

I am amazed that you are so quickly forsaking the one who called you - by grace - for a different gospel (not that there is another). Galatians 1: 6-7)

The *Letter to the Galatians* is a bombshell. The Apostle Paul is angry. Having passed through Galatia during his journeys sharing the good news of the Jesus event, he had relieved many a Galatian along with the local Jews of their fear of God and the future and hereafter . . . free of their prior and constant worry that if you didn't do this and that, pay this tithe, make this sacrifice, carry this amulet, keep your proper place within the required segregations of the human race . . . – in a word: if you didn't trust in the absolute graciousness of the Maker of this universe, proclaimed and manifest in Christ, releasing the human race to become finally full of grace itself in the image of its Maker, you were backtracking into the perpetual conflict that arises out of perpetual malaise – missing the aim of your existence.

And what had happened? Proponents of the better effectiveness of *fear* to compel people to stay in line followed Paul into town – scaring his converts back into their prior worries – insisting they pick up the tools of ignorance that insecurity generates (as in more modern times guns as much as fetishes). So that Paul rants: *O stupid Galatians! Who has bewitched you . . . Are you so stupid? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? . . . how can you turn back again to the weak and destitute elemental powers* (which is a way of saying elementary school when it comes to religion?).

Indeed we should be grateful that the early Church preserved these challenges of Paul even as it in some ways allowed things to go elementary again itself. Hence the need for Councils like Vatican II.

But I only bring all this up because this week I came across a lecture by a well educated (Princeton Theological Seminary!) minister in which he appeals to this *Letter to the Galatians* to protest against the efforts of the medical and public establishment encouraging people to get vaccinated! I would wager that St. Paul wouldn't even know what the word means – that medical issues were not on his mind but ailments much more profound. Nevertheless this fellow lines things up like this – within the playing field of Paul's long ago letter. On the one side you have (in the role of the Pharisees) governments aggressively pushing COVID vaccine, instituting vaccine mandates and passports, segregating the unvaccinated as “deplorables” – outcasts. Doctors and other health professionals are the new “priests” imposing complex laws in authoritarian ways . . . with religious zeal, creating the “cult of covid” – a civil religion.

On the other hand you have the “Galatians” – the “true Christians” whom Paul is portrayed as warning: “don't succumb to those doctors, those vaccination requirements – maintain your freedom and trust (and here is where Jesus gets dragged into it not too subtly) in the Lord who set you free. This seems to be a case of forcing the right foot to fit the wrong shoe. And so it goes down through history: counterpunching in front of a mirror wherein your right *appears to become* your left and your left, your right. Nor will it ever end - nor maybe should it? It may pretend to be theology but it's really “politics”.

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