

ἵνα παραστήσωμεν
πάντα ἀνθρώπον
τέλειον ἐν χῶϊ
εἰς ὃ καὶ κοπιῶ ἀγωνιζόμενος
κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ
τὴν ἐν ἐργασίᾳ μου ἐν ἐμοὶ
ἐν δυνάμει

Showing Respect

for Colossians 2:14-17

Θέλων ἀρῆσαι τὰς
ἡλίκων ἀγῶνας ἐχθρῶν
καὶ τῶν ἐν λαοδικίᾳ
καὶ ὄσσοι ὀυχῆ ῥάκας
τὸ πρόσωπόν μου ἐν σαρκί
ἵνα παρακληθῶσιν ἡ
καρδία αὐτῶν
συνβιβάσθαι ἐν ἀγάπῃ
καὶ εἰς πάντα φωνῶν
πλοῦτον τῆς
πληροφορίας τῆς
συνέσεως εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν
τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ
θεοῦ ἰν χῆ καὶ πρὸς
καὶ τοῦ χῆ
ἐνώσεισιν πάντες
οἱ ἄνθρωποι τῆς σοφίας
καὶ ἰγνώσεως ἀπόκρυφοί
τῆς

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Showing Respect for Colossians 2:14-17

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Only a Feast Day Sabbath?

Colossians 2:16,17 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.

This passage of Scripture is one of the most hotly debated in the Christian world. What did Paul actually mean here? Is Paul relegating the gatherings of God's people found in the book of the law to the scrap heap as a bunch of legalistic bondage? Is Paul telling the believers to not let people of the world judge you in these things but judge each other instead? Is Paul saying the Seventh day Sabbath is no longer relevant to Christians because he uses the word 'Sabbaton' in his list?

The traditional Adventist perspective, not wanting to relegate the 7th Day Sabbath to being a shadow, explains that the Sabbath here refers only to the Sabbaths, or Sabbaton, during an annual feast. The word *Sabbaton* is used in the Day of Atonement feast but none of the other annual feasts, so is this really what Paul means here? To most Sunday Christians this seems a shallow defence. We will see that there is a better way to defend the Sabbath, which is no shadow, but it requires accepting increased relevance in the New Testament era of the other two items in the list, namely the new moons and holy days.

The word Sabbaton [G4521] occurs 68 times in the New Testament. In 59 places, it means Seventh-day Sabbath. In 8 places it relates to the week connected to a Seventh-day Sabbath. So 67 of the 68 verses have a direct connection to the Seventh-day Sabbath. The only one left is Colossians 2:16. If the New Testament uses this word 67 times related to the Seventh-day Sabbath, would it be right to say in this one occurrence that it means something else? Consider also that the word Paul uses for Sabbath is exactly the same word used in the LXX for Sabbath in the fourth commandment.

To increase our curiosity regarding Paul's list, we note the following regarding feasts, new moons and Sabbaths in the Old Testament:

1 Chronicles 23:31 And to offer all burnt sacrifices unto the LORD in the Sabbaths[H7676], in the new moons[H2320], and on the set feasts,[H4150] by number, according to the order commanded unto them, continually before the LORD:

This sequence also occurs in 2 Chron 2:4; 2 Chron 8:13; 31:3; Neh 10:33; Ezek 45:17; Hosea 2:11. In each of these cases the Sabbath means the Seventh-day Sabbath. Ezekiel 45:17 has the exact same sequence and could even have allusions to the meat and drink.

Ezekiel 45:17 And it shall be the prince's part to give burnt offerings, and (1) **meat offerings**, and (2) **drink offerings**, in (3) **the feasts**, and in (4) **the new moons**, and in the (5) **sabbaths**, in all solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel.

In the LXX, the word for feasts [G1859], new moons [G3561] and Sabbaths {G4521} is exactly the same as what Paul quotes in Col 2:16. If all these passages in the Old Testament use this sequence to refer to the Seventh-day Sabbath, then why would Paul be using this list in a completely different way to the Scriptures he read? Why would he be using the word Sabbaton to mean something never used in the Bible elsewhere, unless he is only referring to the day of Atonement which uses the word also in Lev 23:32?

If Paul is actually meaning the Seventh-day Sabbath in Col 2:16, then the Sabbath would be listed as a shadow of things to come. However, Inspiration is clear about the Sabbath:

The Sabbath was committed to Adam, the father and representative of the whole human family. Its observance was to be an act of grateful acknowledgment, on the part of all who

should dwell upon the earth, that God was their Creator and their rightful Sovereign; that they were the work of His hands and the subjects of His authority. Thus the institution was wholly commemorative, and given to all mankind. **There was nothing in it shadowy or of restricted application to any people.** PP 48.

Now we are faced with an interesting problem. Paul's use of the word Sabbath and his list of items, from the Bible alone, suggests that he is meaning the seventh-day Sabbath. If He is meaning the seventh-day Sabbath, then it appears that the Sabbath is a shadow of things to come. We might be able to convince ourselves that the Sabbath points to the millennium of rest and our future gathering together in heaven, but that would be a *taste* of the future not a *shadow* of the future. It also places us in conflict with the Spirit of Prophecy that states there was nothing shadowy about the Sabbath. Ellen White's reference to not having a restricted application suggests she is connecting nothing shadowy throughout the history of this world.

If we accept both pieces of evidence listed above, we are apparently placed in a very difficult situation. That is certainly the way I have felt, and this led me to seek the Lord in prayer and ask Him to reveal what is the answer to this difficulty. I know our Father hears our prayers, and as I awoke upon this Sabbath morning a flood of thoughts came to my mind that I think may resolve this issue.

Paul Writes Against Gnosticism

As I was going back and forth in my mind, I reminded myself of the texts that have clear references to Gnostic Christianity.

Colossians 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through **philosophy** and vain deceit, **after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world**, and not after Christ.

Can we refer to the Law of Moses as philosophy and traditions of men?

Moses did not leave them to misconstrue the words of the Lord or to misapply His requirements. He wrote all the words of the Lord in a book, that they might be referred to afterward. In the mount **he had written them as Christ Himself dictated them.**
1MR 114

Christ dictated these to Moses. We can't possibly call the book of the law of Moses the traditions of men and the elements of the world. But this certainly can be talking about Gnostic teachings coming into Christianity. What were some of the key teachings of Gnosticism?

- The material world is bad, the spirit world is good. The material world is under the control of evil, ignorance or nothingness.
- A divine spark is somehow trapped in some (but not all) humans and it alone, of all that exists in this material world, is capable of redemption.
- Salvation is through a secret knowledge by which individuals come to know themselves, their origin and destiny.
- Since a good God could not have created an evil world, it must have been created by an inferior, ignorant or evil god. Usually the explanation given is that the true, good God created or emanated beings (Archons) who either emanated other Archons or conjugated to produce them until a mishap by Sophia (Wisdom) led to the creation of the evil Archon who created our world and pretends to be God. He hides truth from humans, but sparks of Sophia in some humans fill them with an urge to return to the Pleroma (divine realm) where they belong. –

These ideas had implications that could not be squared with either the Old Testament or apostolic writings, which is why early Christians rejected them.

What Were Some Implications of Gnosticism?

Since Gnostics held matter to be corrupt, they considered the body to be corrupt, too. The trend of some Gnostics was to teach that there is no harm in indulging fleshly desires since the body is utterly corrupt and beyond redemption anyhow. Other Gnostics, perhaps the majority, held that the body must be kept in check by strict asceticism. Whether one chooses plan A or plan B, the underlying doctrine makes it impossible to understand how God could become a true man with a fleshly body in Christ Jesus.
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Several of these ideas found their way into parts of Christianity. This process was developing during the time of Paul, although a complete system of Gnostic Christianity did not develop until the 2nd Century. Yet we have evidence in the New Testament that the apostles were fighting a prototype of these ideas.

1 Timothy 6:20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of **science** [G1108] falsely so called:

The word science in this passage is actually the word Gnosis from which the word Gnostic comes from. Paul warns Timothy against false Gnosis or Gnostic ideas.

As mentioned above, the idea of the material world being evil led Gnostic Christians to reject the true doctrine that Christ came in the flesh or a material existence. This is the reason Paul states:

Colossians 2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

The apostle John combats this teaching labelling it the spirit of antichrist.

1 John 4:3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

For Paul to say Christ was the fullness of divinity physically was utter heresy to the Gnostics, and this is further proof that Paul is addressing Gnostic teaching.

Gnosticism is Against the Creator and His Creation

Christ coming in the flesh (What nature did He have?) has been a point of contention for 2000 years, and this is partly due to some of the principles of Gnosticism still affecting our understanding of the Bible. Gnosticism articulates a longstanding issue that mankind has with God – that God is responsible for the mess we are in because He created a world with the foreknowledge that we would sin and fall into suffering and death. The Gnostic believes that the material world of hunger and violence and disease is the creation of a malevolent God. There are many variations of this belief, but one is that the creation is fallen and evil and therefore Jesus cannot take it upon Himself. Reconciling man to God requires dealing with this tendency in man to thing negatively about his Creator.

To make this clear, we quote ‘The Spirit of Antichrist’ by Alan Knight, who explains how the Babylonian religion developed into Greek thought and then came into Christianity:

One of the most significant changes this second wave of Babylonian apostasy brought to the Jewish faith was a new attitude towards creation and the material world...the great pagan reformation changed focus of Babylonian apostasy from material success in this world to spiritual success in the other world [note: as this world gets worse and worse, this same pagan shift will happen]. Babylonian apostasy now doted on the immortal soul and its destiny to return to the heavens after death. And so now the supreme God tended to be identified exclusively with the other world. If the supreme deity is perfect, they reasoned, he could not be involved with creating the material world with all its problems and imperfections. With that change, creation of the material

world frequently was downgraded to a neutral if not outright negative event.

The Greeks resolved this by assigning creation to a secondary, lower deity they called the 'demi-urge.' And when the Hellenistic Jews introduced these Greek ideas into Christianity in the first century, this evolved into a bitter backlash against the Hebrew religion.

Inside the church it led some Christians to identify the Hebrew God of creation with the Greek demi-urge. Thus was born the first great Christian heretical movement, called Gnostic Christianity. The true supreme God, they argued, is not the God described in the book of Genesis. The real supreme God is a completely different individual – the heavenly Father revealed in the New Testament.

And so, they reasoned, Christians must totally reject the Hebrew God and his creation. That is the only way Christians can be certain their immortal soul will escape from reincarnation in the Hebrew God's material world, and ascend to heaven after death.

Eventually this led Gnostic Christians to condemn the Hebrew creator as a deluded and evil deity who wants to keep us in bondage to material existence. Worst of all, they observed, he instituted worship on the seventh day in honor of material creation...

Such animosity towards the Creator has its origin at the Fall in the Garden of Eden. We remember that when Eve was deceived by Satan and ate the forbidden fruit, Adam didn't plead on behalf of his wife. He didn't intercede for her and ask God if there was a cure. He didn't advise Eve to ask for forgiveness. He felt trapped by God in a terrible situation. Why had God made a forbidden tree? Why was there a deceiver? Why had God then given him a woman for him to love and become attached to who would eat from the

forbidden tree? All this made him feel cornered, and therefore rebellion welled up within him.

Adam decided to eat the fruit, knowingly going outside God's will, causing him to lose the sense of sonship to his Father which immediately brought feelings of shame and guilt. To deal with these distressing new feelings, Adam blamed God. He felt that if God was good, God wouldn't have created a world where such a series of events would happen leading him to eat the fruit. Or if God was good, God should just forgive him – even though he wasn't repentant and had yet to realize the terrible change that had happened to his own heart.

Adam didn't understand that death was the inherent consequence of disobedience, of cutting himself off from God. He had believed the devil's lie, "thou shalt not surely die," and therefore in his mind the fruit wasn't poison – it was God's restriction that was the poison. Satan had said:

Genesis 3:5 "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

Adam believed that God was withholding something good from him, not something bad. If death didn't come by natural consequence of eating the fruit (example: if we don't breathe, we die), then death must come by direct execution by God for daring to disobey him (example: if we don't breathe, God kills us). Adam thought God was going to kill his wife and he was determined to die with her, so he also ate the fruit. But his bravery quickly vanished due to the selfishness that is the result of sin, and he reasoned that if God was going to execute them, then God should execute Eve for putting Adam in the mess, and maybe also execute Christ for creating Eve.

Genesis 3:12 And the man said, The woman whom **thou** gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

Adam thought that God had created a system where God was the one who demanded death. Adam thought that God had made a death decree in which

there was no escape. Was this true? How do we understand what God had said to Adam?

Genesis 2:17 (YLT) ...For in the day of thine eating of it – dying thou dost die.

This is a statement of what the consequences will be, not a threat that God will kill him for eating it. Let us again compare it to breathing. *For in the day that thou stop breathing – dying thou dost die.* It is true that if we don't believe that breathing is good and therefore stop breathing, we will die; but what if we repent and breathe again? Won't we live?

If Adam truly realized his problem, he would have pleaded to be forgiven and been healed of his terrible thoughts towards God. But Adam no longer saw grace, mercy, or compassion in his loving Father. He only saw a God who was harsh and could not be trusted, from whom he ran away and hid and was afraid. Adam saw God as a creator who set up a requirement that Adam was bound to fail. The condemning judgment Adam made of His Father is expressed by Paul here:

Romans 5:16 ...for the judgment was by one [Adam] to condemnation...

Paul is not referring to God condemning Adam in this verse. Jesus said in John 5:22 that His Father judges/condemns no one. And in John 8:11 He tells the adulterous woman that "Neither do I condemn thee." It is Adam that is judging after the flesh, Jesus says He "judges no man" (John 8:15). Condemnation didn't come from God. Condemnation was the effect of sin on Adam's mind. Adam condemned God because he felt God mercilessly condemned him. Adam's enmity with God due to His condemnation of God was inherited by his children, and this condemnation is the barrier that causes us to be estranged from God.

Romans 8:7 (NIV) The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

It is to solve this problem that God gave His Son, that we might be reconciled to Him. God gave His Son to show us that He loves us and will do everything for us; He is not the condemning God that demands death that we think He is. Estranged from God, we thought God only wanted death for us, but God took this and put it on His Son, and then through the resurrection has shown us that God's love to us is greater than our hostility to Him. Christ's faith in His Father has overcome the scepticism and misgivings of the human race towards God, and this faith Christ gives to us that we may be healed of our self-destructive thoughts toward God.

Romans 8:1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

This is the plan of salvation that God would open up to Adam after he sinned. But God had to do so carefully, for Adam mistrusted and doubted that God really wanted to help him. Adam reasoned that God condemned him, and death was the only option. This belief was inherited by all his descendants. The seed of Gnosticism, that God was a malevolent Creator who could not be trusted, was in Adam, and would be expanded upon by his descendants.

Blotting out the Handwriting of Ordinances

This belief that God condemns and requires death caused Adam to come up with an appeasement system, seen in his passing the guilt to Eve and the Son of God for creating Eve. If someone must die, let it be them. Without something dying, Adam would not believe he was forgiven. That is why God instituted the sacrificial system, to give Adam an outlet for his need for something to die so that he could believe he was forgiven. We know it was Adam that needed it and not God because the Bible says: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire." (Psalm 40:6 and Hebrews 10:6)

This is all related to Colossians 2:14, a verse that has been highly misunderstood:

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.

Most Christians take this to mean that the law of God/Moses was taken away and nailed to the cross. But is the law of God contrary or opposed to us? It is opposed to us in the minds of sinful men, who don't see the law as designed for our own benefit and health, protecting us; but rather see God's law as imposed, arbitrary, and not a necessary part of the how the universe was designed. The reason a person who thinks the law is arbitrary keeps it is because he is scared God will kill him for not keeping it, not because he thinks the law is necessary for life. This is like a child who eats vegetables because he is scared his parents will punish him if he doesn't, not because he realizes that vegetables are good for his health. The sinful mind of man turns a loving God's laws of life into a malevolent God's decrees of death. Raging against God's law makes as much sense as raging against gravity or the need to drink water.

We need to look at this section in Colossians with our animosity towards the law removed. When we do, we see that the word "ordinances" in Colossians 2:14 in Greek is *dogma*, meaning 'decree', and it is related to decrees of men, not of God.

Luke 2:1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree [dogma] from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

Acts 16:4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees [dogma] for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

Acts 17:7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees [dogma] of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

In the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament, this word dogma never appears referring to the law of Moses. It only refers to man-made decrees.

- Cyrus's decree to help the Jewish leaders build the Temple in Ezra 6:8
- a decree that the wise men be killed in Daniel 2:13
- a decree to worship the statue when the music plays in Daniel 3:10
- The decree of the Medes that is not to be altered in Daniel 6:15

The pioneers always understood the "handwriting of ordinances" to mean the ceremonial law. The question is what law is ceremonial? "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" is in the law of Moses, not in the 10 Commandments, is that ceremonial? No. The common idea that the law of Moses outside of the 10 Commandments is ceremonial is a grievous error.

It is the sacrificial system that is ceremonial. "The blood of bulls and goats" was a painful concession on the part of God to man's need to have something die to feel that God was not condemning and cursing him for sinning. It was to help man know that the consequence of sin was death if it wasn't for the probation life given to us by the Son of God – a process which is painful for Christ. God wanted us through the sacrifices to recognize our own condition and how sin cuts at the Son of God, who must bear its burden that we may have a chance to repent.

Once we understood the deeper spiritual implications of sin, God's plan to save, and repented of our misunderstanding of God, we would no longer need sacrifices. We could believe that we could come to God and ask for forgiveness directly, without something needing to die first. Our dreadful condition and irrational hostility to our Father and our fellow man is finally revealed and accepted by us, and we come to God with a "broken and a contrite heart," believing that God "wilt not despise" us.

Psalm 40:6 Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

Psalm 51:16-17 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Hosea 6:6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

It was this man-made system of sin transfer and appeasement that was nailed to the cross, along with the hostile doubting mindset of man that required that system. God allowed His Son to be made sin for us (2 Cor 5:21), so that we would no longer need to put sin on anything else – it was already on His Son. Through Christ we can finally deal with our problem, rather than transferring the blame. We didn't need to blame someone else for our sin, like Adam did with Eve.

These sacrifices and services of the temple were to cease with the perfect offering of Christ Himself as the Lamb without blemish; these sacrifices were abolished at the cross. This handwriting of ordinances our Lord did blot out and take away and nail to His cross. (5LtMs, Ms 43, 1887, par. 1)

The Book of Law Given for our Benefit

Humans, because they are influenced by sin, automatically see the law as a test of loyalty to God that we must perform, rather than promises that God will do in us if we trust Him and believe His word. Men are unable to see that the law is spiritual and is to be written on our hearts; it is the character of God lived in us. Instead we see only the letter of the law that we either think is impossible to do, or we try to minimize its requirements.

Jesus tried to teach the Pharisees that it was the spirit of the law that mattered, not the letter which they used to condemn others. The Pharisees condemned

the hungry disciples of Jesus for plucking corn on the Sabbath day, and Jesus told them that was not how the law was to be used.

Matthew 12:1-2 At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were hungry, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.

All men are sinners, but we can avoid recognizing ourselves as sinners by putting the blame on others. This is precisely what the Pharisees increase of rules and regulations did; it allowed them to condemn others, thus scapegoating others and making themselves feel righteous. Jesus called this out:

Matthew 12:7 But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

God wanted them to be priests who ask for mercy for their fellow man and to intercede on their behalf, not condemn them and offer them as a sacrifice. This misunderstanding of how the law was to be used was man's inheritance from Adam. Humans see God as condemning those who break His law, and so followers of God do the same.

Deeper than this and maybe subconsciously, Adam condemned God as guilty of being a merciless creator when in fact God was guiltless. Jesus is teaching here that what God really wants us to do is to reconcile men to God and therefore to His law. If we would just believe that God wanted mercy and not sacrifice, we would be able to see that God is always willing to forgive us and help us. Jesus was outlining a totally different understanding to the law than what the Pharisees understood.

The law was supposed to slay us individually and bring us to Christ. It was supposed to reveal to us our problem. It was not supposed to be used to judge

ourselves better than others. Because people use the law in this way, many come to hate the law. When have the mind of sin we don't see the grace of God, and therefore we see the law as being impossible to keep and therefore designed to kill us. It is this deceit of sin, sin's exceeding sinfulness, that God wants to reveal to us. Here is Waggoner explaining these verses of Paul:

Romans 7:11-14 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew *me*. Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

The Law cleared. – The law pointed out the fact that sin was killing us. “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” We have no more reason to rail at the law than we have to hate the man who tells us that the substance which we are eating, thinking it to be food, is poison. He is our friend. He would not be our friend if he did not show us our danger. The fact that he is not able to heal the illness that the poison already eaten has caused does not make him any the less our friend. He has warned us of our danger, and we can now get help from the physician. And so, after all, the law itself was not death to us, but its office was “that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.”

“The Law Is Spiritual.” – “For we know that the law is spiritual.” If this fact were more generally recognized, there would be much less religious legislation among so-called Christian nations. People would not try to enforce the commandments of God. Since the law is spiritual, it can be obeyed only by the power of the Spirit of God. “God is Spirit” (John 4:24); therefore the law is the nature of God. Spiritual is opposed to carnal, or fleshly. Thus it is that the man who is in the flesh can not please God

The Israelites thought to perform the law themselves while still holding their wrong ideas about God, not seeing how far-reaching the law is and that only Christ dwelling within us can fulfill the law. They did not see that that “law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). God wanted Israel to accept Christ and be righteous by faith like Abraham their father was, becoming a “friend of God” (James 2:23). But this did not happen. The Jews had the same picture of God that Adam had.

Exodus 20:19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

God saw that the Israelites would misunderstand the 10 Commandments, so God gave more laws to give more detail on how the law was to be kept. This was written in the book of the law by Moses, and was kept in the Most Holy Place next to the Ark of the Covenant. This was to give more instruction regarding the spiritual principles of the law. They were a guide to help fallen man come to a more complete understanding of the 10 Commandments. Having refused the complete implications of reconciliation and obedience, more particulars of the law are necessary to bring out the exceeding sinfulness of our character that it may be repented of (Rom 5:20).

The Lord did not leave his people with the precepts of the decalogue alone. Moses was commanded to write, as God should bid him, judgments and laws giving minute directions in regard to their duty, thereby guarding the commandments engraved on the tables of stone. Thus did the Lord seek to lead erring man to a strict obedience to that holy law which he is so prone to transgress. ST June 17, 1880, par. 1

If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved in the ark by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a token or pledge, they would never have gone into idolatry, nor been suffered to go down into Egypt; and

there would have been no necessity for God to proclaim his law from Sinai, engraving it upon tables of stone, or guard it by definite directions in the judgments and statutes given to Moses. ST June 17, 1880, par. 2

Moses wrote these judgments and statutes from the mouth of God while he was with him in the mount. The definite directions in regard to the duty of his people to one another, and to the stranger, are the principles of the ten commandments simplified and given in a definite manner, that they need not err. ST June 17, 1880, par. 3

Ellen White here clearly states that the judgments and statutes of God given to Moses were not ceremonial. They were to give us more information on how to keep the 10 Commandments. Our sinful nature so misunderstands God that we need this extra detail, “simplified and given in a definite manner, that they need not err.” The writings of Ellen White also contain many laws that perform the same purpose – to help bring us back into obedience with the law. Though it seems to be adding more law to the 10 commandments, it is in actuality only clarifying the 10 commandments.

But even the added law didn’t bring Israel to repentance. They still didn’t feel that they were *all* sinners who needed God to put the law in them. They would not enter the new covenant and thus none of them could keep the law, nor could they see the higher calling of reconciliation that God wanted them to do for the whole world (as a “kingdom of priests”).

Exodus 19:3-6 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; ‘Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.’”

God had brought them out of Egypt on eagles' wings like a loving Father, but they saw God as bringing them out of Egypt to kill them (Exodus 14:11, 16:3; Numbers 14:2, 20:4, 21:5). They saw God as their ancestor Adam did, and they scapegoated others like Adam did. They were still stuck in a condemning mindset, rather than a repentant mindset. This is our human nature, and we in our carnal nature are like them. The Ellen White quote from above continues:

The Lord said of the children of Israel, "Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my Sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols, wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live." [Ezekiel 20:24-25] Because of continual disobedience, the Lord annexed penalties to the transgression of his law, which were not good for the transgressor, or whereby he should not live in his rebellion. ST June 17, 1880, par. 4

By transgressing the law which God had given in such majesty, and amid glory which was unapproachable, the people showed open contempt of the great Lawgiver, and death was the penalty. ST June 17, 1880, par. 5

Free forgiveness is alien to the heart of man that pushes the Spirit of Christ away. The Jews coming out of Egypt pushed Christ away when they thought Christ was leading them out into the wilderness to kill them. Their constant negative thinking that God had bad intentions for them made it difficult for God's spirit to work on their hardening hearts. Their "open contempt of the great Lawgiver" required God to give them a form of justice that was stony so that it would be acceptable to their stony hearts, or else they would not feel it was fair and they would think that God was unjust. The death of the transgressor allowed them to feel forgiven and reconciled to God, just like the death of the lamb allowed Adam to feel forgiven and reconciled to God.

Polluted in our Decrees

This need for those who sin to die was manifested in the harsh justice of the civil laws of Israel, where stoning was the punishment, something Israel learned in Egypt (Exodus 8:26).

Man has refused to believe that the law is inherently good for us and that God would help us perform the law if we only asked and believed He was a God of grace, so therefore we have steadily degraded from the high state we once had when we were first created. We kept needing signs and wonders to believe we were forgiven, whether it was circumcision, sacrifices, or terrible lightning on a mountain. This all fit our idea of justice, not God's; they were needed by us, not by God, as Ellen White declares. Let us read that astonishing paragraph again:

If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved in the ark by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a token or pledge, they would never have gone into idolatry, nor been suffered to go down into Egypt; and there would have been no necessity for God to proclaim his law from Sinai, engraving it upon tables of stone, or guard it by definite directions in the judgments and statutes given to Moses. ST June 17, 1880, par. 2

When and how ("in sincerity and truth" 1 Cor 5:8) we should worship God at His appointed times, of which the Sabbath is one (Leviticus 23), and how we should relate to each other was given in the book of the law to Moses by Christ, but we have despised it and continue to despise it. The penalty for this resolute unwillingness to see God as gracious was death. This is because we see God as a God of death when He isn't, and the death decree that originated in Adam and lived on in us was reflected back to us. We cannot keep the Sabbath holy,

nor be truly sanctified to reach perfection of character, in such a condition of irreconciliation with God.

Ezekiel 20:26 And I polluted them [Ezekiel 20:31 says “ye pollute yourselves”] in their own gifts [LXX says *dogma*, decrees], in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the LORD.

God allowed our unconscious hatred of Him to manifest itself: the death decree that we believed God wanted caused the Israelites to think that they needed to pass their children through the fire to appease Jehovah, or any other gods that were imagined according to their condemning justice system. Our own human decrees and laws, whether they were totally invented by man or were concessions of God that we were to steadily move up from, were to end when we realized our own sinful nature and how much God has done for us. God hasn't changed in how much He was willing to do for us, but we finally believed Him when we saw Him give His Son to us in the incarnation.

Colossians 2:10-13 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, where in also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

This whole wicked way of thinking that we are forsaken of God and that God is an evil creator was taken by Christ and buried in the grave. There is no reason to think evil gnostic thoughts of our creator. The death decree, including all that was conceded to deal with it (the sacrificial system) along with man's broken methods of dealing with guilt and shame (pharisaism/legalism, ascetism, Gnosticism, appeasement, projection, victim mentality, repression, rationalization, and all other defense mechanisms), was nailed to the cross. Through Christ we finally recognize that God is not our enemy; that God is

willing to do everything for us to overcome our sin-sickness. We can truly believe we are forgiven and that God's law is good for us – God will work that law in us through Christ in our flesh. We realize that we are and have been dead in our sins, but Christ has been given to us and has been with us suffering with us from the foundation of the world.

Ephesians 2:15 For he is our peace, who hath made both one [us with God and therefore with each other], and hath broken down the middle wall of partition; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances [death decrees]; for to make in himself twain one new man, so making peace.

Let us make this perfectly clear. The phrase “blotting out of the handwriting of ordinances” Colossians 2:14 is not related to the principles of the law of God. It is most definitely not cancelling the blessed appointed times of the LORD when He draws nearer to us and calls to fellowship together with Him. What is blotted out and abolished is our sinful mind of enmity that estranged us from God, which manifested itself in the need for sacrifice and appeasement before believing God would forgive us.

Colossians 2:14-15 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he [Christ] made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Christ paid the debt and overcame our bitter alienation that was holding us back from being reconciled to God. Satan and his evil angels used the evil forces of hate, malice, condemnation, appeasement, fear, insecurity, and anxiety caused by our estrangement from God to manipulate us. It was these “principalities and powers” that were holding us back from God that Christ overcame, triumphing over them through His self-sacrificing life, His willingness to take sin and all its evil thoughts upon Himself, and finally through His resurrection show us He has power over death. Realizing how much Christ has been doing for us since the very beginning of time, we accept

His reconciled Spirit in us and become able to keep the law without blaming others for our failures.

Reconciled with the Creator and His Creation

The death decree in the mind of man having been broken, we no longer need to be angry at God for how He has created the material world; for we have finally realized He is not against us but for us. We are no longer under the deceptions of sin, as Christ has “spoiled the principalities [first principles] and powers” that had ruled our mind, not through force but through love, restoring our true relation to God, to our fellow men, to our own bodies, to physical reality.

Gnosticism was teaching a form of Christianity that was undermining the full reconciliation offered in the Gospel as taught by Paul. Here are some further implications of Gnostic Christian teachings:

“The primary focus of religion must be on the other world – the heavenly realm.” *Spirit of Antichrist*, Alan Knight, p 179

“Gnostic Christianity always favoured the idea that spirituality is solely internal.” *ibid* p 75.

“Spirituality is not to be found in the material experience of life nor in any of the rules that the Bible or any persons use to try to legislate material conduct.” *Ibid* p 43.

These principles would cause Gnostics to look down on the ritual of communion and other material rites that were channels to understand spiritual truths. Gnostics, past or present, are full of bitter disdain for the creation and thus the Creator (even if they may profess to be spiritual and worship God), but with our newfound hope in Christ “all things become new” (2 Cor 5:17). The creation’s flaws we see as reflecting our own flaws, while the grace of Christ in it is seen as beautiful and precious due to our newfound

appreciation of our Creator and Father. For the Christian, gratitude has replaced anxiety and insecurity.

Our Lord has said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.... For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." John 6:53-55. This is true of our physical nature. To the death of Christ we owe even this earthly life. The bread we eat is the purchase of His broken body. The water we drink is bought by His spilled blood. Never one, saint or sinner, eats his daily food, but he is nourished by the body and the blood of Christ. The cross of Calvary is stamped on every loaf. It is reflected in every water spring. All this Christ has taught in appointing the emblems of His great sacrifice. The light shining from that Communion service in the upper chamber makes sacred the provisions for our daily life. The family board becomes as the table of the Lord, and every meal a sacrament. (DA 660.3)

Partaking of Communion is not Wrong

To the Gnostic Christian eating and drinking material things is not part of worship; these things are symbols of slavery to the material world. Therefore, the gnostic makes manmade rules to 'Touch not, taste not, handle not' material things in your worship. Focusing solely on the internal spiritual experience is the key for the Gnostic Christian.

Is there more evidence of Paul speaking against Gnostic Heresy?

Colossians 2:18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.

Gnostics had a teaching about emanations from God called Aeons.

Aeons bear a number of similarities to Judaeo-Christian angels, including roles as servants and emanations of God, and existing as beings of light. In fact, certain Gnostic Angels, such as Armozel, are also Aeons. Wikipedia – Aeon (Gnosticism)

We have evidence of worshipping of Angels amongst Valentinian Gnostic Christians. Valentinus lived from 100AD till 160AD and was rumoured to be a student of a man who was a student of Paul. His teaching is a development of the Gnostic teaching of Aeons that existed during the time of Paul.

“Valentinian Christians took part in sacraments that culminated in a divine marriage ceremony in which they were spiritually married to angels. A male convert would be married to a female angel, and a female convert to a male angel.” *Primitive Christianity in Crisis* (2003) p 102

There is nothing in the book of the law that commands the worship of angels. It commands the worship of God only.

Colossians 2:20-22 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from **the rudiments of the world**, why, as though living in the world, are ye **subject to ordinances**, (21) (**Touch not; taste not; handle not;** (22) Which all are to perish with the using;) after **the commandments and doctrines of men?**

We see in this passage the terms ‘touch not, taste not, and handle not’ are enveloped in the terms:

- (1) The rudiments of the world
- (2) The commandments and doctrines of men.

It is fairly safe to say that the terms ‘touch not, taste not and handle not’ are connected to commandments and doctrines of men, stemming from the rudiments of the world. The Gnostic Christians would have found the material aspects of Hebrew worship offensive and would have judged them for eating

and drinking or feasting during religious or social gatherings. The cry would be heard to 'touch not, taste not, handle not.'

It is possible the Jews might also accuse Christians of partaking in a Communion of eating and drinking sacred things outside of the instrumentality of the Levitical priesthood. Adam Clark also makes this comment:

These are forms of expression very frequent among the Jews. In Maccoth, fol. xxi. 1: "If they say to a Nazarite, Don't drink, don't drink; and he, notwithstanding, drinks; he is guilty. If they say, Don't shave, don't shave; and he shaves, notwithstanding; he is guilty. If they say, Don't put on these clothes, don't put on these clothes; and he, notwithstanding, puts on heterogeneous garments; he is guilty." Adam Clark commentary on Colossians 2:21.

Jews might also accuse Christians of not including the sacrifices during Sabbath, New Moon and feast days which Christians saw as fulfilled in Christ. These were definitely shadows of things that were fulfilled in the death of Christ. So Paul is addressing both Gnostic Christian attacks as well as Jewish Legalistic attacks regarding eating and drinking at religious gatherings.

Reframing Colossians 2:16-17

This brings us to the heart of the issue in Colossians 2. Let's read the passage again.

Colossians 2:16-17 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: (17) Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

I want us to notice four key things in this passage:

- (1) The use of the word respect.

- (2) The use of supplied punctuation, the colon, giving what follows the sense of defining what has just been stated, and the capitalisation of the word 'Which' giving the impression of a new sentence.
- (3) The use of the word 'but'.
- (4) The supplied word 'is' in relation to the body 'is' of Christ

1. The Use of the word *Respect*

Let us look at how the word *respect* is used in other places in the New Testament. This is what it says about this word in the Strong's G3313:

From an obsolete but more primary form of μείρομαι *meiromai* (to *get* as a *section* or *allotment*); a *division* or *share* (literally or figuratively, in a wide application): - behalf, coast, course, craft, particular (+ -ly), part (+ -ly), piece, portion, respect, side, some sort (-what).

This word is translated part (24x), portion (3x), Coast(3x), behalf(2x) respect(2x) misc(9x). Here are some examples in the New Testament:

Matthew 2:22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into **the parts** [G3313] of Galilee:

Luke 15:12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me **the portion** [G3313] of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

Luke 24:42 And they gave him **a piece** [G3313] of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.

In Matthew 2:22 and Luke 15:12 the word is translated with the definite article 'the' but Luke 24:42 does not use it. The use of the word part or portion requires in English that we identify the part with either a definite or indefinite

article. The context of Paul's usage would favour a definite article but either way is fine. With this knowledge let us apply this to the text.

Let no man judge you in meat or drink or in [**/the parts/the portion/ a piece**] of a feast, new moon or Sabbath

The use of the words meat and drink gives the context for the next word *respect*, which means he is speaking to a certain part of the feasts, new moons and Sabbaths.

2. The Use of Supplied word *days* and colon

Now we need to realise something fairly significant: the word 'days' and the colon are supplied. They don't actually exist in the text. I use e-sword for my online Bible and supplied words are in grey.

Colossians 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*:

Notice that the colon is supplied. It does not exist in the text. This significantly alters the meaning of this sentence. If we take this out and then allow the sentence to continue by placing the word 'which' non-capitalized, we see something quite profound.

Let no man judge you in meat or drink or in the part of a feast, new moon or Sabbath which are a shadow of things to come

Did you catch that? Paul is speaking about the part of the feasts, new moons and Sabbaths that are a shadow of things to come. Since Paul's main concern is dealing with Gnostic Christians aversion to things material, his reference to meat and drink is more likely related to every day eating and drinking in social settings which the Gnostic minded Christians, who had an ascetic focus, would have discouraged.

The fact that Paul lists eating and drinking first suggests that this is the highest area of concern and that this theme carries into the other items in the list even though they are not considered shadows. The items that would have directly related to the shadow of things to come are the parts of the Feasts, New moons and Sabbaths that are material in nature, since the Gnostics focused solely in the internal or spiritual when it came to worship.

3. The Use of the word *but*

We now need to come to terms with word *but* because this is the conjunction expressing the relationship to *the body of Christ*.

The word “*but*” in this passage is “*de*” [G1161] This is what Strong’s says about it:

A primary particle (adversative or **continuative**); but, and, etc.: - also, and, but, moreover, now [often unexpressed in English].

So this word not only means adversative or contrary to what was just stated but can also mean a continuation or explanation. This is where a semi-colon could be inserted in English to explain what was just said. Notice some uses of the word *but* [G1161] in the New Testament.

Matthew 1:2 Abraham begat Isaac; and [G1161] Isaac begat Jacob; and [G1161] Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

See how the word is used to mean a continuation as a result of what just was stated. Isaac begat Jacob as a continuation of Abraham begetting Isaac. In this case it is used as a continuation. It makes no sense in this case to say:

Matthew 1:2 Abraham begat Isaac; **but** Isaac begat Jacob; **but** Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

There are places where a ‘but’ would be better to use. Jesus uses it carefully in Matthew 5:

Matthew 5:38-39 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: (39) **But** I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

The word *but* that Jesus uses is G1161. If He wanted to completely counter what was said previously He would have used another word, a word that he used when countering Satan:

Matthew 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but[G235] by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

This word is *alla* and this is what Strong's says about it:

Neuter plural of G243; properly other things, that is, (adverbially) contrariwise (in many relations): - and, but (even), howbeit, indeed, nay, nevertheless, no, notwithstanding, save, therefore, yea, yet.

If Jesus wanted to completely counter the phrase an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth He would have used G235 *alla* as this is a complete negation, but Jesus uses the word *de*. This allows him to counter the interpretation given people by the Pharisees and at the same time continue and expand the actual meaning of the book of the law when it said 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' See Ex 21:24, Lev 24:20 and Deut 19:21. The meaning of this passage was not to strike people at all. The law was designed as a deterrent to strike anyone, but the Jews had twisted it into a teaching on revenge. So this little word *de* is very important and it has serious implications in a number of places where something is read only as adversarial, when it also includes continuation.

With this in mind we are ready to complete this sentence.

Let no man judge you in meat or drink or in the portion of a feast, new moon or Sabbath which are a shadow of things to come; **more over** the body of Christ.

So what does the *body of Christ* relate to? Paul is the only one to use this term and he uses it four times apart from Colossians 2:17:

Rom 7:4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.	Christ condemned sin in the flesh and purchased our freedom. The term body of Christ means the literal body of our nature that Christ took, and then He took that body to death in order to give us life.
1 Cor 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?	This is a reference to spiritual body of God's people (the church) in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells.
1Co 12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ , and members in particular.	Again a spiritual reference to the church
Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:	Again a spiritual reference to the church

Eating and drinking of bread and the cup are symbols of our entry into the body of Christ and reveal the fact that we have accepted His death on our behalf. They symbolise that we have joined Him in death that we might be raised with Him.

Romans 6:4-5 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

They are symbols that Christ dwells in us and that we are therefore part of His body. Notice what Jesus says.

John 6:55,56 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

Again Paul connects these emblems to our communion in Christ.

1 Corinthians 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

The death, burial and resurrection of Christ symbolised in these emblems is the first fruits which makes certain the future resurrection of the saints at the second coming.

1 Corinthians 15:22-23 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (23) But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; **afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.**

In partaking of the death and resurrection of Christ through these symbols we express the Christian hope of future victory over death at the coming of Christ. So these emblems are a shadow of things to come, and this is partly why Paul states:

1 Corinthians 11:26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, **ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.**

Our Lord Jesus also expresses this theme in this way:

Mark 14:25 Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

The bread and the cup are shadows and have no virtue in them to save the soul; they are symbols of the death and resurrection of Christ. His resurrection makes certain the resurrection of the saints at the Second Coming as well as the complete and open fellowship of the body of Christ each Sabbath and New

Moon appointment in the heavenly kingdom. In a broader sense the eating and drinking done in a festive spirit during Feasts, New Moon and Sabbaths are a shadow of our gathering together in one body after the second coming. There is no virtue in eating and drinking, but these material things connected with the worship of God's people give us a taste of the future kingdom of God. The Gnostics would have discouraged any focus on eating and drinking at religious gatherings or eating and drinking having any part in worship, because for them the spiritual is to be separated from the material. Whereas the Hebrew minded Christian would see these material things as simply part of their complete Christian experience because the material world is not evil but the creation of God.

How wonderful it will be when the entire body of Christ will be united together in one place to praise and worship God and His Son.

The nations of the saved will know no other law than the law of heaven. All will be a happy, united family, clothed with the garments of praise and thanksgiving. Over the scene the morning stars will sing together, and the sons of God will shout for joy, while God and Christ will unite in proclaiming. "There shall be no more sin, neither shall there be any more death." "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the Lord." "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." "The Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." "In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of His people." PK 732,733

There is an alternate idea that the term *body of Christ* simply means the church and this term is to be connected with the idea of judging or deciding for you how to engage in public worship related to these issues. This may be a reference to the body of Christ coming together at the Acts 15 council to decide on certain protocols for Gentile converts, but there is no direct

association for this. While it is possible to view it this way if we allow for a double meaning in the text, there are dangers that this could open the idea that personal conscience in worship should be dictated by the majority of the body of believers, and this is something I think is problematic.

4. The Supplied word *is*

You might have noticed in my last quoting of Colossians 2:16-17, I left out the last supplied word '*is*'

Let no man judge you in meat or drink or in the portion of a feast,
new moon or Sabbath which are a shadow of things to come;
more over the body of Christ.

Surely we are much safer to seek to gain understanding of Scripture with as few supplied words and punctuation as possible. Inserting the word *is* in combination with an adversarial meaning of the word *but*, the phrase *body of Christ* is placed in opposition and contrast to the words *shadow of things to come*. It makes the shadows a negative thing as opposed to the body or substance which is a good thing. This reasoning process perfectly suits the Gnostic Christian mindset that sees material things as negative and spiritual things only as positive.

At another level the Greek mind would tend to see shadows as negatives due to one of Plato's fundamental teachings concerning the "*Allegory of the cave*."

Plato has Socrates describe a gathering of people who have lived chained to the wall of a cave all of their lives, facing a blank wall. The people watch shadows projected on the wall by things passing in front of a fire behind them, and begin to designate names to these shadows. The shadows are as close as the prisoners get to viewing reality. He then explains how the philosopher is like a prisoner who is freed from the cave and comes to understand that the shadows on the wall do not make

up reality at all, as he can perceive the true form of reality rather than the mere shadows seen by the prisoners. *Wikipedia – Allegory of the Cave*

So the Greek mind would see shadows as part of the enslavement of the mind, and therefore when reading a text like Colossians 2:16-17 it would be natural to read the shadows in an antagonistic relationship to perceived reality.

If Paul wanted to emphasize a contrast he would need to have included a word in Greek like G2076 *esti*. This word is not included, and therefore, the 'is' should be taken out. With the removal of the word 'is' the words body of Christ become a natural progression of *shadow of things to come*. It should be evident that the more supplied words there are provided in a passage, the more likely the translator is beginning to become interpretive of the text rather than just translating the original author.

So in conclusion the Gnostics were judging the Christians for connecting material emblems to their worship which they considered bondage. It is also possible that the Jews and some Christians were judging the Church for not gathering on these days to do the rituals of their forefathers. This included sacrifices and offerings that were part of the shadowy sacrificial system that was no longer required. Either way, Paul is not addressing the *timing* of the days of the feasts, new moons and Sabbaths, but is addressing the controversy of what was to be *done* on those days regarding eating and drinking and the portion of the feasts that related to eating and drinking, which was very much part of the feasts and the communion service.

So if we show proper '*respect*' for Paul's use of that word in Colossians 2:16, we find that this question has a solution that will address all the major issues at hand.

Showing Respect For Colossians 2:14-17

There are some passages in the Bible that occupy a pivotal position in understanding how and when we are to gather together for worship.

The Christian church is almost universal in its belief that Colossians 2:14 to 17 provide the clearest evidence that Paul released the Christian church from observance of the Sabbath, the new moons and the feast days and nailed them to the cross.

Seventh-day Adventists, realising the sacred blessing and responsibility in the Sabbath, have divided the law between the Ten Commandments and the Law of Moses and removed the Sabbath from inclusion in this passage in Colossians.

The great problem is that the Greek word for Sabbath used in this passage is exactly the same as the word for seventh-day Sabbath or a Sabbath in relation to a seven day week. Adventists have to plead a special case for one verse as against 68 other verses that point to the Sabbath. If the Sabbath is meant here, then it is included in the list of new moons and feast days that are considered to be shadows of good things to come and are therefore not part of the Christian worship experience.

In this booklet we explore the context of the Colossian Church situation, the use of the Greek word *dogma* in verse 14, and in verse 16 and 17, the use of supplied words by King James translators and the translation of the Greek word *meros* to the English word *respect* that masks the true intent of Paul's effort to defeat the counsel of the proto-gnostic Christians. It is hoped that this booklet may help to respect the real intention of the apostle Paul in this passage.