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False Teachers, False Conclusions

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FALSE TEACHERS, FALSE CONCLUSIONS

There are three fundamental problems with Ratzlaff's interpretation of Colossians 2:14-16, Romans 14:5, and Galatians 4:10. First, there is his failure to recognize that none of these passages deal with the validity or invalidity of the Sabbath commandment per se. Instead, they deal with ascetic and cultic practices which undermine (especially in Colossians and Galatians) the vital principle of justification by faith in Jesus Christ.

Second, in the crucial passage of Colossians 2:16, Paul is warning the Colossians against those who judged them on questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or sabbaths (RSV). This warning is not a condemnation of the five mentioned practices as such, but of the authority of false teachers to legislate on the manner of their observance. Implicitly, Paul expresses approval rather than disapproval of their observation. Any Pauline condemnation in this passage has to do with the perversion promoted by the false teachers, and not with the practices per se.

This important fact is recognized even by Sundaykeeping scholars. For example, Douglas De Lacey, a contributor to the scholarly symposium "From the Sabbath to the Lord's Day," who concludes his analysis of this passage by saying: "Here again (Col. 2:16), then, it seems that Paul could happily countenance Sabbathkeeping." Troy Martin, Professor at Saint Xavier University in Chicago, comes to the same conclusion in a recent article published in *New Testament Studies*. It is encouraging to see scholars finally recognizing that, contrary to the traditional and popular interpretation advocated by people like Ratzlaff, Colossians 2:16 is not the death knell of Sabbathkeeping in the New Testament but, instead, a proof of its Pauline approbation.—Samuele Bacchiocchi in *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*.