

²⁶⁷ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 243.

²⁶⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*

SUMMARY

In Christ, the Galatians were redeemed, and they received the blessings promised to Abraham. They were adopted as God's children, and made heirs with Christ. The elemental principles, that Galatians were once under, were only guardians and trustees, until Christ appeared. The στοιχεῖα (*stoicheia*) could not bring them to a place of righteous standing before God, as it was not their function. στοιχεῖα (*stoicheia*) subjected the Galatians to slavery to sin. Nothing that they did could free them from στοιχεῖα (*stoicheia*). It was only through faith in the gospel of Christ that they finally received their freedom. Therefore, they were to be careful not to turn to στοιχεῖα (*stoicheia*), which would mean returning to a life of slavery to sin and στοιχεῖα (*stoicheia*). The same gospel, which Paul preached to Galatians, was also preached to Melanesians, and it has borne fruit. However, how has it changed the Melanesian view of spirit powers, in order to remain true to the gospel of freedom?

THE BREAKING NEWS PART 3: TRANSFORMING THE MELANESIAN WORLDVIEW

Traditional religions prepared Melanesians to accept Christianity, in spite of some personal cost incurred by the missionary bands and agencies. In some parts of Melanesia, like Fiji and the PNG Highlands, the whole tribal groups, or chieftain kingdoms, responded to the gospel, and accepted Christianity as their religion. Most conversional responses were largely due to power encounters, where the gospel power triumphed over the known spiritual powers.²⁶⁹ The traditional beliefs in ancestors and spirit powers were toppled, or otherwise submerged, in order to embrace the superior power of the gospel of Christ that was clearly displayed. In spite of the saving experience, and the indigenisation of Christianity, beliefs in ancestral spirits and spirit powers still coexist with the Christian faith, causing syncretism, and creating new religious movements. This is due to the failure of many missionaries to understand the Melanesian religious worldview, and

²⁶⁹ Cf. Allan Tippet, *The Deep-Sea Canoe: Stories of the Spread of the Gospel by South Pacific Island Missionaries*, Pasadena CA: William Carey Library, 1977; Allan Tippet, *People Movements in Southern Polynesia: Studies in the Dynamics of Church-Planting and Growth in Tahiti, New Zealand, Tonga, and Samoa*, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1971.

to recognise what their traditional religions had done, before the arrival of the gospel. This section seeks to apply Paul's teachings on elemental principles in Galatians to Melanesians, beginning with their view of the spirit world.

THE SPIRIT WORLD IS REAL

Paul, from his monotheistic tradition, took a radical stand against idolatry, and he denied the existence of other gods, except Yahweh (Gal 4:8; Deut 6:4). Whatever the Gentile world perceived to be gods were not gods.²⁷⁰ They were creatures, compared to Yahweh, the creator, and the God of the ancestors. Paul's denial of the so-called gods was not a denial of the existence of the spirit world. His reference to God, who is the only true Spirit, and good and bad angels, as celestial beings, revealed his stance on the existence of the spirit world. The incarnation of Christ is apparently the supreme revelation of the spirit world (Gal 4:4-5). God, who is Spirit, became human. Thus, to Paul, the spirit world was not a superstition. Also, his view of the spirit world can be seen in his approach to idol worship at Corinth, where he stated that demons were behind idol worship (1 Cor 10:19-21). In Galatians, he used τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (*ta stoicheia tou kosmou*)²⁷¹ to refer to both elementary teachings of the religions, and elemental spirits behind elements of the cosmos that Greco-Romans worshipped. To Paul and his audience, the spirit world was just as real as for the Melanesians.

Melanesians' belief in the existence of the spirit world and the after-life is often expressed through their myths. The myths portray that the tribal ancestors, who have died are living on in the after-life, or are part of the underworld, and they abide with, and are the guardians of the living descendants. They help their descendants in their needs. Besides the ancestral spirits, and spirits of the deceased relatives, are the *masalai*. Some *masalai* are believed to preside over certain geographical locations, while others roam or wander from place to place.²⁷² The spirits have intrinsic

²⁷⁰ Cf. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, pp. 33-38.

²⁷¹ Gal 4:3, 9; Col 2:20.

²⁷² Suruma, "Toabaita Traditional Beliefs and Worship of Ancestral Spirits and God's Word", p. 16; Idusulia, "Viewing His Sacrifice through Melanesian Eyes", pp. 9-10.

power, and the ability to influence the outcome of events. Each tribe in Melanesia have names for these spirit beings, like the Toabaita people of Malaita in Solomon Islands,²⁷³ and the Mianmin of Western Province in PNG.²⁷⁴ Also, Melanesians believe that, behind *sanguma*, *posin*, and magic are spirit powers. These different categories of spirit powers, which Melanesians have, reveal their belief in the existence of the spirit world.

Belief in the existence of spirits is substantiated through spirit encounters. Through the ritual activities that Melanesians perform in honour of the images, resembling their ancestors and *masalai*, they encounter spirit beings. Their experiences of spirit beings cannot be denied, with which Gardner apparently had difficulty, by stating, “experience is an intentional notion”.²⁷⁵ Claims of spirit encounters among the Mianmin made Gardner hesitant to analyse beliefs about spirits as a mere psychological issue, thus, he sought to analyse the claims of spirit encounters as “human constitution, and the genesis of behaviour”.²⁷⁶ Experiences of spirit encounters are irrefutable proofs to Melanesians of the spirit world. Similarly, the Galatians also had their experiences of the spirit world, through their religions, which prepared them for a greater encounter with the Spirit of the gospel of Christ, who worked miracles among them (Gal 3:2-5). By hearing and believing in the gospel of Christ, Melanesians, too, have experienced the transforming and liberating power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and thus, know that the triune God is Spirit and real. The Spirit of the gospel, whom they have received, is far more powerful, and different from the spirits that they once knew. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in every believer, permanently (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19), to empower them to keep in step with the truth of the gospel, so that the *σάρξ* (*sarx*) is not given any opportunity to subject the believers to slavery to sin. The Holy Spirit is not like the ancestral spirits and *masalai*, which can be manipulated and deceived, nor does the Holy Spirit enslave people to fear, but to power, love, and self-control (2 Tim.

²⁷³ Cf. Suruma, “Toabaita Traditional Beliefs and Worship of Ancestral Spirits and God’s Word”, pp. 15-17; Idusulia, “Viewing His Sacrifice through Melanesian Eyes”, pp. 9-14.

²⁷⁴ D. S. Gardner, “Spirits and Conceptions of Agency among the Mianmin of Papua New Guinea”, in *Oceania* 57-3 (1987), pp. 163-166.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

1:8), and to freedom from sin and elemental principles. To have an encounter with the Holy Spirit is not through rituals, ancestral images, and *masalai*, but through faith alone in the gospel of Christ. Therefore, our cosmology is both physical and spiritual.

MELANESIAN $\sigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$ (STOICHEIA)

In Galatians, we note that the Law and $\sigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$ (*stoicheia*) functioned as a $\pi\alpha\iota\delta\alpha\gamma\omega\gamma\acute{o}\varsigma$ (*paidagōgos*), prison warden, custodian, supervisor, or manager, which implied that their authority was not permanent. They operated on a temporary basis, and executed their duties and responsibilities, to prepare humanity for Christ, through whom humanity is given the opportunity to be God's children and co-heirs with Christ.

Melanesians, like the Gentiles of Galatia, were under the custodianship and supervisory authority of $\sigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$ (*stoicheia*), which is a reference for all the nameless forces.²⁷⁷ In Melanesia, these nameless forces, which Paul referred to as $\sigma\tau\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$ (*stoicheia*), are the ancestral spirits, *masalai*, *lo*, *sanguma*, *posin*, and magic. These elemental principles were in charge of the Melanesians, as custodians and instructors, to prepare them for the arrival of the gospel.²⁷⁸ They served as the source of revelation and discernment for Melanesians, to understand and explain the origin of life, and relationship with the nature, the existence of celestial beings, and the afterlife, the loss of good life, as a result of ancestral failure, and their return to restore the utopian life, times and seasons, the sacred and the profane, ritual ceremonies, and marriage and family, until the revelation of Christ superseded them.²⁷⁹ Christ is the true, complete, and final revelation of God (cf. Heb 1:2).

These elemental forces were not so favourable towards Melanesians, when executing their responsibilities as custodians and instructors. They kept Melanesians under fear, and they caused Melanesians to seek after power from them, under the pretence of them having inherent or intrinsic power.

²⁷⁷ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 109.

²⁷⁸ Douglas, "Other Beings, Postcolonially Correct", p. 38; Trompf, *Melanesian Religion*, p. 29.

²⁷⁹ Mantovani, "Traditional Religions and Christianity", p. 13.

On the other hand, these forces taught Melanesians to be religious, and religion became their way of life “to be”.²⁸⁰ Under their supervision, Melanesians knew of the existence of the spirits, and how to relate to them. Some of these forces were kind, while others were not. The ancestral spirits, and *masalai*, were like the angelic beings in Galatians, who served as intermediaries between the powers and authorities of the unseen world, and the Melanesians. They even helped the people to acknowledge the existence of a supreme being.²⁸¹ These beings, as intermediaries, used different forms to communicate, such as, in anthropomorphic forms of ancestors and deceased relatives, totemic creatures, and dreams. Even today, Melanesians believe in dreams and totemic creatures as the means of communication used by the spirits. Also, Melanesians perceived the *lo*, which each tribe or clan has originated with the ancestors. Breaking the *lo* would displease the ancestors, who sanctioned it. Thus, the offender is required to perform a prescribed ritual, stipulated in the *lo*, to appease, and bring reconciliation between them and the living. The *lo*, which is seen as an institution for governing relationships with the living and the dead, actually revealed sin in the lives of people, who needed atonement. *Sanguma* and *posin* (black magic) instilled the fear of death, and they were used as controlling mechanisms to control the behaviour of the people. Each of these forces played distinct roles, in an epoch where the gospel of Christ was not proclaimed in Melanesia. Nevertheless, these forces still had their own goal of keeping Melanesians under the authority of sin, which *στοιχεία* (*stoicheia*) served as its agents. Melanesians were so accustomed to these forces that, even after receiving the gospel, they still revere them, and some often turn to them for help.

However, the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ have brought to an end the functions of *στοιχεία* (*stoicheia*) over Melanesians. The *στοιχεία* (*stoicheia*) served until the gospel of Christ was proclaimed to Melanesians. It was the moment of terminating and invalidating of *στοιχεία* (*stoicheia*) responsibility, even though the death of Christ around AD 33 had already announced their plight, that they were impotent and

²⁸⁰ Alphonse Aime, “Religion as a Way of Life”, in *Catalyst* 20-4 (1990), p. 314.

²⁸¹ Cf. Daimoi, “An Exploratory Missiological Study”, pp. 62-66.

beggarly (Gal 4:3, 9). *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*) can no longer be our custodians or supervisors, and our source of revelation and discernment. Christ is the greatest, and the complete revelation of God, so that, through Him, we have received the perfect knowledge of God, full freedom from the deception of *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*), adoption as God's children, and we are now co-heirs with Christ. Melanesian Christians can no longer seek revelation and discernment from *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*), after receiving the gospel of Christ. If we do, we will place ourselves under the realm of deception, and slavery to sin, and disown God's superior and final revelation to us.

BELIEVERS HAVE NEW ANCESTORS

Melanesians respect and pay homage to their ancestors. They even boast of the heroic deeds of their ancestors, and seek to imitate them. In situations where there is a challenge, Melanesians often parade or placard their ancestors, who were responsible for initiating their peculiar trademarks. Regarding the spirits and *masalai*, it was the ancestors who had an encounter with them, and introduced them to their descendants, to revere and honour them. This is also true of the Israelites. The God of the universe, which the Hebrews worshipped, was referred to as the God of their ancestors – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.²⁸² It was their ancestors who were instrumental in giving Israel her religious identity, as a monotheistic nation, and cultural trademarks that were linked to their monotheistic faith. The Jews had great respect and honour for their ancestors. They faithfully kept to their monotheistic religion and traditions that their ancestors had received and laid down, but Israelites never worshipped their ancestors. Instead, they worshipped the God of their ancestors, or the God, who called their ancestors, and made them into a nation.

In religious debates, the Jews placarded God's choice of their ancestors, which implied that they were set apart from other nations, as God's chosen

²⁸² There are numerous expressions referring to the God of the universe as God of the Jews' ancestors – God of my/your father(s) (Gen 26:8; 28:13; 31:42, 53; 48:15-16). "God of Israel" (Ex 5:1; 32:7); "God of the Hebrew" (Ex 5:3; 7:16; 10:3); "God of Abraham" (Ps 47:9); "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Ex 3:6, 15, 16; 4:5; 6:3; 1 Chr 29:18; 2 Chr 30:6; Matt 22:32; Acts 7:32). Jesus and Stephen used the latter in their testimonies, which is the clearest expression of the Jews' connection to Yahweh, through their ancestors.

people.²⁸³ In Galatians, we see a debate scenario between Paul and the Judaisers. Each party used Abraham as a point of reference, to substantiate their arguments. Judaisers used Abraham, through whom circumcision was given, as a covenant marker between God and his descendants, to validate their argument that circumcision completed one's justification. Without it, justification was incomplete, and one was excluded from being Abraham's children. Circumcision was projected as the way to be Abraham's child. Paul, however, used Abraham to refute their teaching, that it was not circumcision that completed Abraham's justification, rather it was faith.²⁸⁴ Abraham believed God, and was declared righteous. Subsequently, the gospel was proclaimed to Abraham, that, in the same manner, everyone will be justified, through faith in his seed – namely Christ, and will receive the promised inheritance, and be counted as Abraham's descendants, but not through circumcision, as the Judaisers' placard.

So, everyone who believes, has Abraham as their ancestor. In other words, Abraham is the father or ancestor of every believer. His faith is exemplary for everyone, the kind of faith that pleased God. Even though he died; his life of faith in the living God has made him the father, or ancestor, of faith (Gal 3:9), and this is the kind of faith God expects all human beings to demonstrate in their lives. Therefore, those who have faith in God, or faith in Christ, are the children, or descendants, of Abraham. Abraham is not the believers' source of redemption and justification, thus, he is not to be worshipped, only God is to be worshipped. Melanesians, who have accepted the gospel of Christ by faith, are Abraham's descendants, and thus, have Yahweh, the God of the universe, as their God, as Abraham did. Andrew Walls states it beautifully about our spiritual heritage as Christians, that

the [Christians are] given an adoptive past. [They are] linked to the people of God in all generations (like Him, members of the faith family), and, most strangely of all, to the whole history of Israel, the curious continuity of the race of the faithful from Abraham. . . . all Christians, of whatever nationality, are landed by adoption with several millennia of someone else's history, with a whole set of ideas,

²⁸³ Matt 3:9; Luke 3:8; John 8:33, 41.

²⁸⁴ Gal 3:8, 9; Rom 4:9-12.

concepts, and assumptions, which do not necessarily square with the rest of their cultural inheritance; and the church, in every land, of whatever race and type of society, has this same adoptive past, by which it needs to interpret the fundamentals of the faith.²⁸⁵

As Abraham's descendants, believers are one family or tribe. Christ, in His body, has abolished the segregating wall of ethnicity, tribalism, and gender differences (cf. Eph 2:11-18; Gal 3:28). Those who were once tribal enemies are no longer enemies. Christians are a new creation, and a new family in Christ, and belong to a new tribe called the "Israel of God" (Gal 6:15), or the church of God in Melanesia (cf. 1 Cor 1:2). In Christ, Christians have received a new and a perfect spiritual heritage, connecting them with Abraham, which supersedes the spiritual heritage they inherited from their tribal ancestors, giving them a hope for a better future that was envisaged in their myths, which is already theirs, but not yet.

Also, Melanesian Christians should reckon themselves as descendants of Christ. Christ is the founder, or the ancestor, of every Christian. It was Jesus' faithfulness to the Father's will, in laying down His life as a redemptive sacrifice for sinners, which made Him the source, and ancestor, of justification/righteousness. In Him, the promised inheritance to Abraham has come to us. Christ is the seed of Abraham, and, through faith, Christians are offshoots or descendants of Christ. He conquered sin and *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*), through the cross. Christ is our great warrior-hero, who defeated all the cosmic powers on our behalf.²⁸⁶ Unlike Abraham, He is the source of our salvation, and He is living with and in us (Gal 2:20). Abraham died and was buried, so were our ancestors. But Jesus died, and was resurrected bodily, where He was seen, touched, and conversed with (ate and talked) by His disciples for 40 days before ascending into heaven.²⁸⁷ On the Day of Pentecost, He sent His Spirit to the apostles and believers,

²⁸⁵ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1996, p. 9; Hitchen, "Mission to Primal Religious Groups in a Postmodern Context", p. 17.

²⁸⁶ Daimoi, "An Exploratory Missiological Study", p. 204.

²⁸⁷ Gal 1:1; Matt 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-12; Luke 24:1-52; John 20-21; Acts 1:1-9; 1 Cor 15:3-8.

who were prayerfully awaiting the promised Helper to be sent, to give them power to bear witness to the victory of Christ over sin, death and evil powers, and to proclaim salvation and freedom in His name (Acts 2:1ff). He is not only the great Ancestor, but He is also the Son of God. Having provided redemption, He was exalted to the right hand of God, to the place of highest honour and authority. Every ruler and authority is subject to Him. One day, everyone will bow to Him, and confess Him Lord of all. Through faith in Him, we are made God's children (Gal 3:26), and we sit with Him in the place of authority (cf. Eph 2:6), and we have received adoption into the divine family as sons and daughters. All who believe in Him are given inheritance rights to be heirs with Him. He has given His Spirit to them, who cry out to God, "Abba, Father" (Gal 4:7). He abides in and with every believer, through His Spirit, to empower them to walk in His victory. Christ alone holds the right to be worshipped, and to be our mediator (1 Tim 2:5). Melanesian Christians have a new and Great Ancestor – Jesus Christ, who has made them God's people (Gal 3:26). Jesus, as our Great Ancestor, has conquered all our enemies – sin, death, satanic forces, and even shame. His shameful death on the cross is, however, portrayed as a chariot, leading all the defeated powers chained behind it (Col 2:15).²⁸⁸ This metaphor clearly shows the defeat of every power, and the release of all who were once under their rule.

SIN IS A DEFEATED POWER

Melanesian Christians do not reckon that sin is a real power, and a threat to them, as much as, or more than, the spirit powers. This is probably because of the way Melanesians define and understand sin, making them not to acknowledge sin as a dominant and enslaving power, which is at work in their lives. Sin is the real "power 'under', which all humankind labours".²⁸⁹ It masters the *σάρξ* (*sarx*) to produce the acts of sin (Gal 5:19-21). *σάρξ* (*sarx*), as a defeated power, is the enemy of the Holy Spirit's presence in a believer's life, and as a servant of sin, is able to convince many Christians to perceive that the elemental principles have inherent power, and are powerful foes to look out for. Often, Christians, who fall into sin, tend to blame

²⁸⁸ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 231.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 104, cf. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

Satan, or the powers of evil, for causing them to sin, instead of acknowledging the power of sin, working through the members of their bodies to cause them to sin.²⁹⁰ We are not saying that Satan does not tempt people to sin. Satan does tempt people to sin, but only by using our sinful desires and passions. At the root of every temptation, which people face, is sin. It is sin that gives power to death to rule, and puts us under the rule of the elemental principalities. Without sin, there would be no death, and death would have no power. Likewise, elemental principalities would not have legal jurisdiction over human beings. Evil spirit powers collaborate with sin, and work under the power and supervision of sin, which rules our lives.

However, the good news is that sin has been defeated, along with all its agents. Everyone who has accepted the gospel of Christ by faith, embodies the victory of Christ over sin and death. In other words, they are baptised, and clothed with Christ (Gal 3:27), and have “crucified the sinful nature, with all its passions and desires” (Gal 5:24). Sin no longer rules their lives, but Christ who lives in them (Gal 2:20), through His Spirit (Gal 4:6), who gives them power to overcome the sinful nature, and all its passions (Gal 5:16-18). Christians are warned to guard against the sinful nature, by living according to the Spirit (Gal 5:16, 25), and to keep in step with the Spirit. Being converted from an animistic background, Melanesian Christians should guard against the sin of spiritual bigamy, which many commit, to deal with life’s dilemmas. Disobedience to the leading of the Spirit leads to gratifying the sinful nature. It is a battle that Christians continually fight in their minds. Therefore, Christians are to keep their minds pure from sinful thoughts, and fill their minds with thoughts that are honourable and pleasing to the Lord.²⁹¹ In other words, Christians should not compromise their godly values for earthly pleasures. We are to stand firm in the gospel of freedom that comes through faith in Christ (Gal 5:1), and serve one another in love (cf. Gal 5:13-15). In doing so, we will defeat the power of sin that seeks to enslave us through *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*).

²⁹⁰ Cf. Schwarz, *Thinking Critically About Sorcery and Witchcraft*, pp. 17-18; Hitchen, “Mission to Primal Religious Groups in a Postmodern Context”, p. 15.

²⁹¹ Cf. Phil 4:8.

SANGUMA – A WORK OF THE SINFUL NATURE?

The Holy Spirit revealed that witchcraft, or *sanguma*, is a “work of the flesh or the sinful nature” (Gal 5:20), and not of the spirit beings. Those who live by the flesh, produce the acts of a sinful nature listed in Gal 5:19-20, and *sanguma* is one of them. But Melanesians believe that *sanguma* is a “work of the evil spirit beings”.²⁹² Christians, who are from a non-animistic background, would describe belief in *sanguma* as a mere mythological problem, and would agree with Paul that *sanguma* is a “work of the flesh”. But this is not so with Christians from an animistic worldview, like Melanesians. Christians in Melanesia still think that there are spirit powers behind *sanguma*, based on their experiences. This presents a tension between a biblical and a Melanesian view of *sanguma*. How do we solve this tension? Are these two views compatible to explain the jigsaw puzzle of *sanguma*? Paul, from his monotheistic background, did not believe that the real opposing and enslaving power is the host of fallen angels. For him to say that *sanguma* is the work of the sinful nature, was to show that sin was the real power that kept humankind under bondage.²⁹³ However, there were sins, like idolatry, that have demonic involvement, and *sanguma* could be one of them. How could it be? Firstly, *sanguma*, as a “work of the flesh”, shows its nature and its roots. Secondly, *sanguma*, as a “work of the evil spirits”, shows the gravity of *sanguma* sin, that it involves evil spirit powers. *Sanguma* is a “desire” that comes out of the sinful nature (Gal 5:17). It is a desire to manipulate supernatural powers to satisfy the craving of the sinful nature to be god-like, and to have control over other people. Like every other evil desire, when it is obeyed and pursued, it becomes an “act” (Gal 5:19), where evil spirit powers are involved.

²⁹² Schwarz states five common pastoral responses to *sanguma*: (1) There are some who believe that *sanguma* have real power, and can cause harm; (2) *Sanguma* is linked to satanic spirits; (3) *Sanguma* have intrinsic power; (4) Bad events, caused by *sanguma*, are actually caused by God, or God’s agents; and (5) Power of *sanguma* is an illusion or superstition (Schwarz, *Thinking Critically About Sorcery and Witchcraft*, pp. 64-81). In considering these five reasons, four of them (1-4) seems to suggest that there are impersonal forces involved in *sanguma*.

²⁹³ Cf. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 110.

In Melanesia, the acquiring or possessing of spirit power, is almost everyone's goal to deal with life's dilemmas, and to succeed in life.²⁹⁴ *Sanguma* is one of the of power, which God forbids humans from doing. *Sanguma* opens up to, and invites, the evil principalities to possess, and to empower the seeker. The seeker performs rituals and ceremonies, under the supervision of a chief instructor, to acquire the power, pertaining to the spirit(s) behind the cult. It is a wilful, conscious, and deliberate seeking of spirit powers, to secure their favour and power for personal gratification. It is one's willingness to come under the power and influence of the *sanguma* spirit. The desire to commit the sin of *sanguma* is an individual, family, clan, and tribal decision. In some Melanesian societies, *sanguma* is inherited from the ancestors, and it is accepted as part of the culture. Societies, which consent to *sanguma* practice, do so for social and economic reasons. Therefore, the *sanguma* spirit(s) work in conjunction with *sanguma* sin. Without it, the *sanguma* spirits have no power over one's life.

Sanguma is a work of the sinful nature, but its practice involves evil powers that are working in opposition to God. It begins from within, and it is a desire for power, or to be god-like. It was this prospect of becoming like god, which caused the downfall of humankind.²⁹⁵ God made humankind in His image, to live under His power and authority. However, humankind's discontentment of living under God's rule caused them to seek equality with God, which led to their downfall, and they decisively placed themselves under the subjective rule of sin, until the death of Christ, which brought an end to its rule. Melanesians, under the power and the influence of sin, and $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi$ (*sarx*), cannot overcome *sanguma*. But the good news is that Christ has defeated sin and $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi$ (*sarx*). *Sanguma*, as an act of $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi$ (*sarx*), does not have the power to subject us to its fear. Believers have the greater power of the Holy Spirit in their lives to overcome $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi$ (*sarx*), and the act of *sanguma*. *Sanguma* begins in the flesh, and not from the spirit powers. Melanesians need to change their view of the origin of *sanguma*, from spirits, to sin, or flesh, and acknowledge that the death of Christ for sin has rendered *sanguma* impotent.

²⁹⁴ Schwarz, *Thinking Critically About Sorcery and Witchcraft*, pp. 28-29.

²⁹⁵ Satan, too, was cast down from heaven for his desire to take God's place (cf. Is 14:12-15; Ezek 28:11-19).

SUMMARY

Galatians clearly shows the reality of the spirit world, which affirms the Melanesian worldview. The so-called ancestral spirits, and *masalai*, could be none other than angelic beings, or *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*). Some angelic beings serve God and His people, while others serve Satan and sin, as their supreme master, to hinder God's purposes. Melanesians lived under sin and *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*), and were subjected to fear of the spirit powers that manifested through *posin* and *sanguma*. But the good news is that the death of Christ has triumphed over all the evil forces – sin, death, and satanic forces. In Christ, Melanesians are free from slavery to sin and *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*).

CONCLUSION

God created humankind as His vice-regent, to have authority over creation. Their authority to rule was perfect, complete, and effective, only when they obeyed and submitted to God. But, when humanity sinned, God in His holiness, handed them over to their sinful desires and passions. Humanity was placed under the custodians and managers until sin was dealt with, to have humanity restored to their place in creation.²⁹⁶ Sin, as a power, kept the whole world in prison. It reigned through death, and all humankind lived under the shadow of death and satanic forces.

Satanic forces took advantage of humankind's enslaved state of life under sin, to showcase their power to humanity, as though they had inherent powers. Thus, Melanesians, through their beliefs and worship of the so-called ancestral spirits and *masalai*, came to perceive that these forces have intrinsic power. In the search for power to do magic, *posin*, and *sanguma* to influence the outcome of events, Melanesians manipulated these forces. In doing so, Melanesians experienced blessing and death, and thus, were subjected to fear of these evil forces.

However, from Galatians, we have discovered that the real power is sin. It is sin that authorised, and opened the door to satanic forces, to have a

²⁹⁶ Jews were under the supervision of the Law, and Gentiles were under the supervision of *στοιχεῖα* (*stoicheia*).

foothold in the lives of people. Some sins, like idolatry and *sanguma*, are sins of the flesh, but these sins also tamper with spirit powers. When Christ gave Himself for sin, He defeated sin and death, and rescued humankind from the deceitful works of the evil forces. The στοιχεῖα (*stoicheia*) are made impotent, beggarly, miserable, and useless. Those who are in Christ have Christ living in them through his Spirit. Believers are a new creation, and have the power, through the cross, and through the Holy Spirit, to overcome sin in their lives. When cravings of the sinful nature, like the invoking of the ancestral spirits, *masalai*, and *sanguma*, are denied, the satanic powers, working through these agencies, remain impotent and useless.

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