Comparative Translation of Colossians 2:14-17

14. Blotting out the certificate of sin-indebtedness that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it [the accusing witness] out of the middle of the court assembly, nailing it to his stake.
15. And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.
16. Let no [false teacher, see vss. Col 2:4, 8, 18, 20-22] therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath:
17. (which <u>are</u> a shadow of things to come) but the body of Messiah.

Verse 14--The phrase "handwriting of ordinances" (*cheirographon tois dogmasin* is the Greek term) is used no other place in Scripture. We have no other witnesses as to what it might mean. Many say this phrase means *ceremonial law,* or the *law of Moses*. There **is** a Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint). Very significantly, the Greek for *ceremonial law,* and *law of* Moses (which is found throughout the OT) is <u>not</u> *cheirographon tois dogmasin.* The word dogmasin (the Greek word translated "law") does not appear in the whole of the Septuagint. Not even once. The margin of my KJV says this phrase means *bond*. The margin of my NKJV says it means *certificate of indebtedness with its requirements*. Anciently, an IOU--a certificate of debt--was written on a clay tablet. When it was PAID IN FULL, it was 'cancelled' in a peculiar manner. A nail was driven through it destroying the record of debt. Paul was only using the commonly recognized business language of his day.

"Out of the way" should have been translated *out of the middle*. In Jewish jurisprudence, the witnesses against a child of Israel stood in the middle of a large half circle of 71 judges. In front of the high priest (flanked on either side by 35 judges) sat three scribes or court recorders if you will. The one on the left of the high priest counted all the guilty votes, the one on the right counted all the acquittal votes and the one in the middle counted both. There could be no circumstantial evidence, and no chain of sequence witnesses. (One witness sees him drinking, another sees him getting in his car, another sees him driving erratically, and another sees him crash.) There had to be two or three witnesses who saw the whole thing, (**Deuteronomy 19:15** and **Genesis 41:32**) or court was adjourned and the accused walked away a free man. In context, the accusing witness that is against us is the record of our sin. If we have repented, this record of our indebtedness is considered paid in full, and is blotted out. Paul is simply using the commonly understood language of Jewish jurisprudence.

Verse 16--Since "*days*" is italicized (text added by the translators) it can be removed as un-inspired.

Verse 17--Some scholars have said that the phrase *which are shadows of things to come* is a parenthetical statement. Put it in parentheses and it should still be understood. It is, and also explains who is to do the judging. The *is* found in verse 17 is also italicized and is here removed. "Let no one judge you ... but the body of Messiah." Ahh, that's better. The parenthetical statement further explains the previous things listed: holy days, new moons and Sabbaths. Concerning how a holy day, new moon, or Sabbath is observed, a believer should only tolerate judgment by other true believers--the body of true believers. See **Matthew 18:15-17**