

## There is No Longer Jew nor Greek: Dialogue on Christianity and Race - Pre-event reading.

### Three marginalisation dramas:

Below are the key texts for the event; the third text is the central ‘ethnic marginalisation’ incident (Gal. 2:11-14), which follows on the heels of two others (1:13-14 and 2:1-5). The fourth text, Gal. 2:15-21 is the passage which scholars often call the thesis statement of Galatians. It is here Paul for the first time mentions ‘justification by faith’. Observe – it emerges from the context of these three marginalisation stories. Contextually, and somewhat in contrast to the Reformers, ‘justification by faith’ was not initially about ‘how do sinners find salvation in a gracious God’? This was Martin Luther’s question rather than Paul’s. If justification by faith and not by works of Law was the answer, the question was more akin to ‘how do we become the one, multi-ethnic family of God which God had always purposed to create’?

*<sup>13</sup> For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. <sup>14</sup> I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers (Gal. 1:13-14).*

*Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. <sup>2</sup> I went up in response to a revelation. Then I laid before them (though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain. <sup>3</sup> But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. <sup>4</sup> But because of false believers<sup>[a]</sup> secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us— <sup>5</sup> we did not submit to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you (Gal. 2:1-5).*

*<sup>11</sup> But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; <sup>12</sup> for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. <sup>13</sup> And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led*

*astray by their hypocrisy. <sup>14</sup> But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?” (Gal. 2:11-14).*

*<sup>15</sup> We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; <sup>16</sup> yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. <sup>17</sup> But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! <sup>18</sup> But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. <sup>19</sup> For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; <sup>20</sup> and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. <sup>21</sup> I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing (Gal. 2:15-21).*

### The Embarrassment of the Church Fathers at the Antioch Incident.

These three excerpts show the attempts of early Christian leaders to explain the Antioch incident away. A number of Christianity's early critics, including Porphyry and Celsus, thought it ridiculous that two such important leaders like Paul and Peter could have such an embarrassing, public falling out if this was really a movement of God. The arguments of these church fathers, though not really historically plausible, in my view, show just how pivotal an event this was in Christian history.

*[Clement argued that Cephas was not the apostle Peter]:* They say that Sosthenes also, who wrote to the Corinthians with Paul, was one of them. This is the account of Clement in the fifth book of his Hypotyposes, in which he also says that Cephas was one of the seventy disciples, a man who bore the same name as the apostle Peter, and the one concerning whom Paul says, “When Cephas came to Antioch I withstood him to his face” (Clement, *Hypotyposes*, V).

*[Tertullian argued that Paul was a zealous new convert who over-reacted]:* Now they adduce the case of Peter himself, and the others, who were pillars of the apostolate, as having been blamed by Paul for not walking uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel — that very

Paul indeed, who, being yet in the mere rudiments of grace, and trembling, in short, lest he should have run or were still running in vain, then for the first time held intercourse with those who were apostles before himself. Therefore because, in the eagerness of his zeal against Judaism as a neophyte, he thought that there was something to be blamed in their conduct — even the promiscuousness of their conversation (Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, I:20).

*[Jerome, following Origen, claimed that Peter and Paul staged the whole incident to teach the church]:* Origen reminds us that things are not always as they seem. Paul did not foolishly choose to rebuke Peter for actions he actually condoned and practiced. Peter was guarding the weaker Jewish believers and Paul was guarding the weaker Gentile believers, so they chose to stage a rebuke of Peter with the purpose of reminding everyone that the way of salvation was not by the “works of the law” but through faith in Christ (excerpt from a letter to Augustine of Hippo in the 4<sup>th</sup> cent.).