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# The ethics of the spirit in Galatians: Considering Paul's paranesis in the interpretation of his theology

Steven Douglas Meigs  
*University of South Florida*

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The Ethics of the Spirit in Galatians:  
Considering Paul's Paranesis in the Interpretation of His Theology

by

Steven Douglas Meigs

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
Department of Religious Studies  
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Major Professor: James F. Strange, Ph.D.  
Paul G. Schneider, Ph.D.  
Darrell J. Fasching, Ph.D.

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## Dedication

To my wife Cari, for many years of loving support and great patience.

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I would like to acknowledge the professors at the University of South Florida who contributed to making my experience in the Department of Religious Studies as richly rewarding as it was. First and foremost, my great appreciation to our Distinguished University Professor James F. Strange cannot be adequately expressed here. As my mentor and graduate director, his influence in the classroom, in field work in Israel, and in my graduate research has been invaluable. In a field where all too often scholars seek to distinguish themselves by embracing novelty and controversy, Prof. Strange has been the constant voice of reason and cautious objectivity, and I will continue to benefit from his wise example in all I do. To the other professors who have been most influential in my research, I extend my gratitude: to Paul G. Schneider, for constantly challenging me and being most likely to “throw a wrench in the gears” of my thinking, and for the privilege of allowing me to teach his New Testament class this year; to Darrell J. Fasching, for stimulating my interest in Paul as a constructive model for post-Holocaust Christian theology and an ethic of human dignity; and last but by no means least, to Dell deChant, who taught me so much about being an effective instructor and inspiring students—the way he so greatly inspired me during my time at USF. I also wish to express my appreciation for the encouragement of Professors Sandra Garcia, Gail Harley, and Wei Zhang, and my compatriots in academia, Tori Lockler and Christine O’Brien—who always seem to make the world a little brighter.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables	ii
Abstract	iii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Pauline Interpretation in Augustine and Luther	3
The New Perspective Dialogue	8
The Galatians Debate	13
Thesis Statement	14
Survey of Scholarship	15
Chapter Two: The Crisis in Galatia	21
Methodology in a Mirror-Reading of Galatians	21
The Opponents in Galatia	24
The State of the Galatians' Response to the Opponents	28
The Attraction of the Opponents' Doctrine	31
Chapter Three: Paul's Theological Arguments	36
Appeal to the Law-Free Gospel to the Gentiles	37
Appeal to the Galatians' Experience of the Spirit	40
Reinterpretation of the Abrahamic Covenant	43
Continuity and Discontinuity	54
A Sociological Model of Breakaway Sects	57
The Apocalyptic Context of Paul's Gospel	62
The Indicative/Imperative Principle	68
Chapter Four: Paul's Ethics	71
Merging the Meanings of the Flesh	76
Flesh and Spirit	79
Faith Working Through Love	86
Freedom to Become Slaves in Love	88
Fulfilling the Law of Christ	91
Chapter Five: Conclusions	94
Notes	101
References	112

### **List of Tables**

Table 1	Spirit/Flesh Dualism in Chapters 5-6 of Galatians	83
Table 2	Antithetical Terms in Galatians, Chapters 1-3	84
Table 3	Antithetical Terms in Galatians, Chapters 4-6	85

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ABSTRACT

The *faith versus works* dichotomy that has been a foundation of Protestant Christianity for centuries is derived in large part from a flawed understanding of Paul's theology in the epistles to the Galatians and Romans. In the wake of WWII, scholars began reexamining Pauline theological constructs and proposing new ways of understanding Paul's arguments regarding faith and works. James D. G. Dunn dubbed this dialogue the *new perspective*.

This paper will contribute to one particular aspect of *new perspective* dialogue: understanding the relation of the paranetic material in the final two chapters of *Galatians* to Paul's theological arguments in the main body of the letter (1:1-5:12). The ethical imperatives in 5:13-6:10 have often been ignored or explained away due to the fact that they are difficult to reconcile with the faith-only, anti-works bias in the traditional Lutheran interpretation of Paul's theology. It has been customary to view the *fruit of the Spirit* in Galatians more as a description of what the Spirit *does* in the life of a believer than any kind of an ethical imperative (though similar imperatives are found throughout the New Testament). Some scholars have suggested that the ethical section of the letter was appended later, or perhaps attached as a general directive unrelated to the specific occasion of the main body of the letter. However, if the ethics cannot be reconciled with

their theological foundations, the theology must be misunderstood; we cannot respond by devaluing or deemphasizing ethical systems. Theology cannot be interpreted without considering the ethical imperatives it enjoins.

My thesis is that the Pauline ethical imperatives in Galatians are directly related to the theological arguments that precede them, and that a scholarly engagement of these imperatives can illuminate Paul's theology and facilitate a more fruitful understanding. In demonstrating the theological/ethical connections, I will consider the occasion of the letter, Paul's narrative reinterpretations, antithetical constructions, and indicative/imperative formulas, the tension between salvation-historical and apocalyptic perspectives, and the truth for Paul that transcends the occasion of the epistle.



Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural quotations are from *The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version*, © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

The *faith versus works* dichotomy that has been a foundation of Christianity for centuries is derived in large part from a flawed understanding of Paul's theology in the epistles to the Galatians and Romans. Reading each letter through the lens of the other has reinforced this theological predisposition. Strong rhetoric toward Jesus' Jewish opponents in the Gospels of Matthew and John substantially fueled the fires of anti-Judaism, while misapplied Pauline theology justified and sanctified the sentiment. Two of the greatest theologians in the history of Christianity, Aurelius Augustine of Hippo and Martin Luther, each understood their own salvation experiences as a triumph of God's power and grace, through faith alone, apart from anything they could have achieved themselves. Both went on to powerfully articulate and defend their understandings of Paul's soteriology against doctrines they perceived as striking at the very foundations of this truth, Augustine in conflict with Pelagius, and Luther in conflict with the pope.

One unhappy result of this theological faith/works dichotomy is that the Jew became the symbol for the supposed works-based righteousness that was rejected by God; the Jew was seen as a rebellious creature, too proud to accept the righteousness given freely by God's grace, and finally rejected by God after the murder of God's Son. After it became clear that the Holocaust genocide of six million Jews had been justified in Nazi ideology by a sort of modified Lutheran theology, many branches of the

worldwide Christian church slowly began to take some responsibility for the anti-Semitism they had tolerated (if not encouraged) for centuries. Scholars began aggressively reexamining Pauline theological constructs and proposing new ways of understanding Paul's arguments regarding faith and works, flesh and spirit, slavery and freedom, and Jew and Gentile. James D. G. Dunn dubbed this dialogue regarding reinterpretation of Pauline anti-Judaic, supersessionist teachings (especially in Galatians and Romans) the *new perspective*.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, much of *new perspective* Pauline scholarship stands in stark contrast to the traditional Augustinian and Lutheran perspectives. As the body of scholars and variety of approaches have multiplied, so have the correctives from scholars reaffirming key aspects of the Lutheran understanding. Because the *new perspective* on Paul is at root a response to Augustinian and Lutheran perspectives, an introduction to the interpretations of Paul established by these two great theologians is appropriate.

## Pauline Interpretation in Augustine and Luther

The Augustinian approach to understanding Paul is largely based on Augustine's personal conversion experience, especially as it was progressively interpreted through his conflicts with heretical teachings. Augustine's theological genius was most realized in his defenses against challenges to orthodoxy, though, of course, his definition of orthodoxy was being perfected in the process. For Augustine, the main lens through which to understand the heart and soul of Paul's gospel message was God's grace triumphing over human weakness. Augustine interpreted his own conversion purely as an act of divine grace, which accomplished the miraculous transformation that was required without any effective action or merit on Augustine's part.

*The Confessions*<sup>2</sup> is Augustine's autobiography, including his early life and hedonism, his spiritual journey, including his decade with Manichaeism, and the process of his later conversion to Christianity. Much of Augustine's reasoning regarding the nature of sin is revealed in this book, as well as his understanding of God's working in his life drawing him to salvation through Christ. In Book 8 of *The Confessions*, Augustine explains how God answered his agonized prayer, giving him the ability to overcome the lust for pleasure to which he felt so addicted.

So was I speaking and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo! I heard from a neighbouring house a voice, as of a boy or girl, I know not, which, chanting, and oft repeating, "Take up and read; take up and read."...So checking the torrent of my tears, I arose; interpreting it to be no other than a command from God to open the book, and read the first chapter I should find....I seized, opened, and in silence read that section on which my eyes first fell: Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in concupiscence... Instantly at the end of this sentence ended, by a light as it were of security infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away.<sup>3</sup>

Augustine understood his prior inability to overcome sinfulness in the light of chapter 7 of Paul's letter to the Romans: he saw himself as the man led captive by sin dwelling in his members; he was the wretched man crying out for deliverance from "the body of this death."<sup>4</sup> Augustine originally understood this wretched state to refer to the state of the *unbeliever*, that is, *before* the miracle of God's grace. He would later reverse his view on this.

As noted above, much of Augustine's theology was constructed in response to heresies, and his reaction was often to embrace an extreme polemical position in relation to the challenge. A prime example of this is seen in Augustine's response to Pelagius, who affirmed humanity's inherent goodness and power of will, i.e., that humans possessed the ability to choose to serve God. Augustine, being especially sensitive to his own need for the supernatural act of grace that facilitated his own conversion, saw the Pelagian heresy as attacking the very foundations of Christian faith as he understood it. Augustine responded to Pelagius by affirming humanity's total depravity and inability to effect salvation, and by formulating the doctrine of *predestinarianism*, which affirms that God predetermines who will be saved and conversely who will not, thus removing the possibility of human response as a determinant of salvation.<sup>5</sup> Human righteousness is not possible because of the sinful nature; faith is purely the gift of God's grace according to God's will, given apart from any ability of the believer to choose it.

Also in his reaction to Pelagius' doctrine, Augustine reversed his earlier position on the Romans 7 "wretched man" as the pre-regenerate state of the Christian, and asserted that Paul was actually referring to himself *personally* and to his *present state* at

the time of the Roman letter. Thus, Augustine reinterpreted the passage as the description of the ongoing spiritual struggle in the life of every true believer. The implication is that those who deny this ongoing struggle are not true believers, thus effecting the full censure of Pelagius.<sup>6</sup>

The Council of Orange (529 CE) did indeed reject Pelagianism, affirming the prevenience of God's grace alone but stopping short of endorsing Augustine's severe predestinarianism.<sup>7</sup> Over the following centuries, the church came to see salvation more and more as a grace imparted in church rituals of communion, and the post-Aquinas drift was toward a more Pelagian perspective.<sup>8</sup> In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther more fully embraced Augustine's predestinarianism in his rejection of the Catholic church's doctrines of merit and Erasmus' semi-Pelagianism in *The Freedom of the Will*.<sup>9</sup>

The Reformation was founded on Luther's doctrines of *sola gratia* and *sola fide* expressed most distinctly in Paul's epistle to the Romans. Martin Luther's approach, like Augustine's, is based on his personal religious experience and is developed in the context of his doctrinal conflicts. Luther was an Augustinian monk for years tortured by guilt and fear, and by his own admission hated the righteousness of God, which threatened him. His famous tower experience involved a new revelation of God's righteousness as "revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'"<sup>10</sup> This experience of imputed righteousness apart from all works became the lens through which Luther saw all of Paul's writings. Like Augustine, Luther recognized his personal struggle of conscience in the experience of the wretched man in Romans 7 and held that

Paul was referring to himself and his own struggle—and to the state of all true believers. Like Augustine, Luther proclaimed humanity's total depravity and powerlessness to perform any act leading to salvation. For Luther, salvation was by God's unmerited grace and came through faith in Christ alone, and he denied the efficacy of any works in securing God's favor.

Luther understood God's (supposed) rejection of Jewish ritualistic and legalistic religion in the context of his current struggle against the ritual and merit-based salvation of the Catholic church. The scriptures that spoke most clearly to Luther about the apostasy of the Catholic church in departing from the true faith were those that also seemed to indict the Jews for their rejection of the true faith. Luther recognized the offenses of the Catholic church in the various New Testament indictments against Judaism, Pharisaism, and Judaizers. Luther regarded the papacy as part of a demonic delusion sent by God as punishment upon the church because the church had turned the sacraments into empty works, and he makes a direct correlation with God's punishment of the Jews for their perversion of sacrament into works-righteousness:

Therefore God also delivered us into all sorts of terrible blindness and innumerable false doctrines, and, furthermore, he permitted Muhammad and the pope together with all devils to come upon us....The people of Israel fared similarly....

But now that we have grown old, the pope comes along and the devil with him and...severs word and sign from each other, teaching that we are saved by our own contrition, work, and satisfaction. We share the experience related by St. Peter in II Peter 2:22: "The dog turns back to his own vomit, and the sow is washed only to wallow in the mire." Thus our sacrament has become a work, and we eat our vomit again. Likewise the Jews, as they grew old, ruined their good circumcision performed on the eighth day, separated the word from the sign, and made a human or even a swinish work out of it. In this way they lost God and his word and now no longer have any understanding of the Scriptures.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, identifying the sins of the Reformation-era papacy as correlating with first-century Judaism also effectively located the Reformation movement in fundamental opposition to Judaism (both ancient and contemporary) as well. Lutheran theology firmly established the view of Judaism as a religion of works-based righteousness antithetical to saving faith, and concluded this as the basis of God's rejection of the Jews. This conception of Judaism was used as a lens to interpret any Pauline argument that would bear it (and colored the understanding of faith itself).

This brief treatment does not well represent Luther or Lutheranism as a whole and omits many positive aspects, but it introduces those theological constructs that the *new perspective* most specifically challenges, and which are thus relevant to this thesis.



## The New Perspective Dialogue

Shortly after WWII, new challenges to the Lutheran interpretation of Paul began to appear, largely in response to the Holocaust. Scholars began aggressively reexamining Pauline theological constructs and proposing new ways of understanding Paul's arguments regarding the relationship of faith and works, flesh and spirit, slavery and freedom, and Jew and Gentile. As noted above, It was James D. G. Dunn who dubbed this dialogue regarding the reinterpretation of Pauline theology (especially in Galatians and Romans) the *new perspective*.<sup>12</sup>

In 1967, W. D. Davies challenged the traditional Lutheran view of Paul in *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*.<sup>13</sup> Seen through the lens of the Protestant Reformation, Paul's true meaning was lost. Davies argued that justification by faith was not the foundation of Pauline theology at all, but "a convenient polemic."<sup>14</sup> Paul was first and always a Rabbi, but one who came to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. To be understood, Paul must be engaged in the context of Palestinian Judaism; Paul's major themes are derived from Rabbinic and Pharisaic tradition and inform his understanding of the new revelation in Christ. As a Jew, Paul's characteristically Jewish fusion of nationalistic and religious identity "invaded his Christianity,"<sup>15</sup> which neither involved a rejection of Jewish practice for Jews "nor a denial of community with them."<sup>16</sup> For Davies, Paul's own identity argues against the Lutheran interpretation of Paul's theology.<sup>17</sup>

Krister Stendahl's landmark essay "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West" first appeared in 1963 in the *Harvard Theological Review* 56,

and was presented in lectures at Austin Presbyterian Seminary in 1963 and Colgate Rochester Divinity School in 1964.<sup>18</sup> In 1974, a more fully developed version of Stendahl's thought appeared in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*.<sup>19</sup> *Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans*<sup>20</sup> appeared in 1993. Stendahl argues that Paul never employs the doctrine of *justification by faith* in a way that can be applied to the *introspective conscience* of the modern western world. Paul is neither thwarted by his inability to live righteously (like Augustine) nor tormented by continued pangs of guilt (like Luther), nor is his gospel formulated in response to any such universal problem perceived in modern western thought. Rather, Paul possesses, in Stendahl's words, a "robust conscience,"<sup>21</sup> seeing himself as a faithful Pharisee and a Jew who had lived righteously (Galatians 1:14; Philippians 3:4-7).<sup>22</sup> Stendahl's conclusion is the utter irreconcilability of Paul's theology with Augustine's interpretation (based on his garden conversion experience) and Luther's interpretation (based on his tower conversion experience).

With E. P. Sanders' 1977 landmark work, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*<sup>23</sup> and his 1983 follow-up, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*,<sup>24</sup> the *new perspective* kettle came to a rolling boil. In *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, Sanders' purpose, as he states it, is "to compare Paul on his own terms with Judaism on its own terms, a comparison not of one-line essences or of separate motifs, but of a whole religion with a whole religion."<sup>25</sup> Sanders' intent is to know how the religion functions in the lives of its adherents, and to recognize certain soteriological patterns that follow a logical order in the *experience* of the adherent (not in systematic theological constructions). The main issues in any pattern of religion for Sanders are how one *gets in* and how one *stays in*.<sup>26</sup> Sanders engages the

Dead Sea Scrolls and Pseudepigraphal, Apocryphal, and Rabbinical works to determine the patterns of religion recognizable in each. Throughout the different Judaisms encountered in these writings, Sanders recognizes one common pattern and fundamental unity. Sanders terminology for this common pattern of religion is *covenantal nomism*.<sup>27</sup>

The pattern begins with Gods' election, an act of His good will, and his offer of a covenant, articulated in the Law. God's continued promises of blessing are contingent on faithful adherence to the Law. Transgressions of the covenant are punishable, and if serious and habitual, will involve a revoking of the covenant. Obedience maintains the covenant relationship. Recognizing that transgressions are unavoidable, the means for atonement—restoration of the covenant relationship—are provided within the Law. The maintenance of the covenant is thus based on God's forgiveness and reestablishment. Those who faithfully abide in the covenant by obedience and repentance/atonement when necessary will be saved. From beginning to end—election to salvation—the covenantal relationship is based on God's mercy and grace, not on human merit.<sup>28</sup>

However, Sanders also recognizes that Paul's *participationist* theology transcends the *covenantal nomism* model.<sup>29</sup> Paul's experience of Christ as the ultimate solution both preceded and led him to the realization of the ultimate plight of all humanity.<sup>30</sup> Paul's new understanding of Jesus as Savior and Lord of all convinced him that a change of lordship was required to be saved, and thus, that the real problem was humanity's bondage to another lordship that brought death—the bondage to sin.<sup>31</sup> The evidence of this progression from the universal solution to the universal problem, Sanders says, is the great inconsistency of Paul's statements about universal sinfulness and bondage to it.<sup>32</sup>

The employment of *participationist* and *covenantal/judicial* models together in what seems an unresolved tension causes no apparent conflict in Paul's thought. Christ's death works according to both models in securing freedom: judicially, in providing atonement to renew the covenant and be acquitted in judgment, and participationally, as the believer dies with Christ to secure freedom from the power of sin and to share in his resurrection—*both* the eschatological promise *and* the experience of new freedom and power in the present. There is no real conflict between *covenantal nomism* and *participationist eschatology*.<sup>33</sup>

Sanders' conclusion is that Palestinian Judaism cannot be understood as a works-based religion (thus redeeming Judaism from the Lutheran caricature) and that this is not Paul's argument against Judaism. The basis of Paul's argument is his soteriology: if Christ is the answer for the universal problem applying to both Jews and Gentiles—sin and death—the Jewish covenant alone cannot be effective for salvation; *participation in Christ* is what is required.<sup>34</sup> Simply put, Sanders' conclusion is that “what Paul finds wrong in Judaism [is that] it is not Christianity.”<sup>35</sup> Due to substantial criticism, Sanders later explained that this statement was meant to communicate that that was *all* that Paul found wrong with Judaism.<sup>36</sup>

Sanders' great contribution to the new perspective is in redefining Judaism as a religion based on the mercy of God, not works-righteousness, but he stops short of a real engagement of Paul's theology. This restraint is the basis of N. T. Wright's critique of Sanders: a thorough rethinking of Paul's thought is lacking.<sup>37</sup> James D. G. Dunn is notable among the scholars who have attempted to fill this deficiency.<sup>38</sup> Dunn has

emphasized that Paul's contention with the traditional Jewish understanding of the Law was largely focused on the separation it produced between Jews and Gentiles; a fundamental principle in all of Paul's thought was the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile due to the work of Christ.<sup>39</sup>

Among the many responses to the disparagement of Luther's theology, Steven Westerholm's 2004 offering, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul*, has been among the more balanced and comprehensive correctives. Westerholm focuses on the Pauline arguments (e.g. *Romans* 4:4-5) that seem to present *works* as the human attempt to merit salvation and *faith* as reliance on the grace of God alone.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the more Lutheran understandings in Ephesians and the Pastorals, however *deutero*-Pauline these letters may be concluded to be, cannot be said to represent the early perversion of Paul's genuine thought if such thought is clearly present in *Romans*.<sup>41</sup>

Due to its limited scope, this paper cannot consider the body of Pauline and deutero-Pauline theology, but will be confined to the context of Galatians and the relation of the theological and ethical sections therein. This introduction should also signal that the perspectives of the scholars involved in the Galatians debate are often informed by positions they occupy within the fuller scope and context of *new perspective* dialogue and, as such, may reflect broader agendas that our study cannot illuminate.

## The Galatians Debate

This paper will contribute to one particular aspect of *new perspective* dialogue: understanding the relation of the paranetic material in the final two chapters of *Galatians* to Paul's theological arguments in the main body of the letter (1:1-5:12). The ethical imperatives in 5:13-6:10 have often been ignored or explained away due to the fact that they are difficult to reconcile with the faith-only, anti-works bias in the traditional Lutheran interpretation of Paul's theology. It has been customary to view this *fruit of the Spirit* more as a description of what the Spirit *does* in the life of a believer than any kind of an ethical imperative (though similar imperatives are found throughout the New Testament). Furthermore, the idea of a judgment of believers based on their works, though well documented biblically, was incompatible with the prevailing Lutheran theology. Some scholars have suggested that these sections of the letter were appended later, or perhaps attached as a general directive unrelated to the specific occasion of the main body of the letter. However, if the ethics cannot be reconciled with their theological foundations, the theology must be misunderstood; we cannot respond by devaluing or deemphasizing Paul's ethical systems. Theology cannot be interpreted without considering the ethical imperatives it enjoins.

## Thesis Statement

My thesis is that the Pauline ethical imperatives in Galatians are directly related to the theological arguments that precede them, and that a scholarly engagement of these ethical imperatives can illuminate Paul's theology and facilitate a more fruitful understanding of it. Any *new perspective* attempt to correct the centuries-old misunderstandings of Paul's theology in Galatians must also present a corrective to the deemphasizing of the Galatians pericope and demonstrate its direct relation to Paul's theological arguments preceding it.

## Survey of Scholarship

Opposed to this thesis are some scholars who have proposed that the Galatians paranesis has *no real relation* to the preceding letter at all, but was appended to it later. Others suppose that Paul added a general-purpose paranesis to his specific theological argument, and never intended a precise relation between the paranesis and what precedes it. At this point, a survey of some of the theories regarding the relationship of the Galatians paranesis and theology is appropriate. I will begin with some of the arguments that assert the disconnection of Paul's paranesis and theology in Galatians and/or justify the invalidation of the paranetic sections in studying Paul's theology. I will then address positions that allow for more of a meaningful connection between paranesis and theology, ending with some of the scholars offering the more tenable and fruitful understandings upon which my thesis will focus.

One of the more ambitious approaches is to assert that Paul was confused and misunderstood the issues or that he "flip-flopped" on his theological positions. Heikki Räisänen concludes that Paul is inconsistent and contradictory in his theology.<sup>42</sup> Willi Marxsen once proposed that Paul's inconsistency may be due to confusion stemming from lack of information about the opponents in Galatia.<sup>43</sup> We would at least note that it seems doubtful we can understand the world of Paul today better than he knew it himself.

Another approach involves the proposal that the paranetic sections were later appended to the Galatians epistle. J. C. O'Neill finds the Galatian paranesis incongruous with the Galatian situation and decidedly non-Pauline.<sup>44</sup> Our purpose is to show that there is a real and logical connection of theology and paranesis in Galatians, and that both



are clearly Pauline.

A number of scholars have accepted a definition of *paranesis* as a sort of general wisdom literature, often seen as a collection of aphorisms appended to documents to which they are not directly related. Thus, by this definition, the paranesis in Galatians could have been “tacked on” to just about anything Paul ever wrote, and need not have any relation to the occasion or context of Paul’s epistle. Chief among these scholars would be Martin Dibelius, who notes that “these [paranetic] sections are the least epistolary in character in the entire Pauline corpus.” Rather, they are “groups of sayings very diverse in content, lacking any particular order, and containing no emphasis upon a special thought of pressing importance for a particular situation.”<sup>45</sup> Thus, there would be no need to explain the relation of the paranetic to the theological, because the genre of paranesis by definition need not have any relation. Again, our objective is strictly to demonstrate the relation of theology and paranesis as regards the epistle to the Galatians. We cannot within the scope of this paper engage Dibelius’ definition of the genre proper, as this would require too extensive an engagement of the many other paranetic sections in the New Testament. We will challenge his definition as regards the Galatians paranesis.

A larger number of scholars have asserted that the paranesis in Galatians is offered primarily as a defense against the charge (whether realized or anticipated) that Paul’s theology would produce lawlessness.<sup>46</sup> This seems somewhat tenable, but one might ask why Paul bothers to develop this entire body of paranesis, it being obvious that much of it does not seem to exhibit an apologetic or defensive posture. It should be noted that when Paul is defending himself elsewhere, it is usually fairly obvious that he is doing

so. Rather, a more balanced understanding, while acknowledging the recurring accusations of lawlessness against Paul and the continued need for defenses, would not lose sight of the fact that Paul's clear goal is the persuasion of the Galatians, not a defense before his opponents, whom he is not addressing. His ethical maxims are articulated to demonstrate the superiority of his gospel to the Galatians. That his paranesis also may answer the usual objections of lawlessness is a happy benefit. Frank Matera<sup>47</sup> and John Barclay<sup>48</sup> express healthy reservations against a wholly apologetic understanding of the paranetic material.

Another way of reconciling the anti-law and pro-ethics sections of Galatians is to suppose that Paul is challenging opponents on two separate fronts. That is, when Paul is done with the Judaizing movement, he turns to the next set of opponents; the paranetic section is intended to combat the latter group's libertine tendencies. This view has few supporters today, but demonstrates well the difficulty imagining all of Galatians written in response to the same problem. Schmithals imagines a situation resulting from a single syncretistic oppositional front of some kind, perhaps made up of Jewish-Christian Gnostic libertine circumcisers.<sup>49</sup> We noted above Marxsen's suggestion that Paul misunderstood the nature of the Galatian problem. Marxsen proposed a similar sort of Hellenistic-spiritualist-libertine movement that saw circumcision as a powerful mystical initiation rite, this being what the confused Paul mistook for a Judaizing nomism! Similarly, Robert Jewett asserts that the Galatians were confused by their Hellenistic understanding of the way of the Spirit and had embraced "pneumatic libertinism," desiring circumcision and cultic calendrical observances out of their "instinctive respect

for the cosmic powers” and to “ensure entrance into the mythical seed of Abraham.”<sup>50</sup>

Suffice to say here that a clear lack of data has not deterred bold speculation as to what opponents the Galatian paranses *could* address.

It is my conviction that many scholars have confused the issue as much as they have illuminated it. To employ a metaphor, there is a tendency towards throwing the baby out with the bathwater and then speculating as to what kind of baby might have enjoyed the newly drawn bath. In the interest of an *entirely* new perspective, some scholars have discarded traditional views that were not irredeemably problematic (e.g. Judaizing influences, proselytizers) and proposed less credible suggestions as to the identity of the opponents and what doctrine they might be promoting. I find the scholars presented below to have presented more fruitful assessments of the Galatian situation.

H. D. Betz suggests that it is the Galatians who have been inconsistent, having experienced great spiritual power and enthusiasm initially, only to have some of their members later fall into fleshly indulgences. Those Galatians who sought a means of curtailing the libertine abuses of Paul’s gospel of “freedom in Christ” may have considered the Judaizers’ promotion of (at least partial) Torah-observance as a means of dealing with these excesses.<sup>51</sup> Obviously, it is hard to enforce a law if you do not have one. Thus Paul would be concerned not only to dissuade the adoption of ritual Torah observance as the solution to the problem but also to show that his law-free gospel was indeed sufficient to deal with the existing problem of libertinism, both in terms of spiritual power and a better *nomos*—the law of love. This idea has much to commend it, but there are questions we must consider. How can circumcision itself help to reign in

existing libertinism in any way—except in imposing an obligation to further law observance? If the Galatians understood this and this is what they had in mind, why does Paul argue in 5:3 that those who let themselves be circumcised would be obligated to keep the entire law? More to the point, why does Paul not indicate knowledge of the Galatians’ desire to use the Law to counter existing libertinism? Why does Paul not name any specific occurrences of libertine behavior? The statement in 6:1—“If anyone is discovered in a transgression”—seems a bit too hypothetical. Paul’s method of dealing with such issues in other epistles is usually much more specific; the examples in 1Corinthians alone would fill a paragraph.

Betz’s rhetorical analysis of Galatians has led him to classify it as a rare example of an apologetic letter.<sup>52</sup> Because paranesis is not generally an important feature of forensic rhetoric (as Betz himself notes and finds somewhat frustrating), his identification is not particularly helpful here. On the other hand, Kennedy’s conclusion that the epistle is an example of deliberative rhetoric, with everything before the paranesis only serving as an introduction to it, is a bit too convenient.<sup>53</sup> We cannot devalue Paul’s theological arguments to this degree; our purpose is to show the unity of theology and ethics while maintaining the value of both. Attempting not to minimize either judicial or deliberative aspects, Longenecker concludes that Galatians represents a case of mixed rhetorical genres, and notes that the unconscious fusing of rhetorical conventions to achieve one’s purposes was common, especially in the context of overlapping cultures.<sup>54</sup> This seems tenable, but is not particularly helpful for our purposes here. Dunn cautions that a too-great focus on rhetorical types—none of which is a good fit with Galatians—obscures the

degree to which Paul's theology and polemical passion determine the structure of his arguments.<sup>55</sup> Because recent literary (structural, rhetorical) criticisms of Galatians have not yielded a helpful consensus illuminating the ethical sections of Galatians with which we are concerned, they will not be utilized.

The section above has served the purpose of surveying scholarship that will not be substantially engaged below (with the exception of Betz, Matera, and Barclay). Those scholars and theories that will be more fully engaged below need not be surveyed here. The scholars I will engage in the presentation of my thesis below include John M. G. Barclay, H. D. Betz, F. F. Bruce, James D. G. Dunn, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Richard Longenecker, Frank Matera, Francis Watson, and Ben Witherington. Their insights have been most helpful in my research and in the development of my thesis. A common theme among most of these scholars is the realization that in Pauline thought, the imperative is built on the indicative.<sup>56</sup> Paul's challenge is to *be who you are*—live the new life you have been given. This observation in itself is an affirmation of the relation of Paul's paranesis to his theology generally, and is at the heart of this thesis.

## Chapter Two

### The Crisis in Galatia

#### Methodology in a Mirror-Reading of Galatians

Our overview of scholarship above regarding the identity and message of the opponents in Galatia has demonstrated some of the wildly divergent theories that may result from a methodologically deficient “mirror-reading” of Galatians. John M. G. Barclay explains the critical method of mirror-reading as “[using] the text which answers the opponents as a *mirror* in which we can see reflected the people and the arguments under attack.”<sup>57</sup> Many of the biblical scholars named above as foundational to this thesis have noted the problems of mirror-reading and have urged specific areas of caution, if not more detailed methodology. H. D. Betz<sup>58</sup> and Ben Witherington III<sup>59</sup> provide helpful insights in this regard. Barclay has most closely analyzed the problems and pitfalls with mirror-reading polemical epistles such as Galatians and has developed a number of criteria which, when cautiously employed, may avoid the common pitfalls without discarding the possible benefits.<sup>60</sup> The problems identified by Barclay in attempting to mirror-read Galatians are, briefly, that (1) Paul is not addressing his opponents, but rather, the audience of his opponents, (2) Paul is not being even-handed or objective but is passionately polemical, and (3) we are hearing only one side of a conversation existing in a foreign social and linguistic context.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, unlike a face-to-face or telephone conversation, it is not the case where one party would be able to instantly

respond to the other's statements. Rather, we have Paul's constructed epistolary response, and this makes the latter problem even more difficult.

Barclay has also evaluated the realized pitfalls of many recent scholars attempting a mirror-reading of Galatians and has arranged them in four overlapping categories, which, in brief, are (1) the arbitrariness of selecting and prioritizing the data to be considered, (2) "over-interpretation" of Paul's statements, assuming them all to be direct rebuttals to specific accusations, (3) "mishandling polemics," either by imagining every theological statement of Paul as a response to an opposite theological construct, or, as is too often the case in new perspective studies, by taking sides in the conflict, and finally, (4) assuming specific words and phrases to be echoing those of Paul's opponents and then using them to reconstruct the opponents' doctrines.<sup>62</sup>

By employing stringent controls, the pitfalls above may be avoided. Barclay's method utilizes seven criteria to help determine what can be safely concluded from any of Paul's statements. All of the seven seem so logical as to be good common sense. In brief, we must consider (1) the type of statement Paul is making (assertion, denial, prohibition, command, etc.), (2) the tone or urgency of the statement, (3) the frequency of repetition, (4) clarity of meaning / lack of ambiguity, (5) unfamiliar motifs, which may be specific to the situation, (6) consistency with other statements, and (7) historical plausibility.<sup>63</sup> Employing these criteria in evaluating the evidence, Barclay adapts a classification system previously used by E. P. Sanders in evaluating theories regarding historical Jesus research, using seven categories ranging from "Certain or Virtually Certain" to "Incredible." It is not surprising that the hypotheses noted above in chapter

one that conceive of Paul's opponents as Gnostics, libertines, or cosmic mystical spiritualists all end up relegated to the "Incredible" category.<sup>64</sup> Being mindful of Barclay's criteria, we will consider evidence regarding Paul's opponents at Galatia. Due to limited scope and because the opponents are not the central focus of this thesis, a specific analysis of how each criterion validates each observation cannot be offered.



## The Opponents in Galatia

As noted above, some scholars who could not reconcile the Galatians ethical imperatives with the preceding theology attempted to solve the problem by asserting two separate groups of agitators—and corresponding divisions in the Galatian church. The parts emphasizing faith and freedom would thus be primarily addressed to the group attracted to legalism and the paranesis to the group engaging in libertinism. This kind of hypothesis is inconsistent with the evidence we do have. Although Paul addresses division in the Galatian church (Gal. 5:15, 20; 5:26-6:5), he nonetheless addresses the Galatians throughout the epistle as *one body* of believers, not as two factions. Paul does not seem to directly address the opponents at all,<sup>65</sup> but he refers to their doctrine as a *different gospel* (singular) in 1:6. We must conclude that although there are *different responses* in the church to the opposing doctrine, there is no real evidence of multiple opposing doctrines.<sup>66</sup>

Identifying the opponents<sup>67</sup> with certainty is not possible, but we can make a number of valuable observations regarding their doctrine and their arguments. As we have just noted, Paul refers to their teaching as a different gospel, one that has confused the Galatians and perverted the gospel of Christ (1:6-7). If this were a direct refutation of the Christian<sup>68</sup> message—that is, a denial of Jesus as the Christ—Paul would neither have called it a gospel nor would it have confused (1:7; 5:10) or “bewitched” (3:1) the Galatians; a direct refutation would clarify the contrast more than obscuring it. Furthermore, only a modification of the gospel of Christ could “pervert” it. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the opponents considered themselves Christians and that the

Galatians received them as such.<sup>69</sup>

We can also conclude that a key part of the opponents' teaching involved the need for the Galatians to be circumcised (2:3; 5:1-3, 6, 11-12; 6:12-15). This has led many scholars to conclude that the opponents were Jewish Christians.<sup>70</sup> Because of Paul's extended engagement of Abrahamic themes (especially in the light of his novel interpretations), it is conceivable that the opponents had appealed to Abraham and the original covenant of circumcision in their arguments, and this would also imply a Jewish heritage. It is doubtful that the opponents came from within the Galatian church of Paul's converts, but likely that they were outsiders, because, as noted above, Paul always talks about them in the third person and never addresses them directly, as he does the Galatians.<sup>71</sup> In fact, Paul does not seem to be certain exactly who they are (3:1, 5:7, 10).

There is insufficient evidence to equate the Galatian opponents with the false believers who were spies (2:4) or the "people from James" (2:12) that Paul refers to in his account of prior conflicts.<sup>72</sup> Though it is possible that Paul may have meant to imply the similarity of the opposition, the events of the Jerusalem/Antioch story do not correlate well with the Galatian incident. What is clear, however, is that Paul believes the central issue in these prior conflicts to be directly related to the present situation in Galatia: *by what means* are Gentiles to enter the church of Christ? We may well wonder whether the concession of the Jerusalem elders to a Noachian standard for Gentiles represented the *minimum* requirement only—and left their conception of the *ideal* Gentile response intact (i.e. circumcision and proselyte conversion). In the case of Gentiles who conform to the minimum and not the ideal (i.e. those who remain uncircumcised), a central issue would

involve the question *to what degree* Gentiles and Jews may be united in Christ *socially*. The table fellowship incident at Antioch is the perfect stage for this drama, and Paul has the first, last, and only word in the performance. (Whether verses 2:15-21 represent Paul's continued argument to Peter or his explanation to the Galatians is unclear.)

There is also no conclusive evidence that the opponents were sent by the Jerusalem apostles, and Paul's account of the council's verdict (2:3, 6-10) would certainly suggest otherwise. Dunn speculates that Paul's confrontation with Peter at Antioch effected a break with the Jerusalem elders.<sup>73</sup> He implies that the council may have reversed its decision, and the "people from James" came to Antioch to correct the problem and reinstate the proper requirements for Gentiles, later branching out into Asia Minor to apply similar corrections in the churches that were begun by Paul while he was still under the endorsement of Jerusalem.<sup>74</sup> There is no Pauline record of such a split, and no solid evidence that Jerusalem was behind a comprehensive Judaizing project among Gentiles. Though it is likely that the opponents in Galatia had some prior connection with the apostles and may have even *claimed* that they represented the apostles (or assumed they did), Paul seems unaware of any such claim, or surely he would have much more explicitly addressed it.<sup>75</sup> He surely would not have refrained from commenting on Jerusalem's betrayal, or restrained his critique of the leaders and "pillars" in Jerusalem as he did.

However, it does seem clear in ch. 1-2 that Paul is defending himself by affirming the Jerusalem elders' endorsement of his ministry and the validity of his law-free gospel to the Gentiles. This would suggest that the opponents had attacked Paul's credibility, or

that Paul thought they had. We cannot reconstruct the opponents' charges from Paul's defense, however, because we cannot be sure of Paul's knowledge and understanding of the charges. With limited knowledge of the propaganda against him, Paul's reaction may have been more of "shotgun" approach than a direct rebuttal of specifics.<sup>76</sup>

More about the opponents doctrine may become clear in considering the Galatians' responses to them below. It should be noted at this point, however, that the scope of this thesis will not permit an engagement of the debate as to whether Paul uses the term Galatia to refer to churches in the northern areas of Asia Minor (those who would call themselves Galatians) or the churches Paul founded in southern Asia Minor according to the record in Acts (which were within the territory officially designated as Galatia by Rome). It will also not be possible to address the debate as to how the epistle to the Galatians fits into the chronology of Paul's letters. Though considering parallels in other churches may have value, we must abstain from conclusions based upon any supposed historical progression of the Judaizing problem in Paul's letters. Furthermore, conclusions based on any supposed development of Paul's theology throughout his letters lack specific relevance, as our focus here is only on the unity of the epistle to the Galatians and the connection of Paul's theology and paranesis in his thought *at that time*.

## The State of the Galatians' Response to the Opponents

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel...” (1:6). Here Paul acknowledges that at least some of the Galatians had already accepted the message of the opponents, and marvels at the speed with which the opponents have convinced them. In 4:8-11, Paul presents a disturbing assessment:

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods. Now, however, that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits? How can you want to be enslaved to them again? You are observing special days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted.

Paul here describes the Galatians as having *regressed* in some sense back to their former enslaved state as pagans, emphasizing calendrical observances. As noted above in the survey of scholarship (p. 16), some scholars have concluded that the Galatian opponents could not have just been Christian Jews encouraging proselyte conversion, but were perhaps Gnostics, Hellenistic spiritualists, or Jewish mystics. Because circumcision was indisputably a central issue, some of these scholars have suggested that it was a sort of mystical initiation. This is an imaginative solution to the problem, but it is unnecessary. As we will see when engaging Paul's arguments regarding freedom and slavery below, this correlation of the Judaizing movement with the former pagan state of the Galatians makes perfect sense. They have been set free by Christ at great price, but now desire to trade some of their freedom for a more regimented form of religion. Paul is driving home the point that the elements of Jewish ritual observance are as “weak and beggarly” as the pagan elements the Galatians were formerly in bondage to. Moreover, their current state

is actually worse, because by deserting the freedom in Christ they had already attained, they are deserting the One who called them to that freedom. Paul's passionate response is to be expected in light of his prior struggles in establishing the law-free gospel to the Gentiles—and his role in imparting that freedom to the Galatians. Such extreme polemic is distinctively Pauline. No Gnostic/mystic opponents are required to reconcile Paul's polemic to the context.

Though the sections from Galatians above indicate some ritual observance has begun, it is clear that the Galatians for the most part are not full proselytes yet. Verses like 4:12, 5:1-3, and 5:10 make it clear that Paul still has hope that the Galatians may make the right choice and the crisis may be averted (see also 6:1, 9, 12-13). Paul's whole force of indicative/imperative argument further implies that the Galatians have not yet lost it all (3:26-27, 29; 4:6-7, 28, 31; 5:10, 13, 16, 25). Furthermore, Paul's warning that if they are circumcised they will be obligated to keep the entire law (5:2-3) at the very least indicates that many are not yet circumcised, and probably suggests that some have not fully considered the implications of being judged by the standard of full Torah observance. In all of this, Paul is clearly trying to dissuade those still considering circumcision.

Finally, Paul does not seem to address any Galatians who have already been circumcised. That none have been circumcised yet is unlikely. Perhaps those who have already gone too far are being referred to by Paul in the third person, like the opponents. It is debated whether 6:12-13 refers to the opponents or to those Galatians who have been circumcised and are attempting to get their fellow Galatians to follow suit—or both. We

cannot resolve this ambiguity here, but would note the motivations to “not be persecuted for the cross of Christ” and to be able to “boast about your flesh.”

One of the important issues that Paul addresses in the Galatians paranesis is division in the church (5:15, 26). Certainly the Judaizing movement could have exacerbated any existing divisions. If some Galatians have been circumcised and are either pressuring their resistant brethren or withdrawing from them, this may be a major ground of division. However, Paul’s paranesis regarding division does not seem to explicitly address this issue. The exhortation in 6:1 to gently restore one who has been “detected in a transgression” hardly seems to apply to the case of the recently circumcised brother who is now “obligated to keep the whole law” and is cut off from Christ (5:3-4). It seems clear that the division in the paranetic section involves more than the different responses to the opponents’ Judaizing doctrine (and the latter may represent a more irreconcilable schism that is not being addressed in the paranesis). What were the specific conflicts not related to the Judaizing movement? Of course we cannot know. We can only recognize that the paranesis addresses conflicts in the church never explicitly connected to Judaizing.<sup>77</sup>

## The Attraction of the Opponents' Doctrine

We must ask why the Galatians responded as favorably as they did to the opponents and their message of Torah observance for Gentile Christians. We will need to consider three areas of attraction: theological, social, and practical/ethical. These categories involve substantial overlap. They will be briefly introduced here, but will be revisited in the following chapters in the contexts of Paul's theology and ethics.

The theological attraction of the opponents' arguments to the Galatians should not be underestimated; Paul would not have engaged in such extended theological exposition if he were not certain of its importance to his recipients. Paul's extended focus on the Abrahamic narrative signals that he considers that motif directly relevant to the opponents' theology. The opponents may have largely based their argument on Abraham's obedience and the covenant of circumcision. A further indication that Paul is probably responding to the opponent's theological exposition is the way he radically reinterprets the Abrahamic story to yield new meanings that contradict the traditional Jewish understanding. We will examine Paul's innovative reinterpretations in depth below. Suffice to say here that Paul's response would make much sense if the opponents were using the Abrahamic story to persuade the Galatians that they should follow Abraham's obedient example and confirm themselves as the children of the covenant through circumcision. However, even if Paul misinterpreted the opponents' message, as some contend, this is not really problematic. Our thesis is that *Paul's* theology and *Paul's* ethics in Galatians are directly related; thus, the relationship of Paul's theology to the opponents' theology is not the central issue. We can at least safely conclude that Paul



assesses a theological motive in the Galatians' positive response to the opponents, and that he is in some way addressing what he supposes the opponents' theological arguments to be.

Paul stresses the Galatians' identity as the true children of Abraham through his promised seed (singular), the Christ (3:16), and in this his theological focus addresses the issue of the Galatians' social identity as well. The Galatians were former worshippers of pagan deities who had rejected that identity and lifestyle, and, in the midst of overwhelming social pressure and possible ostracism, were attempting to understand and maintain their new identity. This would have been especially difficult after Paul left Galatia and they could no longer rely on his strong leadership. As Barclay notes, the Galatians' new identity as Christians "involved not only massive cognitive readjustments but also social dislocation...[and] serious disruption in...relationships with family, friends, fellow club members, business associates, and civic authorities."<sup>78</sup> Thus, in addition to alienation from their pagan culture, there may have been conflicts with civil authorities regarding abstinence from emperor worship. And though the Galatians had received a gospel with foundations in Judaism and the Jewish Messiah, they were, as uncircumcised Gentiles, outsiders from the local synagogue. We do not know certainly if the local synagogue would have still accepted circumcised followers of Jesus at this date, but an early date for Galatians would increase the likeliness. The synagogue may have represented a third front of opposition against the Galatian Christians, and reconciliation with the Jewish community would have been desirable.

The Jewish-Christian opponents who came to Galatia probably identified themselves with the true apostles of Jesus and the true Jerusalem church. The opportunity to be connected with the true Jerusalem-based Christian movement may have been very attractive for the socially dislocated and marginalized Galatians. If the local synagogue accepted circumcised Christians, this would have been a great attraction also. Community observance of the traditional Jewish festivals and rituals would be served to reinforce the Galatians' identity and unity. In the light of these attractions, Paul's early comments about his relationship with Jerusalem and the apostles make sense. Paul's remarks in 2:6 about the Jerusalem leaders' status not being particularly important to him stop short of being specifically deprecatory or accusatory; however, his comments would serve to discourage an inordinate estimation of the Jerusalem apostles and the Jerusalem community as the social/ethnic model for Gentile Christian communities outside of Palestine.<sup>79</sup>

Membership in any society involves an established moral code. Paul's gospel of freedom in Christ and walking in the Spirit might have seemed a bit ambiguous to the Galatians as compared with their previous culture, and even more so in contrast to the Torah of the Jews. In the context of real conflicts within the church, Paul's freedom theology may have seemed to the Galatians to lack clear and practical answers about how to respond to specific problems.<sup>80</sup> In the context of strained relations outside the church, charges of lawlessness might also be a problem. These need not always have been charges of licentious/libertine behavior, per se, but simply the absence of a defined and observable legal system. Thus, to address conflicts in the church and stem the tide of

misunderstandings among outsiders, the Galatians may have now desired to transform some of their ambiguous ideological “freedom” into a more regimented form of religion that would have greater practical value.<sup>81</sup>

A return to their former submission to pagan deities they had expressly rejected would have been the Galatian Christians’ least viable option, and they would not have considered the imperial cult an option. The Christian cult itself may have been seen as a sort of a new mystery religion, which would not have helped them escape charges of libertinism. Certain philosophical movements may have been attractive to the Galatians, but we have no good evidence of this. Having gone from being worshipers of pagan deities to worshipers of the Jewish God and Messiah, devotional structure would be their more likely inclination. The ancient and respected code of the Jews may have been particularly attractive to the Galatians because of its effectiveness in alleviating internal conflicts. The Torah much more fully addresses correct behavior within the community, and the appropriate recompenses for all manner of violations are defined.<sup>82</sup> As noted above, communal observance of traditional rituals produced a unity among the Jews transcending that of many cultures.<sup>83</sup> The Torah also embodied many of the Hellenistic virtues that the Galatians would esteem, but invested them with greater meaning in the context of God’s revelation of them.<sup>84</sup> In terms of the Galatian Christians’ position in the greater societal structure, embracing Torah would *not* have represented a betrayal of their Christian stand against paganism or the imperial cult, and it may have provided some exemption from compulsion regarding the latter if they were esteemed to be a sect of the Jews and thus a *religio licita*. If some of the persecution the Galatians experienced came

from the Jewish community itself, the alleviation of this conflict could have been a consideration. Most importantly, Torah observance would have associated the Galatian church with an established subculture well represented throughout the empire—and respected by many.<sup>85</sup>

## **Chapter Three**

### **Paul's Theological Arguments**

A comprehensive engagement of Paul's theologizing in Galatians is not possible within the limited scope of this paper. Our goal in this chapter is to identify the major Pauline concepts and motifs that will inform our study of Paul's ethics in the next chapter. We will consider the importance of Paul's appeal to the Galatians' personal experience. We will be especially interested in how the biblical narratives appropriated by Paul are reinterpreted and invested with radically new meaning. We will observe continuity and discontinuity with Judaism in Paul's arguments, considering how his redefinitions and modifications serve and illuminate his purposes. We will seek an understanding of the social function of the reinterpretations of traditional motifs in breakaway religious communities. We will consider how such reinterpretations function in apocalyptic/eschatological thought and signal transition to the new age, and observe the presence of an apocalyptic framework in Galatians. We will observe the indicative/imperative dynamics that are essential to Paul's thought in Galatians (and elsewhere), and consider parallels in Stoicism and the ancient ethical tradition.

## Appeal to the Law-Free Gospel to the Gentiles

Paul's response to the Galatians begins with an appeal to the history of the law-free gospel to the Gentiles (1:11-2:21), followed by an appeal to the history of the Galatian church's reception of the gospel (3:1-5; see also 4:13-15). We have briefly visited the issue of the Antioch confrontation and the question to what degree uncircumcised Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians may be united socially. Though we cannot address many interesting aspects of this confrontation, the central issue for Paul is the equality of Jews and Gentiles through faith in Christ. Paul's argument in 2:14-21 (whether historical or reflective) against Peter's inconsistency provides the transition into Paul's arguments to the Galatians and introduces the main themes.<sup>86</sup>

Peter's withdrawal from the Gentiles upon the arrival of Jerusalem Jews signified that something was yet lacking for the complete social equality of Jew and Gentile; the observed social reality contradicted the revelation in Christ. Here we see a disparity of indicative and imperative; the separatist behavior does not correlate with their unified identity in Christ. This, more than simple hypocrisy, is Paul's charge: "they were not *acting* consistently with the truth of the gospel..." (2:14, emphasis mine). We would note here that Paul's argument is not against works proper, but against the works of the law that maintain Jewish identity in such a way as to involve necessary separation from Gentiles.<sup>87</sup> To maintain these former Jewish identity markers would effectively force Gentiles to proselytize if they wished to have complete unity in Christ with believing Jews. Hence Paul's question: how could Peter, who had already transgressed the traditional separation of Jews and Gentiles in table fellowship, then reverse his stance and

“compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?” (2:14)

Paul esteems the Antioch issue and his position regarding it to be directly relevant to the Galatian crisis.<sup>88</sup> The opponents at Galatia operate on the premise that the traditional Jewish identity markers of circumcision and Torah observance are still in place in Christ and the Galatians’ incomplete adoption of Jewish identity leaves their identity in Christ deficient and incomplete. Paul’s gospel involves an understanding that these divisions are no longer valid, that being identified with Christ supersedes traditional identity markers. Paul defines the traditional Jewish identity markers as circumcision and the works of the law, and identifies the new mark of the Christian as *faith in Christ*.

Paul appeals here to the events that signal the inauguration of this new age of faith and confirm the believers’ identity in Christ. The *crucifixion of Christ* is the crucial event in the new covenant and the new status of believers.<sup>89</sup> Christ by his death sets believers free from the present evil age (1:4) and redeems them from the curse of the law by becoming a curse himself (3:13; Deut. 21:23). Christ died condemned by the law, and similarly, Paul states that through the law he died to the law, being crucified with Christ (2:19). The result is that now Christ lives in him, and he lives to God by faith (2:20,19). By baptism into Christ the believer is clothed with Christ (3:27). Justification can no longer come from the law, only through faith in Christ (2:16). To seek justification from the law is to nullify the work of Christ—both regarding the social unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ and individual justification (2:21; 5:2, 4). We should recognize here the indicative/imperative formula: the indicative is justification by faith in Christ (2:16), and the imperative is *living* by faith in Christ (2:20). Conversely, the implication is that

because justification does not come from the law any longer, so the law should no longer prescribe the behavior of the believer.



## Appeal to the Galatians' Experience of the Spirit

While the crucifixion of Christ and the identification of the believer in his crucifixion (2:20) is the crucial event in new age and change of status, the absolute evidence of the reality and efficacy of the event is the *experience of the Spirit*. This is the first and most compelling argument Paul directs to the Galatians.

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified! The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? Did you experience so much for nothing?—if it really was for nothing. Well then, does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?  
(3:1-5)

Paul here appeals to their personal experience: they *received* the Spirit, *started* in the Spirit, *experienced* much, and God's supply of the Spirit was accompanied by *miracles* in the church. The indicative/imperative disparity seen here is in beginning with the Spirit and ending with the flesh. Here Paul subtly introduces a radical hermeneutic that he will employ to great effect. His novel employment of Spirit/flesh dualism in this context facilitates correlation of the Spirit with faith (believing), which implies the parallel correlation of the works of the law with the flesh!<sup>90</sup> We will engage Paul's use of flesh/Spirit dualism more later, including his blurring of the different senses of *flesh* to imply astounding correlations. His appeal to the Galatians' actual experience of the Spirit (which is not falsifiable) is used to validate his theology.

Another appeal to the Galatians' experience is seen in 4:4-6. The goal of God's redemption is for those enslaved under the law to be adopted as children, and this

transformation is evidenced by the Spirit being sent forth into the believers' hearts, crying "Abba, Father." The Galatians' experience of the Spirit evidences that they are already children of God. The reverse implication here would be that those who are yet promoting the law are not yet delivered from slavery and adopted as children of God.

One further observation is in order here. The giving of the Spirit not only evidences the state of the believer; it has *eschatological* significance, signaling the coming of the new age. In traditional Jewish thought, this involved the future pouring out of the Spirit on the nation of Israel (Ez 37:1-14, 39:28-29; Joel 2:28-29; Is 32:15-18, 44:1-5). The uncircumcised represent the unholy and cannot receive the Spirit. Because law-observance is an absolute requirement, only the Gentiles who proselyte-converted could receive the promise. Even circumcised Jews would require a new circumcision of the *heart*.<sup>91</sup> This was at the least assumed to be restricted to those with physical circumcision, of course. That the uncircumcised could receive the Spirit as evidence of this eschatological circumcision of the heart while law-observant Jews did not is unthinkable, yet Paul claims that this has already taken place.<sup>92</sup> The presence of an apocalyptic/eschatological theme in Galatians will be explored more fully later. I present it here to introduce Paul's intention of reinforcing the Galatians' understanding of their experience of the Spirit in this context.

Paul also appeals to the former closeness of his relationship with the Galatians, and laments the state of contention that exists (4:13-16). His emotional appeals in concert with the appeals to the Galatians' own experiences would have been more powerful than all the logic in the world.<sup>93</sup>

Before moving on to the Abrahamic narratives, we would note the indicative/imperative formulas Paul establishes. Having been justified by faith, the believer/community must continue to live by faith. Having begun in the Spirit, the believer/community must continue in the Spirit. These precepts inhabit Paul's thought throughout Galatians, and are foundational to his ethics later.

## Reinterpretation of the Abrahamic Covenant

Paul has appealed to the Galatians' reception of the Spirit as proof of their justification by God on the basis of their faith in Christ. In 3:6, Paul correlates this faith with Abraham's response to God when promised an innumerable multitude of descendants: "He [God] brought him [Abraham] outside and said, 'Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness." (Genesis 15:5-6) This is a crucial proof-text in Paul's argument, as it is one of the few verses in the LXX where *faith* and *righteousness* are used together.<sup>94</sup> Paul does not make any reference here to Abraham's circumcision in Genesis 17 that is to be the sign of his covenant with God, as he does in Romans 4:9-13. For Paul to have done so here would have defeated his purpose, as the Galatians/opponents could have countered that their circumcision would likewise be the sign following their faith, just as Abraham's was.<sup>95</sup> Paul also makes no reference to the testing of Abraham in which he was found faithful (Genesis 22:1-18; James 2:21-24), nor to the widely accepted understanding of faith as *faithfulness*.<sup>96</sup> Thus Paul completely divorces *believing* from any subsequent action as the sole criteria in God's judgment of righteousness. It is those who *believe* like Abraham who are his descendants (3:7).

In 3:8, Paul explains God's blessing pronounced on Abraham as a prophecy of the gospel by which the Gentiles will be justified by faith alone (without circumcision). Genesis 18:18 contains the critical term Paul needs to utilize—*nations (gentiles)*—but this verse is not worded precisely as a promise spoken to Abraham. Genesis 12:3,

however, is clearly worded as a promise, but it uses the word *families* instead of *nations*. Paul simply combines the verses, so God seems to use the word *nations* in speaking his promise to Abraham. Paul's conclusion is that all the Gentiles who *believe* like Abraham are the ones to whom the blessing pertains (3:9).<sup>97</sup> Here again Paul is selective, omitting the verse that refers to Abraham's descendants *doing* righteousness as a condition of the promise (Gen 18:19), which could work against his purposes. Paul's argument is that these promises to Abraham specifically refer to his law-free gospel to the Gentiles.

In 3:10-13, Paul juxtaposes Abraham's blessing based on his faith with the "curse of the law." In the original passage in Deut. 27:26, the curse is on those who do *not* continue in everything the law commands. But using Habakkuk 2:4—"the righteous live by their faith"—conjoined with Leviticus 18:5—"keep my statutes and my ordinances; by doing so one shall live"—Paul here performs a reinterpretational magic act that dazzles the senses, concluding that those who try to keep the law are the cursed ones!<sup>98</sup> Using his reading of Deut. 21:23—"Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"—Paul concludes that this curse of the law is conquered by Christ substitutionally becoming the curse for the believers.<sup>99</sup> The whole plan all along was that "in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (3:14).<sup>100</sup> In this finale of reasoning, Abraham's promise that comes to the Gentiles through faith in Christ is *the Spirit!*<sup>101</sup> Of course, there is no place in the Tanak where Abraham is connected with the promise of the Spirit. Paul correlates Abraham's faith, by which he received righteousness, with the Galatians' faith, by which they received the Spirit.<sup>102</sup> Thus, the Galatians' experience of receiving the Spirit is

tantamount to God declaring them righteous through faith.<sup>103</sup>

Having introduced Christ's crucifixion as the central event inaugurating the blessing to the Gentiles, Paul will explicitly identify Christ in the Abrahamic covenant itself. In 3:15, Paul first exploits the language of the LXX, which translates the Hebrew word for covenant, *berit*, to the Greek *diatheke*, which could be used to refer to a last will and testament.<sup>104</sup> The Hebrew idea of covenant more closely correlated with the model of the *suzerain-vassal* treaty of the ancient Near East, a covenant between an imperial power and a vassal kingdom.<sup>105</sup> In no wise could *berit* have referred to a legal contract between equals (as using the Greek *syntheke* would have implied). Betz and Longenecker are among those who have noted that *diatheke* did not inherently involve immutability,<sup>106</sup> but, in using the word to refer to a final testament and designated heir, Paul clearly affirms that it does.<sup>107</sup>

In 3:16, Paul makes an argument regarding Christ as the sole heir of the Abrahamic covenant (the oft-asserted flaws of which may not be entirely warranted). The word *seed* (NASB, NIV, NKJV, KJV; *offspring* in NRSV, RSV) can be used as a collective singular in both Hebrew and Greek. As such, considering Paul's argument here as if it were essentially linguistic makes no sense. The issue is *to whom the promise pertains*. First and most precisely, Abraham's *seed* meant Isaac—the singular child of the promise—and not Ishmael. (Used as a collective singular here, *seed* could have implied both sons.)<sup>108</sup> The word *seed* then becomes a collective noun in referring to all those who are descended from the one chosen seed—Isaac.<sup>109</sup> Paul, however, does not have Isaac but Christ in mind as the Seed of Abraham, and the collective term *seed* refers to those

who belong to Christ—they are the heirs of Abraham, recipients of the promise (3:29). Paul would have the Galatians understand that they are Abraham’s seed through Christ.

We may note here that among Paul’s arguments, this is one of the few that would not have been absurd to Jewish-Christian opponents; the idea of the Messiah as *Seed* of Abraham was familiar. In Jubilees 16, angelic visitors foretell that Abraham would have six sons after Isaac, who, like Ishmael, would become Gentile nations. One of Isaac’s descendents would be unique:

The seed of his sons should be Gentiles, and be reckoned with the Gentiles; but from the sons of Isaac one should become a holy seed, and should not be reckoned among the Gentiles. For he should become the portion of the Most High, and all his seed had fallen into the possession of God, that it should be unto the Lord a people for (His) possession above all nations and that it should become a kingdom and priests and a holy nation. (Jubilees 16:17a-19a)<sup>110</sup>

Continuing his discussion of the Abrahamic promise as an immutable last will and testament, Paul argues in 3:17 that the Mosaic Law cannot annul or supersede the Abrahamic covenant that preceded it. Of course no Jew would have contended that the Mosaic *annulled* the Abrahamic; Paul’s argument seems to be directed toward refuting that the Mosaic law added requirements to the Abrahamic covenant (and perhaps, as was commonly believed, that Abraham somehow kept all the Torah by an innate knowledge of it 400+ years before it was given).<sup>111</sup> Thus, the inheritance can have only one origin—because it comes from the promise, it cannot also come from the law (3:18).

Paul now turns to the purpose of the law in 3:19-25. The Law was installed temporarily, because of transgressions, and applied only until the promised Seed would come to receive the promises (3:19a). This temporariness certainly ran counter to the

Jewish idea of the law enduring forever.<sup>112</sup> Paul further argues that the law was not directly received from God, but was ordained through angels and then by a mediator (Moses); in contrast, he maintains that the promises to Abraham came directly from God (3:19-20).<sup>113</sup> The law, though righteous, could not impart righteousness (3:21); its function was to deal with transgressions. The most obvious interpretation of this would be the Hellenistic idea of the divine origin of the law to control criminal activity.<sup>114</sup> But in 3:22-23, Paul seems to have something else in mind. The more Epicurean concept was that the law was given to protect those who did not require a law from those who did, and this is not unlike the Jewish idea of the “fence” around Israel.<sup>115</sup> However, Paul’s argument is that the law *imprisoned all under sin*, which would imply that the Jewish “fence” was less protecting a fortress than locking down a penitentiary (3:22).<sup>116</sup> For believers, however, the law *imprisoned* and *guarded* them until faith was revealed (3:23), thus implying a more positive function.<sup>117</sup> The law could not justify or impart righteousness; the law was the temporary disciplinarian<sup>118</sup> until the time when justification by faith through Christ was revealed (3:24-25).

In 3:26-29, Paul begins to make his conclusions explicit. The time of the disciplinarian’s control is past because faith has come. The Galatians are now children of God through faith. By baptism, they are clothed with Christ.<sup>119</sup> Their identity is now in Christ, not in the former Jewish identity markers of Torah. The great divisions—Jew and Greek, male and female, slave and free—are all done away in Christ. Paul’s conclusion is that, because they belong to Christ, *the Galatians are Abraham’s seed*, and heirs according to the Abrahamic promise.



In 4:1-7, Paul employs a metaphor of children under a guardian that correlates to 3:23-25. While not precisely dealing with Abrahamic theme, it does further address the purpose of the law regarding the children of the promise. It is interesting, to say the least, how Paul harmonizes the themes of guardianship, slavery to the law, and the former *paganism* of the Galatians. The minor son placed under a trustee appointed by the father does not yet have the rights of an adult over his inherited property, to be sure, but to say that he is “no better than a slave”<sup>120</sup> hints at the upset to follow. Paul correlates the son’s “slavery” here to the Galatians’ former state being enslaved to “elemental spirits of the world.” For a Jew, this could allude to being subject to the “elementary teachings” of the Mosaic Law.<sup>121</sup> However, Paul correlates this with the Galatians’ experience of being “enslaved by beings that by nature are not gods” in 4:8-9.<sup>122</sup> Thus, it would seem that the Jewish Law and the pagan elemental spirits have performed the same function in enslaving the children of the promise! The analogy seems to break down further in Paul’s conclusion. God sent his son, born as a human under the law, to redeem those under the law, so they can receive *adoption* as sons. Redemption and adoption agree with the Galatians understanding of their experience, having not been children of God previously (4:8), and having been delivered from pagan elemental spirits by Christ (4:9). Christ’s birth under the law can perhaps be understood (in Greco-Roman perspective) as his birth under pagan elemental spirits. However, as regards the *sons* kept safe under guardianship by the provision of the father (i.e. God), can their inheritance at maturity really be described as *adoption*?<sup>123</sup> Beyond the analogical breakdown, *adoption* does not square with the Jewish understanding; however, this is an argument made to *Gentiles*,<sup>124</sup>

and agrees with the Galatians' experience. Paul confirms that receiving the Spirit of God's Son in their hearts, crying out as a child to the father, proves their adoption as children (4:6-7). Conversely, to submit to Jewish law-keeping is tantamount to returning to their former slavery to idols (4:9-11). That this correlation makes sense *to the Galatians* is all that matters to Paul.

In 4:11-20, Paul again addresses the Galatians' past experience and their intimate relationship with Paul, as we have noted above. Witherington explains, "It is no surprise that Paul's arguments are so emotion laden....He knows that appeals to the emotions and to the Galatians' own experiences are more likely to move them than all the logic in the world."<sup>125</sup>

In 4:21-31, Paul presents his most stunning reinterpretational argument, presenting the Abrahamic story of Hagar/Ishmael and Sarah/Isaac as an "allegory" of freedom and slavery. Paul's "strange and even arbitrary exegesis"<sup>126</sup> probably indicates the opponents' use of this very story to make their point.<sup>127</sup> Whereas the opponents would have wanted to stress that Israel and the law came from the lineage of the child of the promise, Paul so violently reinterprets the story that he concludes the biological descendants of Isaac under the law as the enslaved children of Hagar and Ishmael! Contrariwise, the Gentiles who believe in Christ are the true children of Isaac. One can only imagine the consternation and outrage of the opponents at this point.

We would observe here that Abraham fathers the Gentiles through Ishmael *before* he fathers Isaac, yet Isaac is the one to whom the firstborn inheritance pertains (and so with Jacob, coming after Esau). Philo's allegorical treatment of Hagar/Ishmael and

Sarah/Isaac as elementary learning/sophistry and virtue/wisdom respectively could have been familiar to Paul and the Jewish-Christians opponents at Galatia.<sup>128</sup> Regarding the comparison of Philo's allegory to Paul's, Longenecker observes that there are "surface" similarities:

"Both depend on similar elements in the story: The contrast between slave and free; the two sons; the banishment of Hagar and Ishmael in favor of Sarah and Isaac. In both, Hagar and Ishmael represent a preliminary and preparatory stage that is superseded by something greater..."<sup>129</sup>

As Paul is dealing here with freedom versus slavery rather than levels of learning or virtue, his interpretation and Philo's are not harmonious—yet one cannot help but remember Paul's reference to "elemental spirits" above. However, Paul does not have the Mosaic Law in mind; here, the two covenants are both in Abraham, and the covenant of slavery comes *first*, followed by the covenant of promise. Thus, this sequence parallels the later sequence of the giving of the law and the coming of faith in Christ. In both cases, the inferior is displaced by that which comes after, and slavery by freedom.

The indicative/imperative formula in Paul's conclusion here is especially interesting as it pertains to the opponents. Because the Galatians are the children of the promise, like Isaac (4:28), and children of the free woman, not the slave (4:31), they will be also persecuted by the slaves, just as Spirit-born Isaac was persecuted by flesh-born Ishmael (4:29). "But what does the scripture say? Drive out the slave and her child; for the child of the slave will not share the inheritance with the child of the free woman" (4:30). It seems Paul is telling the Galatians to physically drive out the opponents!<sup>130</sup> Considering Paul's confidence that the opponents would "pay the penalty" in 5:10 and his wish that they would "castrate themselves" in 5:12, casting them out seems to be

exactly what Paul hoped to accomplish.

We cannot address all of the interesting aspects and irregularities of Paul's allegory, of course. A final observation here is important regarding Paul's use of *flesh* in 4:23 and 29 to refer to "the child who was born according to the flesh." Paul's usage of *flesh* here signifies *human means or effort* as well as *human descent*.<sup>131</sup> The idea of flesh as human effort is in harmony with 3:3, noted above, and this verse connects "ending with the flesh" to the works of the law (3:2). In 4:23, *flesh* is opposed to the *promise*, while in 4:29, *flesh* is opposed to the *Spirit*, as it also is in 3:3. We have already observed Paul's correlation of the Abrahamic promise with the coming of the Spirit, and we see it reinforced again here.<sup>132</sup> At this point Paul has well established the flesh/Spirit dualism he will continue to employ to great effect.<sup>133</sup> We will return to this in the next chapter.

Galatians 5:1-12 follows the anti-circumcision and freedom themes so closely that its relationship as part of the authentic Galatians letter is not in question.<sup>134</sup> While 5:7-12 focuses more specifically on the issue in Galatia (and perhaps more widespread opposition in 5:11), 5:1-6 concludes the preceding argument, and we will engage this here. 5:1 in particular may have perhaps been better located as emphatic conclusion at the end of ch. 4.<sup>135</sup> Betz identifies 5:1 as the first of three indicative/imperative formulas in the paranetic section<sup>136</sup> (the only one in the undisputed section). The indicative here springs from 4:31. The Galatians are children of the free woman, the heavenly Jerusalem (4:31, see 26). Christ has set them free to live in freedom (5:1). To submit again to the slavery from which Christ delivered them would render Christ's work of no benefit (5:2). This would be a decision to be cut off from Christ, a fall from grace (5:4, see 2:21).

The meaning of 5:3 may be twofold. The opponents may have been promoting the token initiation rite of circumcision apart from full Torah observance, or they may have not been explicit about what would be required of the Galatians later.<sup>137</sup> However, Paul may also be alluding to the freedom/slavery allegory here and driving home the point that one cannot return *partially* to slavery—the obligation to keep the entire law signifies a *total* return to slavery.

We will again note 5:5 below in the context of the eschatological/apocalyptic themes; at this point we would simply recognize the familiar Pauline *already-but-not-yet*. The Galatians, like Abraham, have been declared righteous by faith, as evidenced by the Spirit, but they must continue, through the Spirit, by faith, in the hope of the coming righteousness.<sup>138</sup> This eschatological *already-and-not-yet* works quite well with the Pauline indicative/imperative formulas, as we shall see.

The final verse in this section, 5:6, will be the most crucial to this thesis. Paul first makes an explicit declaration of the uselessness of the former identity markers of circumcision and uncircumcision, thus invalidating the opponents' argument regarding the incompleteness of the Galatians' status in Christ. More importantly, Paul here broaches the theme of *love—as the work of faith*. This is now the only real criterion. If not for this important transitional verse located in the undisputed section of Galatians, the proponents for the unity of the epistle may not have fared so well. As is it, this revolutionary dynamic grounds and informs Paul's ethical constructions at every turn, as we shall see. Finally, we would again note that Paul is not arguing against works as such. Here we see clearly that he is requiring works of love as the result of faith in Christ.<sup>139</sup>

As regards Paul's observed rhetorical deftness in turning Torah on its head, we may still wonder how effective this would have been in convincing the Galatians. We have noted that these narratives may well have been used by the opponents in their arguments to the Galatians, undoubtedly never considering that their obvious logic could be so impugned. Paul would have had to know that the opponents would consider his expositions ridiculous; the fact that Paul argues so confidently may indicate his assumption that the Galatian Gentiles did not have sufficient background in Jewish tradition to perceive the irregularity and absurdity in his reasoning. It would have taken great patience on the part of the opponents to systematically work through the body of Paul's expositions explaining the logical flaws according to Jewish traditional understanding to the Gentile ex-pagans. More importantly, Paul bases his arguments squarely on the Galatians' experience of the Spirit, which is not falsifiable by any logic, and the opponents would have had to reconcile their arguments to that experience—and validate it—at every turn. Finally, Paul's appeal to his own divine revelation (1:1, 11-12, 15-17; 2:1-2, 7-9) is also not falsifiable, and if the Galatians have indeed experienced events through Paul's ministry that they consider to be miracles (3:5), the appeal to the divine would carry substantial weight. Paul's appeal to personal revelation and the experience of Christ would imply that those who disagreed lacked these things. As Dunn points out, Paul's arguments need not make sense to the opponents.

We can hardly assume that such reasoning would have cut much ice with the other missionaries.... As for the Gentile converts at Galatia, their own experience of the Spirit should have been sufficient to confirm the basic position; all that was necessary beyond that was a sufficiently coherent defense to enable them to counter the propaganda of the other missionaries and to maintain their own self-understanding.<sup>140</sup>

## Continuity and Discontinuity

As we have seen, Paul repeatedly makes appeal to the biblical narratives in his epistle to the Galatians to buttress his arguments, but his interpretation and application of the traditional motifs represent novel understandings that are often revolutionary. Paul presents his gospel as the culmination of God's covenant promises in the Torah, but everything is now reinterpreted in light of the crucifixion of Christ and the coming of the Spirit by faith. The Christ event profoundly affects Paul's perception of everything, as Witherington notes:

Assessing continuity versus discontinuity with Judaism in Paul's thinking is critical. As a sectarian person, Paul over and over again takes up and uses his Jewish heritage but modifies it in the light of his understanding of the Christ event. The modification is profound, not trivial, affecting the way he views the nature of God, the function and purpose of the law, who the true people of God are, the criteria for being in that people, and the coming fulfillment of all things...<sup>141</sup>

While affirming continuity with the Jewish tradition, Paul appeals to direct revelation from God through Christ that validates all his hermeneutical activity in turning the common understandings of Torah inside-out and upside-down. We would certainly expect this theological continuity and discontinuity to affect the presentation and content of Paul's ethics as well.<sup>142</sup>

We have seen a few compelling examples of this continuity and discontinuity. Barclay notes that it is crucial for Paul to prove that Gentiles are the covenant children of Abraham and that their redemption is in continuity with the promises made to Abraham and scriptural declaration that God would justify the Gentiles by faith (3:8). On the other hand, Paul says that this faith was only revealed in Christ (3:23) Paul certainly was of a

different mind toward Christians before the gospel was revealed to him (1:11-17).<sup>143</sup>

This does not imply contradiction. As Sanders explains, it was with the revelation of Christ that Paul came to realize it was never God's plan for the law to identify the elect and recognized that God's plan to justify all by faith alone was previously announced in the Abrahamic narrative. The true meaning of the scripture was always present, but it was hidden until revealed in Christ.<sup>144</sup> (We would again note that if the true sense was still hidden to Paul's opponents, a deficiency in their experience of Christ is implied.)

In 4:1-7, the analogy of the child heir who is subject to guardians appointed by his father until coming to maturity takes an unexpected turn when the conclusion involves *slaves* being set free and then *adopted* as children! Thus, the idea of the Jews as children guarded by the law now reveals the slavery of Jews *and* Gentiles and the need for all to be set free and adopted.<sup>145</sup> We have noted the implied parallel between the law as pedagogue/disciplinarian (3:24) or guardian/trustee (4:2) and the slavery to elemental spirits (4:9). The Hagar/Ishmael and Sarah/Isaac allegory in 4:21-31 is the most revolutionary redefining of the Abrahamic covenant, yet in such discontinuity with the traditional understanding, Paul maintains the permanent validity of the Abrahamic covenant in continuity with the Galatians position in Christ.<sup>146</sup>

The blessing in 6:16 is perhaps the epitome of continuity and discontinuity. After reaffirming his conviction that circumcision and uncircumcision mean nothing any longer and a new creation in Christ is everything (15), Paul blesses those that walk according to this rule. The language here may indicate a traditional form of blessing, and is reminiscent of the conclusions of Psalms 125 and 128: "Peace be upon Israel!" Here



Paul pronounces his blessing upon those who follow the rule of the new creation: “Peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” Considering the immediate context (there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile), and Paul’s previous radical reidentifications (Jews can be Hagar’s children, Gentiles can be Sarah’s), it seems Paul is redefining the true Israel of God as those *Jews and Gentiles* that are united in Christ—to the exclusion of unbelieving Jews.<sup>147</sup> As Barclay points out, “if even the name ‘Israel’ can be so redefined, clearly nothing can be regarded as exempt” from radical reinterpretation in the light of Christ.<sup>148</sup>

## A Sociological Model of Breakaway Sects

Francis Watson has proposed that Paul's radical reinterpretation of traditional Judaism can best be understood as the ideology of a sect breaking away from its parent religion and seeking to legitimate its existence as the true heirs of the religious tradition.

“The social reality which underlies Paul's discussion of Judaism and the law is his creation of Gentile-Christian communities in sharp separation from the Jewish community. His theological reflection legitimates the separation of church from synagogue.”<sup>149</sup>

While Watson assumes a complete break between Paul and the Jerusalem church and blurs the distinction between Jewish-Christians and the synagogue, his insight into how reform movements and breakaway sects introduce unique reinterpretations of traditional themes to define themselves in contrast to their parent religion is helpful. Even if the break between Jerusalem and the Gentile congregations is overstated, the opposition of the circumcision faction in Galatia would have necessitated the development of sectarian ideology as a response, both to distinguish the Gentiles Christians as the true heirs of the promises to Abraham and discredit the more traditional understanding of the opponents. Clearly the development of sectarian ideology and separation/opposition from the parent religion are mutually dependent, and certain situations may invite the “chicken or the egg” question.

Watson uses two sociological models. The first model concerns how a religious movement is transformed into a sect as the result of opposition and responds by constructing clearly defined boundaries between itself and the parent religion.<sup>150</sup> The problem begins with a conflict between the charismatic leadership of the reformers and the traditional authority-structures. Because it cannot acquire the power to achieve its

goals, the reform movement must break away from the resistant tradition to survive. Because the new sect's original hopefulness in God's working in society has been frustrated, it adopts an insider/outsider dynamic and a focus on its eschatological vindication. At this point, "society outside the sect is written off. It stands condemned; it is liable to God's judgment. Salvation is to be found exclusively through membership of the sect. The sect is thus differentiated from the reform-movement by its alienation from society."<sup>151</sup> Though one might consider Watson's conclusions on the final state of the sect a bit too categorical, he rightly stresses the eschatological perspective that accompanies religious sectarianism, and we will return to this aspect.<sup>152</sup>

Watson's second sociological model concerns the sect's need for a shared ideology to legitimate the sect's separation from the parent religion. The first aspect of this is the denunciation of the sect's opponents, followed by the use of antithetical constructions in which the sect members represent light, truth, spirit, righteousness, etc., and the opponents the opposite. However, Paul's many antitheses in Galatians are rarely precisely focused on his opponents. This may be due to Paul's uncertainty as to whom he was dealing with, or more simply because he thought precise delineation of his opponents would not be helpful.

The final aspect of Watson's second model is "the reinterpretation of the religious traditions of the community as a whole in the light of the belief that the sectarian group is the sole legitimate heir to those traditions."<sup>153</sup> The goal of the sect's theological reinterpretation is the disqualification of all others outside the sect.<sup>154</sup> "In the parent religious community...there is only condemnation."<sup>155</sup>

This model, though stated in extreme terms, is helpful. The problem arises in relation to Watson's evaluation of Paul. Watson argues that the separation of church and synagogue "took place for practical reasons and not because of any theoretical incompatibility between the practice of Judaism and faith in Christ.... Faith in Christ is incompatible with works of the law because the church is separate from the synagogue."<sup>156</sup> If this were true, evaluating the relation of Paul's ethics to his theory would seem pointless. However, we can appreciate Watson's insight into how religious reinterpretations function in sectarian groups while maintaining that Paul's theoretical constructions and ethical systems are based on more than what was convenient for his political agendas.<sup>157</sup>

We are entitled to challenge Watson's predisposition that Paul's primary motive is to effect separation and demonize the parent religion. If Paul did tell the truth about his experiences, he received the revelation that Jews and Gentiles were being brought together into one body through the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, and the former divisions and identity markers no longer mattered. His stated goal was never separation from Jews; when separation seemed inevitable, Paul still affirmed Gentiles and Jews had been united in Christ (e.g. Romans 3:29-30, 4:12, 10:12). Paul's ideal was unity, though admittedly, that was often not possible.

Paul's agenda was to protect those communities he started from a variety of dangers, from insider and outsider groups trying to exert control in ways he thought were damaging. Paul was devoted to his "children" and often waxed passionate about their continuing in the truth of the gospel they had experienced. For our study to be profitable,

we must accept Paul's real concern for the welfare of his people, *and* we must maintain Paul's integrity as a believer himself seeking truth, not disregarding it whenever convenient, as Watson maintains.<sup>158</sup>

Witherington's assessment of Paul's integrity may help to balance the scales here.

The Paul who offered letters of theologizing and ethics had himself been transformed and was being transformed into the image of Christ... He had experienced his theology before he ever expressed it, had striven to live out his ethics before he ever exhorted others to go and do likewise... His new communities and converts, the body of Christ, gave him a context in which he could be embedded and do theology and ethics. He knew very well who he was, because he knew whose he was, and to whom he was called to preach and teach and nurture. His world was Christ and his body, and his thought as expressed in his letters makes regular journeys between these two poles.<sup>159</sup>

Witherington also recognizes Paul as a sectarian involved in helping his churches (made up of both Jews and Gentiles) to reinterpret and appropriate the religious concepts of traditional Judaism to better understand their new identity as children of God. Paul used his considerable rhetorical skill to great advantage in advancing his agenda but without compromising the integrity of what he believed.<sup>160</sup>

Paul's social agenda, of course, involved the legitimation of Christianity's existence in distinction from traditional Judaism, and, in the case of Gentiles, the legitimation of their faith in Christ without proselyte conversion. But Paul's social agenda involved much more.

It is a measure of his success as a rhetor that he was able to convince people of socially disconcerting notions about servanthood, self-sacrifice, equality of personhood, love of enemies and grace rather than reciprocity, using the formal conventions of the day to his advantage.<sup>161</sup>

The character of Paul's ministry was servanthood and self-sacrifice, based on the

example of Christ as he understood it. His ethics were based on a faith that works by love, and a freedom that chooses to serve others, so fulfilling the law of Christ. Paul challenged the social conventions of his day in affirming no distinction in God's evaluation between slaves and freemen, male and female, Jew and Gentile. Within the church, those of lower social status could be on equal footing with those of more privileged position, as brothers and sisters in the same family. The local church existed as a religious subculture in the larger society, but this did not involve an ideology demanding full separation.<sup>162</sup> The radical sectarianism Watson describes more closely applies to those churches rejected and persecuted by the parent society.

The best example of a Jewish breakaway sect contemporary to the early Christian movement is found at Qumran.<sup>163</sup> The scriptural exegesis found in some of the Qumran documents features radical reinterpretations of traditional Jewish texts and motifs, based on special revelations affirming the sect's chosen status and their imminent eschatological vindication.<sup>164</sup> The antitheses referring to the chosen faithful versus the outsiders are abundant, and Watson's model fits well here—a little better than it fits most of Paul's churches. The obvious differences seem to be found in the degree of separation from society (and explicit condemnation of it) and the specific character of the apocalyptic/eschatological thought. Notwithstanding, Watson is correct in his assessment of the importance of antitheses in Paul's reinterpretations in Galatians (and in his conclusion that the faith versus works antithesis is misunderstood in traditional Lutheran theology).<sup>165</sup> We would also maintain that apocalyptic/eschatological thought is a distinctive feature of Paul's theology, and it is to this aspect that we now turn.

## The Apocalyptic Context of Paul's Gospel

Even a cursory treatment of all of Paul's apocalyptic themes in Galatians is beyond the scope of our brief engagement here, but we can identify some major themes and observe an apocalyptic framework throughout the epistle. For the purposes of this study, we need not establish a precise distinction between *apocalyptic* and *eschatological*. However, we must at least specify what we mean to indicate by these interchangeable terms. John J. Collins offers a definition of an apocalypse as a revelation mediated by a supernatural being "disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world."<sup>166</sup> This duality between temporal and spatial is enhanced in Wayne A. Meeks' listing of apocalyptic characteristics. In brief, (1) secrets have been revealed to the author or prophet (2) having to do with an imminent cosmic transformation (3) which will separate this age from the age to come and (4) include final judgment, separation of the good from the wicked, and rectification of the world order. (5) The apocalyptic universe is characterized by three corresponding dualities: (a) cosmic: heaven/earth, (b) temporal: this age/the age to come, and (c) social: the sons of light/sons of darkness, righteous/unrighteous, the elect/the world.<sup>167</sup> The term *eschaton* need not refer to the end of the world per se, but to the cosmic transformation that inaugurates the new age, which is divinely revealed, and thus, apocalyptic.

The quickest way to begin to emphasize the importance of the apocalyptic in Galatians is to note that these themes characterize Paul's introduction and conclusion. In Galatians 1:1 (as in 1:12, 15-16; 2:2, 8-9), Paul emphasizes that his gospel commission to

the Gentiles came by divine revelation, and this revelation came through the resurrected Christ. In 1:3-4, Christ's sacrificial death has "set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of God, our Father."<sup>168</sup> In his conclusion in 6:16, Paul's final blessing is on those who follow the *new creation*, which is characterized by the complete reordering of social relationships in 6:15.<sup>169</sup> This new reality is inaugurated by *Christ's crucifixion* in 6:14, and Paul's participates in the new creation by his relation to that event: "the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." These few verses alone reveal characteristic apocalyptic/eschatological themes—which are some of the major themes of the epistle.

Resurrection is the great eschatological promise, and the resurrection of Jesus in Galatians 1:1 signals that all that follows is in line with that hope.<sup>170</sup> Resurrection is a major theme in the *already-and-not-yet* theology that is so prevalent in Paul and most of New Testament Christianity. Christ is the first fruit from the dead, and certifies the reality of the resurrection hope, but the believers are still hopefully looking forward to the realization of the promise. This tension of present reality and future hope in the context of the resurrection theme is seen in the conclusion in 6:14-16, as the cross of Christ signifies one's death in relation to the present world and subsequent life as a new creation—and yet the believer very much continues to struggle in hope in the present evil age. We may also see the *already-and-not-yet* tension in Paul's confession in 2:19-20, as Paul reckons himself crucified with Christ, and it is not he but Christ who now lives in him; on the other hand, he does continue to live his life in the flesh by faith in Christ.



Closely connected to the resurrection theme but much more explicitly expressed in Galatians is the theme of crucifixion. The transition from the old evil age to the new creation age is signaled by the death of Christ.<sup>171</sup> The reasons that Paul chose to focus on Christ's crucifixion more explicitly than his resurrection as the crucial event in this transition become apparent when we consider the ways Paul uses the themes of crucifixion and dying in Galatians and the correlations he seems to intend. In 1:4, Christ died for sins to set us free from the present evil age. In 2:19, Paul is crucified with Christ, and through the law dies to the law, so he might live to God. In 3:13, Christ's death redeems us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse himself (judged thus by the law). In 5:24, those in Christ have crucified the flesh and its desires.<sup>172</sup> And in 6:14-15, the cross of Christ signifies crucifixion of the believer to the world and the world to the believer, resulting in a new creation and the radical social reordering of relationships.<sup>173</sup> There are interesting parallels; for instance, in considering the things Christ's death is said to set us free from, *the law* accompanies the *present evil age*, the *flesh*, *social inequality*, and the *world!*<sup>174</sup> We again note the *already-and-not-yet* aspect. The curse of the law and social inequality are features of the present evil age that are said to be abolished in Christ. Though not realized in the world yet, this lack of divisions should be realized in the church of believers, according to Paul, to whom the world is crucified. The flesh and its desires, crucified by believers, are still being overcome in the life of believers living by the Spirit (5:16).

We can also note the implications of 3:13-14 and 2:19-20 considered together. It was under the law that Christ was condemned to death and it was the law that pronounced

him accursed. Through this action Paul affirms that Christ redeemed us. Dunn sees Jesus acting in a representative capacity here, as an “enactment of human destiny,” bearing the full imprint of the curse on himself so to “exhaust its power.”<sup>175</sup> The law cannot condemn and kill a person twice; after death its power is broken. The law condemned Christ and killed him, but God vindicated him and raised him, outside of the law and free from its curse.<sup>176</sup> Identifying with Christ in his crucifixion, Paul says in 2:19-20 that through the law he died to the law, and now lives in Christ. It is after dying under the curse of the law that new life (2:20) and the promise of the Spirit (3:14) are realized (the *already* of the believer’s participation in Christ’s resurrection). Thus, to return to the bondage under the curse of the law from which Christ’s death freed him would have been unthinkable for Paul; it would have meant that “Christ died for nothing” (2:21).

We observed earlier in this chapter that the giving of the Spirit not only evidenced the state of the believer, but it had eschatological significance and was understood in Judaism as signaling the coming of the new age. For Paul, the Spirit is the Spirit *of God’s Son* (4:6), and it is Christ who brings the transition—just as he did in Paul’s own experience.<sup>177</sup> Whether the stress is put on the crucifixion or resurrection, it is clear in Galatians that the coming of Christ is the crucial event between the old and the new ages.<sup>178</sup> Now faith has been revealed and the Spirit given. The slaves are freed, the children adopted, the curse removed, the world crucified. And yet, the rescue from this present evil age is not complete, the evil not vanquished, the wicked not judged, the dead not raised. The Abrahamic promise of righteousness by faith has been revealed, the

giving of the Spirit evidences the declaration of righteousness, and the righteous now live by their faith. And yet, “through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness” (5:5). The future hope invades the present, and the society of the believers evidences its reality, as previous divisions are abolished and “the only thing that counts is faith working through love” (5:6).<sup>179</sup>

The tension of the *already-and-not-yet* thus permeates the cosmic, temporal, and social dualities.<sup>180</sup> Paul portrays this tension using a number of antithetical constructions in Galatians, including flesh/Spirit, slavery/freedom, law/faith, curse/blessing, world/new creation. We have seen a variety of ways Paul uses the crucifixion theme in antithetical transitions: from law to faith (2:19-20), from curse to blessing (3:13-14), from flesh to Spirit (5:24-25), and from this world to the new creation (6:14-15). We also have seen that Paul uses parallels between antitheses to imply some provocative correlations. Earlier in the chapter we noted the way that Paul, in his usage of Spirit/flesh dualism and the faith/law antithesis, correlated the Spirit with faith, thus implying the correlation of the *flesh* and the *works of the law*. We have yet to explore Paul’s artistry in confusing the various meanings of the term *flesh*, which we will do in the next chapter. We also have need to return to Paul’s prevalent indicative/imperative principle, with which his antithetical constructions and the *already-and-not-yet* eschatological focus work so well. This will be addressed in the final section of this chapter.

A final tension should be noted between the apocalyptic motifs Paul employs and his salvation-historical outlook.<sup>181</sup> We have observed Paul’s validation of the biblical narrative and his claims that the coming of Christ and the justification of the Gentiles by

faith are seen in the promises to Abraham. On the other hand, we have recognized the apocalyptic break between this enslavement of the present evil age and the freedom of the new creation inaugurated by Christ's crucifixion, resulting in the abolition of the former religious and social distinctions. This tension between salvation-historical and apocalyptic perspectives is present in Jewish apocalyptic from Daniel to Qumran.<sup>182</sup>

## The Indicative/Imperative Principle

We have noted a number of examples of indicative/imperative structure in Galatians. Even when the structure is explicit, the principle of *being who you have become* and *living the life you have been given* is prevalent throughout. The basic formula involves first a statement of fact regarding identity/state/position, followed by a directive to behave/think/live in ways appropriate to the fact. Paul also uses the formula to illustrate the disparity of identity/state and practice to great effect, as we have seen in 3:3: “Having started in the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?” Similar illustrations of indicative/imperative disparity are seen in 2:14 and 4:7-9. The formula can also be used to identify with a biblical character and/or situation and then issue an imperative to act accordingly. The great example of this in Galatians is in the conclusion of the Hagar/Ishmael and Sarah/Isaac allegory in ch. 4. The Galatians are children of the free woman,<sup>183</sup> and they should do what the free woman and her child did—drive out the slave woman and her child (the opponents)!

We can here summarize Paul’s indicative/imperative themes in Galatians. Some display the classic structure, others are more or less implicit, but all are essential.

dead to the law, crucified with Christ (2:19-20) having started with the Spirit (3:3)	live by faith in the Son of God don’t end with the flesh (continue with the Spirit)
children of Abraham by faith (3:7-10) [ <i>implicit</i> ] children of God, clothed with Christ (3:26-28) adopted as children, known by God (4:5-9) children of the free woman, and of the promise, born according to the Spirit (4:26-30) set free, for freedom (5:1) we are called to freedom (5:13) we live by the Spirit (5:25) crucified to the world (6:14-16)	continue in faith, not works of law no more divisions; all one in Christ do not return to being enslaved  cast out the slave and her child do not submit to a yoke of slavery use freedom to be slaves to others be guided by the Spirit live as a new creation

Engberg-Pedersen recognizes a general overarching indicative/imperative principle in all of Paul's paranesis, and argues that the perceived problems and incoherencies in Paul begin to make sense with an understanding of the logical connection of the indicative and imperative in his thought. Engberg-Pedersen finds the closest parallel to Paul's thought pattern in Stoicism and the ancient ethical tradition generally.<sup>184</sup>

The form of Pauline paranesis involves a restating of the normative truth of the believers' position in Christ, which they already have a basic knowledge of, followed by an appeal to put their renewed knowledge into practice. Thus, Pauline paranesis is always accompanied by "doing 'theology.'"<sup>185</sup> One has only to recognize how many of Paul's statements begin with "do you not know" or include "for we know" to realize that Engberg-Pedersen is correct; in "doing theology," Paul customarily appeals to his audience as if they already know and will acquiesce to what he is saying. However, it is interesting to note that most of these "knowing" statements are found in Romans and the Corinthian and Thessalonian epistles. It is especially interesting that in Galatians Paul makes no theological statement that he explicitly confirms the Galatians "know" already; the only such saying is affirming what he and Peter "know" (2:16). Paul is, in fact, "astonished" at how little they apparently do understand (1:6) and fears his work for them so far may have been wasted (4:11).

Engberg-Pedersen also notes the apocalyptic framework in Galatians, beginning with the Christ event effecting deliverance out of the present evil age (1:4) and concluding with the believer's crucifixion to the world in 6:14. The letter begins with

God's plan, and shows how the intended result is accomplished.<sup>186</sup> We have previously recognized how conducive an apocalyptic context is to indicative/imperative formulae.

An important similarity to Stoicism and the ancient ethical tradition in Paul is his focus on intellect over will.<sup>187</sup> The indicative is about knowing, and Paul's paranesis concerns the logical outworking of what one esteems to be true. There is little language in Paul focused on the power of the will; rather, it is about the power of knowing and understanding one's identity and position in Christ (and in the body of Christ). Paul seems to agree that the best way to affect people's behavior is to change their understanding of themselves and their world. "Paul's paranesis presupposes the specifically Stoic moral psychology. It addresses, not the 'will', but the understanding."<sup>188</sup> This intellectual approach would have been familiar to the Gentile Galatians, however little they understood of Paul's contortions of the traditional Jewish narratives. And, as we have noted, Paul's appeal to their actual experience of the Spirit as proof of their identity and position in Christ would have represented a powerful argument.

In demonstrating the parallels to Stoicism in Paul's thought, Engberg-Pedersen engages a number of the Galatian themes that we have previously considered, with surprisingly similar conclusions.<sup>189</sup> We are now in a position to consider the paranetic material in Galatians 5:13-6:10.

## Chapter Four

### Paul's Ethics

In examining the disputed ethical sections of the epistle to the Galatians in 5:13-6:10, we will attempt to identify significant connections to the concepts observed in the preceding sections of Galatians and in the concluding section in 6:11-18.

We have stipulated, at the very least, that Paul knows something about the real situation in Galatia, i.e. that he is not largely mistaken about the nature of the problem and the opponents' basic arguments. We need not be certain about all the issues (and indeed we have left many questions unanswered), but because we seek connections between Paul's theology and ethics in Galatians, we must operate on the assumption that Paul's responses are in fact relevant to the situation in Galatia.

Secondly, we have stipulated that Paul is concerned with truth as he understands it. This does not mean that we have to agree with his reasoning or conclusions or find specific precedent for the liberties he takes in reinterpreting the traditional material. It means that, in terms of Paul's motives, *what he is trying to say* must not run a far distant second to *what he trying to do*.<sup>190</sup> "Truth" must be more for Paul than a tool to further his political motives. He must believe that he is telling the truth both in terms of the historical record and his understanding of the gospel of Christ as he has experienced it. He must be trying to accomplish what he intends by communicating what he already believes to be true; truth must not be entirely relative to his purposes.



We can here state the main criteria in concluding the substantial connections we are seeking. Both Paul's theology and ethics must be shown to be relevant to the crisis in Galatia and answer the needs of the church there. Additionally, Paul's theology and ethics in Galatians must be shown to be directly relevant to each other.

Our method first involved an evaluation of the Galatian crisis. We have identified the most credible theories as to why the Galatians might have been willing to entertain the doctrine of the opponents and consider circumcision and law observance, i.e. the real needs for which Judaizing might provide answers/solutions. Our possibilities fall into two general categories: the need for legitimation and the need for a system of moral directives.

The perceived need for legitimation may have involved a number of aspects, including the Galatians' uncertainty of their position in Christ in relation to the Jewish-Christian apostles in Jerusalem and their position in regard to Judaism and the Jewish covenant. Local pressures from a Jewish or Jewish-Christian synagogue may have added to the confusion and urgency for resolution. Desire for a clearer societal identity in contrast to their former paganism and other cultural/religious groups may have figured in the equation. The Judaizing movement may have represented the opportunity to solidify their connection to the Jewish roots of the Christian faith, as well as achieve a unity with Jewish-Christian believers who still perceived an obstacle to full fellowship because of the Galatians' uncircumcision. Judaizing may also have been presented as the final remaining step to full participation in the Jewish covenant, which many Jewish-Christians may still have embraced.

The perceived need for a specific moral code could have been the result of a rise of libertinism in the church. However, there need not have been a widespread movement toward such abuses, only occasional cases in which the Galatians were unsure how to respond. Another possibility is that there could have been charges of lawlessness against the church due to a misunderstanding of the law-free gospel (as Paul himself experienced repeatedly). A final possibility involves the division in the church that is evidenced in the ethical section itself. For division to have been a key issue, we would expect that (1) the Galatians could conceive of these divisions being alleviated by Judaizing, and that (2) Paul could conceive of these divisions being alleviated by his ethics (and their theological foundations).

The Galatian needs may be outlined in the following way:

### **Needs the Galatian Church Could Be Trying to Fill by Judaizing**

**Legitimation** — need for full participation and identification

- Desire to complete their identification w/ Jewish-Christian apostles
- Desire for full unity with other Jewish Christians
- Desire to complete their participation in the Jewish covenant
- Need for clearer societal identity in contrast to other groups  
(pagans, Jews, mystery religions, empire, emperor worship)

**Lack of specific moral code** — need for the law

- Need to curb libertinism movement
- Lack of methods to deal with occasional infractions
- Charges of lawlessness
- Division in church
  - which Galatians could conceive of being alleviated by Judaizing
  - which Paul could conceive of being alleviated by his ethics

The next step in our method of study involved an assessment of Paul's arguments against Judaizing in the main body of the letter. Paul legitimated the Galatians' identity as children of God through faith in Christ, as evidenced by the Spirit, and argued that accepting the life of Torah-observance would represent for the Gentiles a fatal step away from the freedom in which they had been established. Paul's arguments for legitimation against Judaizing included the appeal to the Galatians' real experience of the Spirit as proof of their status, and reinterpretations of the Abrahamic motifs to illuminate God's plan for the Gentiles. He employs an apocalyptic/eschatological understanding with Christ's crucifixion as the crucial inaugurating event, and antithetical constructions of faith and works, freedom and slavery, and Spirit and flesh, among others. Indicative/imperative formulas characterize Paul's theological arguments.

According to our first criterion, Paul's arguments should conceivably answer the problems and needs of the Galatians, and we have concluded a number of ways in which they are directly relevant. As far as the legitimation of the Galatians' existence in Christ apart from the covenant of the law, Paul's arguments have been forceful. But as inspiring and compelling as Paul's theoretical antithetical and indicative/imperative constructions are, how practical are they in determining ethical behavior? Paul may have hoped that the fruit of walking in the Spirit would have occurred more naturally as the realized result of the Galatians identity and position in Christ,<sup>191</sup> and we might recognize similar clues of such a thwarted hope elsewhere in the New Testament, especially in 1Corinthians.<sup>192</sup> Imagine Paul addressing the Corinthians' problems by presenting a few chapters of legitimating theoretical constructions, and then telling them again to "walk in the Spirit."

We immediately recognize how inadequate such an approach would have been.

Similarly, the epistle to the Galatians would have been seriously deficient without the practical exhortations that are included in the last two chapters.

Having established the need for practical ethical directives in the absence of an established legal code, understanding how the specific precepts answer the church's needs in this regard will be fairly straightforward. Our efforts in this chapter will largely be focused on our final criterion, which will involve examining the relationship of the ethical precepts to the theoretical constructions in the main body of the letter. Can Paul's arguments summarized above be recognized as bases for the ethical injunctions in this epistle? Or, to pose the question more from the perspective of this chapter, *can Paul's ethics be recognized as the practical outworking of his theory?*

Understandably, we cannot address all of the important concepts in the ethical section or all of the significant connections to the main body and conclusion of the letter. The goal is to present a few of the most compelling examples of ways that the disputed ethical sections of Galatians are essential to the arguments and purposes of the letter.

## Merging the Meanings of the Flesh

In 5:13, the NRSV does a disservice by translating the Greek *sarki* (flesh) as “self-indulgence.” The problem is not with the NRSV’s assessment of the *single* best meaning of the term in this context, but that using such dynamic equivalents (1) obscures the great variety of ways Paul uses the term *flesh* and (2) precludes recognition of any dual significance (secondary meaning) of the term that the author wished to imply. Paul uses the term *flesh* in many different ways, especially in Galatians and Romans. In Galatians, similar dynamic equivalents are found in 1:16 (“human being” in NRSV vs. “flesh and blood” in NKJV) and 4:14 (“condition” in NRSV vs. “trial...in my flesh” in NKJV). Of course, this reinforces the necessity of studying the language of the New Testament in the original Greek.

The term *flesh* as used in the New Testament can signify physical life, physical ancestry, the physical body, humanity, human relationship, natural ability, human endeavor, self-indulgence or pride, the desires of the body, and the sinful nature.<sup>193</sup> In the apocalyptic framework of Galatians, most of this can be subsumed under the category of what is merely human.<sup>194</sup> The senses of the term often overlap, and the ambiguity in a number of New Testament passages fuels ongoing debate. The misunderstanding (non-discerning) of Paul’s various uses of the term in Romans accompanied millennia of anti-Judaic sentiment.

Paul blurs and merges the different senses of flesh to his advantage, never more ambitiously than in Galatians. In his various uses of Spirit/flesh dualism in Galatians, he establishes even more provocative correlations. Though Paul in the New Testament uses

Spirit/flesh dualism in both theological and (less frequently) ethical dimensions, in no other epistle does he use Spirit/flesh dualism in *both* ways.<sup>195</sup> This has led some scholars to discount the relation of the ethical section of Galatians, where flesh is used in a specific ethical sense, from the main body of the letter, where the application is theological or anthropological. However, after observing the astounding unorthodox correlations Paul makes in his theological arguments, we are entitled to question whether blurring the lines of theological/anthropological/ethical applications would really be “out of bounds,” especially considering the occasion of the epistle as we understand it.

The familiar Jewish terminology “covenant in your flesh” from Genesis 17 already associated the term flesh with the covenant of circumcision.<sup>196</sup> Paul introduces Spirit/flesh dualism in Gal. 3:3 with the terminology “ending with the flesh,” flesh here correlating with “works of the law” in 3:2 (and of course, circumcision). This sets the stage for explicit correlation of circumcision with the flesh in Paul’s conclusion in 6:12-13, where he attacks the opponents’ desire to make “a good showing in the flesh” and to “boast about your flesh.” The motivations are self-serving (to avoid persecution; to be able to boast) and hypocritical (they don’t even keep the law, but want to appear so). What is interesting here is that these concluding correlations would not be very effective without having introduced the concept of the flesh as *self-serving desire* in 5:13 and 5:16. The identification of *dissensions* and *factions* as works of the flesh in 5:20 adds to the effectiveness of the correlation.

The only development of the flesh concept after 3:3 in the undisputed section is the Spirit/flesh dualism in the Hagar/Sarah allegory (4:21-31). However, the flesh here

does not represent law-keeping/circumcision or self-serving desire; the antithesis here involves being born according to the flesh (naturally, by human means or human descent) versus being born according to the promise. The mention of persecution develops the idea of the flesh no further, maintaining the same terminology “born according to the flesh,” and not using flesh to imply motivation or desire. The Spirit/flesh dualism in the Hagar/Sarah allegory is thus an ineffective bridge between that in 3:3 and 6:12-13 in the conclusion. As we have seen, what makes the conclusion so effective is the developed correlation of the desire to circumcise with flesh as self-indulgent desire in 5:13 and 5:16. This is facilitated by Paul’s merging of the senses of flesh, and by his usage of Spirit/flesh dualism in *both* theological *and* ethical applications. And more generally, this is one example of how the disputed ethical section of Galatians ties together the main body of the letter and the conclusion very nicely indeed.

## Flesh and Spirit

Because our examination of the merging of the meanings of the flesh has naturally led into the consideration of Spirit/flesh dualism in Galatians, an overview of Paul employment of this dualism and his correlations with other antithetical constructions will fit well here. Though we have already engaged some of these constructions more substantially than we will here, this survey will be helpful in assessing continuity with Paul's paranesis.

Though Spirit/flesh dualism is introduced in 3:3, it is correlated with antitheses introduced previously. In 2:16, Paul introduces the familiar antithesis of *faith* (πίστις is also rendered as *believing*) versus *works of the law*. Only by faith is one declared *righteous* (rendered *justified*). In 2:19-20, Paul enhances the antithesis with his personal experience of *dying* to the law and *living* in faith. In 3:2, the Galatians received the Spirit by faith (NRSV "believing" = πίστεως), not by doing works of the law, and in 3:3, the introduction of Spirit/flesh dualism firmly establishes the correlation of flesh with works of the law. 3:5 enhances the sense of 3:2, as God *continues* to supply the Spirit and work miracles through *hearing with faith*, not doing works of the law. Hearing is implied in Abraham's believing God (3:6), and Paul seems to be setting up the same imperative that the Galatians must believe what they are hearing from him. By believing, righteousness is reckoned to Abraham, and in 3:7, those who believe are the true descendants of Abraham.

*faith* → *righteousness* → *Spirit*  
*works of the law* → *no justification* → *flesh*



We must also now abandon our verse-by-verse approach and more simply identify correlations. In 3:9-14, the traditional antithesis of blessing and cursing is applied as the *blessing of Abraham* and the *curse of the law*. (It is so subtle as to be overlooked, but Abraham himself seems here to be in an antithetical construction over against the law.) The blessing of Abraham comes to the Gentiles and brings about the *promise of the Spirit* through faith, and the *promise to Abraham* was the blessing of the Gentiles through him (3:8-14). Though the concepts of blessing and promise seem somewhat interwoven here, our first “wrench in the gears” is Paul’s emphatic statement that the promises are *not* opposed to the law—even though the promise *is* juxtaposed with the law in 3:18.<sup>197</sup> We will note that we must insist on explicit correlations between antitheses that clearly transcend their immediate contexts.

Faith and law are revisited later in 3:23-29, and the law is compared to a pedagogue over a minor child waiting for his inheritance at maturity. In 4:1-7, the scenario takes a sharp turn, and the contrast becomes one of slaves being adopted as children/heirs. (We have noted this discontinuity previously, and we will see it again.) The experience of the Spirit is the crucial evidence of the new status as children/heirs.

The final significant development of flesh/Spirit dualism is in the Hagar/Ishmael and Sarah/Isaac allegory (4:21-31). This is a more complex construction, but Paul makes his meaning explicit. Abraham is the father, and the two mothers are two covenants.

*free woman – our mother – heavenly Jerusalem*

*– bears children of the promise – born according to the Spirit*

*slave woman – Hagar – Mt. Sinai/present Jerusalem*

*– bears children for slavery – born according to the flesh*

Paul is careful not to employ the faith/law antithesis in this allegory, as he has already ruled out of court the opposition of the law to the promise (3:21). However, the slavery/freedom and flesh/Spirit antitheses are explicitly merged. The conclusion of the story in 4:31 is that we are the children of the free woman, not the slave woman.<sup>198</sup> However, in the next verse, we see the same discontinuity we saw above (between children gaining their inheritance and slaves adopted as children). In 5:1, we have instantly gone from freeborn children to emancipated slaves. (If we had not seen this same discontinuity earlier, we might have concluded 5:1 began the disputed section!)

We must realize that Paul is always affirming the possibility of a change of status, and for him, being delivered from slavery to freedom is tantamount to having been the freeborn child of the promise all along. This is very similar to the tension in the salvation-historical and apocalyptic approaches that we observed in the last chapter. According to the former, the promises were foretold and promised in Abraham, and all history has moved toward the fulfillment that is now being realized. According to the latter, it is Christ's death that has set us free from the present evil world and transformed us into a new creation. The tension cannot be explained away or concluded as inconsistency; it is distinctively Pauline, and recognizing this is essential to an understanding of Paul's thought in Galatians. Whichever way the slavery/freedom antithesis is perceived, as the freeborn of 4:31 or the freed slave of 5:1 and 4:7, Paul's crucial message in 5:1 is the same: "For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." The terminology of the yoke (as with the "yoke of the law") and the references to circumcision and law observance in

5:2-4 make it very clear that the law is the slavery Paul has in mind here. The alternative to this slavery is visited again in 5:5, but instead of stressing freedom again (as if it were a cosmic or spiritual force that one could employ), Paul again stresses the righteousness hoped for *through the Spirit by faith*, thus merging the two critical concepts again. And where is the *flesh* in this not-so-happy reunion of major antitheses? “You have cut yourselves off from Christ” (5:4).

It is clear that the three major antithetical constructions Paul uses in Galatians are flesh/Spirit, law/faith, and slavery/freedom. While slavery and freedom relate to one’s status, faith and law are opposing methods/means toward righteousness before God. Though law clearly implies moral action, it relates more to a legal code than inherent moral character. Faith is a bit abstract, and faithfulness, while implying moral character, still requires an understanding of what practice one must be faithful *in*, necessitating some kind of direction. We are left with the dualism of flesh and Spirit. These concepts, as used in Galatians, both involve *experience*. Whether flesh is used in the sense of physical life, human effort, self-indulgence, or lusts, the sense is experiential. Likewise, Paul has repeatedly appealed to the Galatians’ real (and non-falsifiable) experience of the Spirit in making his arguments for their status as children of God. Paul’s imperative involves continuing in the Spirit. This implies action, and at the least, Paul seems to have a good idea what kind of action this means; unfortunately, his naiveté in thinking his churches also know what kind of action this means has become apparent, especially here and in the Corinthian correspondence, as we have noted above.

I would propose that Paul has here realized the cruciality of offering practical direction on how to live *in faith* without a legal code such as Torah. His imperatives will, true to Pauline form, affirm the indicative of the Galatians' identity in Christ as realized by the real experience of the Spirit. Of the antitheses Paul has employed in his arguments, flesh/Spirit dualism offers the most viable context in which to illustrate the life of faith and complete what he has set out to do in his epistle to the Galatians.

We will expect to see flesh/Spirit as the primary antithesis in Paul's parnetical constructions, with the term flesh utilized to represent the full range of faith-less living, from selfish pride to libertinism. Note below the absence of circumcision. In the chart on p. 86, the positive uses of the concepts of works, law, and slavery are in bold italic.

**Table 1: Spirit/Flesh Dualism in Chapters 5 and 6 of Galatians**

law	circumcision	flesh gen. self-serving	flesh explicitly as vice	Spirit
5:3-4	5:2-4 5:6 5:11			5:5
5:14		5:13 5:16 5:17		5:16 5:17 5:18
5:18		5:20 5:21	5:19 5:20 5:21	5:22
5:23		5:24	5:24	5:25 6:1
6:2		6:8		6:8
6:13	6:12-13 6:15	6:12-13 6:15		

**Table 2: Antithetical Terms in Galatians, Chapters 1-3**

	SPIRIT	FLESH (sarx)	CIRCUM.	LAW	WORKS	FAITH (pistis)	SLAVERY	FREEDOM
1:1								
1:2								
1:3								
1:4								FREE
1:5								
1:6								
1:7								
1:8								
1:9								
1:10								
1:11								
1:12								
1:13								
1:14								
1:15								
1:16								
1:17								
1:18								
1:19								
1:20								
1:21								
1:22								
1:23						FAITH		
1:24								
2:1								
2:2								
2:3			CIRCUM.					FREE
2:4								
2:5								
2:6								
2:7			CIRCUM.					
2:8			CIRCUM.					
2:9			CIRCUM.					
2:10								
2:11								
2:12			CIRCUM.					
2:13								
2:14								
2:15								
2:16				LAW	WORKS	FAITH		
2:17								
2:18								
2:19				LAW				
2:20						FAITH		
2:21				LAW				
3:1								
3:2	SPIRIT			LAW	WORKS	FAITH		
3:3	SPIRIT							
3:4								
3:5	SPIRIT			LAW	WORKS	FAITH		
3:6								
3:7						FAITH		
3:8						FAITH		
3:9						FAITH		
3:10				LAW	WORKS			
3:11				LAW		FAITH		
3:12				LAW	WORKS	FAITH		
3:13				LAW				
3:14	SPIRIT					FAITH		
3:15								
3:16								
3:17				LAW				
3:18				LAW				
3:19				LAW				
3:20								
3:21				LAW				
3:22						FAITH		
3:23				LAW		FAITH		
3:24				LAW		FAITH		
3:25						FAITH		
3:26						FAITH		
3:27								
3:28							SLAVE	FREE
3:29								

**Table 3: Antithetical Terms in Galatians, Chapters 4-6**

	SPIRIT	FLESH (sarx)	CIRCUM.	LAW	WORKS	FAITH (pistis)	SLAVERY	FREEDOM
4:1							SLAVE	
4:2								
4:3							SLAVE	
4:4				LAW				
4:5				LAW				
4:6	SPIRIT							
4:7							SLAVE	
4:8							SLAVE	
4:9							SLAVE	
4:10								
4:11								
4:12								
4:13								
4:14								
4:15								
4:16								
4:17								
4:18								
4:19								
4:20								
4:21				LAW				
4:22							SLAVE	FREE
4:23		FLESH					SLAVE	FREE
4:24							SLAVE	
4:25							SLAVE	
4:26								FREE
4:27								
4:28								
4:29	SPIRIT	FLESH						
4:30							SLAVE	FREE
4:31							SLAVE	FREE
5:1							SLAVE	FREE
5:2			CIRCUM.					
5:3			CIRCUM.	LAW				
5:4				LAW				
5:5	SPIRIT					FAITH		
5:6			CIRCUM.		<b>WORKS</b>	FAITH		
5:7								
5:8								
5:9								
5:10								
5:11			CIRCUM.					
5:12								
5:13		FLESH					<b>SLAVE</b>	FREE
5:14				<b>LAW</b>				
5:15								
5:16	SPIRIT	FLESH						
5:17	SPIRIT	FLESH						
5:18	SPIRIT			LAW				
5:19		FLESH			WORKS			
5:20								
5:21								
5:22	SPIRIT					FAITH		
5:23				LAW				
5:24		FLESH						
5:25	SPIRIT							
5:26								
6:1	SPIRIT							
6:2				<b>LAW</b>				
6:3								
6:4					<b>WORKS</b>			
6:5								
6:6								
6:7								
6:8	SPIRIT	FLESH						
6:9								
6:10					<b>WORKS</b>	FAITH		
6:11								
6:12		FLESH	CIRCUM.					
6:13		FLESH	CIRCUM.	LAW				
6:14								
6:15			CIRCUM.					
6:16								
6:17								
6:18								

## Faith Working Through Love

We will recall that the admonishment in 5:1 was in context of the antithesis of freedom and slavery. The exhortation was to “stand firm” in freedom and “do not submit” to the yoke of slavery—and the next 3 verses concur. In 5:5, the true believer “waits” for the hope of righteousness. The practical imperatives here are regarding what *not* to do. The broaching of the ethical imperative comes in 5:6: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is *faith working through love*.”<sup>199</sup> Here we see that we were correct: the problem never was works per se; it was the works of the law, the traditional identity markers of circumcision and law observance that divided Jew and Gentile, which have been done away in Christ. Works do count; “faith working through love” is the only thing that now matters. The single mention of love previously in Galatians is Christ’s love in sacrificing himself (2:20). If the implication here is that faith acts in self-sacrificial love, we should see the evidence of this in the later (disputed) paranesis. We shall return to this.

5:7, which at first glance might seem to change the subject, actually seems to entail a logical move from the precept to the Galatians’ past practice. “You were running well....” Running a race is a common metaphor; the negative possibility for Paul in Gal. 2:2 was that he might be running “in vain.”<sup>200</sup> “Running well” implies that the Galatians’ faith was once *working correctly*. The end of v. 7 maintains the focus: “Who prevented you from *obeying the truth*?” Obedience implies prescribed action—an *imperative*—but the “truth” Paul refers to here is clearly the *indicative*—the “truth of the gospel” (2:5, 14; cf. 4:16). The focus turns to the opponents “truth” now: their persuasion is not from God

(5:8); Paul has always claimed direct revelation from God. However, Paul is confident that the Galatians will now *think* correctly again (5:10).<sup>201</sup> (As an aside, Paul's persecution in 5:11 seems to recall 4:29.)

The more obvious point here is that the ethical imperative is introduced before the disputed section of the epistle, as we had already noted. Secondly, this "new" concept of faith working by love may not be completely new to the Galatians. Immediately after introducing it, Paul refers to their "running well" in the past and questions who impeded their "obeying the truth." If they were doing well in Paul's estimation, they may well have had some understanding of this concept presented in 5:6. They haven't repudiated it explicitly; they have just entertained another truth (a different gospel, 1:6) that focuses on marks of distinction, rather than unity, equality, and self-sacrifice. Finally, I would maintain that 5:1-12 provides a logical, comprehensible, and meaningful transition to the paranesis that follows.



## Freedom to Become Slaves in Love

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for [the flesh], but through love become slaves to one another. (Gal. 5:13)<sup>202</sup>

This verse is the second indicative/imperative formula observed by Betz in the Galatians paranesis,<sup>203</sup> and opens the disputed section. The slavery/freedom antithesis is employed for the last time in the epistle here, but to strikingly different effect. The freedom in 5:13 echoes that in 5:1 which Christ enacts and intends. Paul has been arguing that the Galatians should not sacrifice the freedom that Christ brings to become slaves again. Paul endorses here, not becoming slaves to the law or elemental spirits again, but to *each other*. This is the second appeal to *love* as a means to right action (prev. 5:6). The love of Christ demonstrated in self-sacrifice (2:20) is their model, as in Phil. 2:2-8, where the context is also promoting unity in the body over against self-serving interests (though the term flesh is not used).<sup>204</sup>

We have addressed the various senses of the word flesh earlier in the chapter and Paul's creative ways of exploiting its ambiguity. We also recognized that Paul's concluding correlations in 6:12-13 would not be very effective without having introduced the concept of the flesh as *self-serving desire* here in 5:13 and in 5:16. The kind of self-serving that is in focus here would include the prideful desire that seeks to advance, advantage, and distinguish oneself over another. Paul's previous uses of flesh denoted human effort, the works of the law, and the tissue cut in circumcision (vs. Spirit and faith), and that which is merely human (the slave persecuting the Spirit-born free children). To now bring this ethical dimension into the mix seems quite clever. It has a

dual function: to impugn the opponents' motives, and to provide a negative model or foil to the kind of community ethic Paul is advocating. After all, this kind of self-serving interest is a feature in all kinds of personal conflicts and social divisions. As we noted, we have no solid evidence in the undisputed sections of Galatians for the existence of church divisions not directly related to the opponents, but Paul's treatment in his paranesis confirms some kind of division (5:15, 20, 26), and there is no mention of circumcision in the paranesis (see the charts above). That Paul would wait until this point in the letter to address divisions is understandable in any case, and especially so if the divisions were pre-existing and the opponents proposed that law observance would alleviate them.<sup>205</sup> With the addition of "quarrels, dissensions, and factions" to the vices listed in 5:19-21, we cannot but conclude that they were relevant (see v. 20). 5:15, 5:26, and 6:3 further confirm this. Almost all of the exhortations could address such conditions, and the models of social equality and selfless service would be just what the doctor ordered, so to speak.

This "slavery" in love affirms the unity of the body of Christ and the radical reordering of social standings effected by Christ's death—the removing of the former divisions (3:28) and the traditional identity markers that established them (5:6). Conversely, the fleshly desire here adds the ethical dimension of self-indulgence to the desire to maintain the former identity markers and divisions that impart special privilege. This is a masterful correlation.

One may ask, "Where is the Spirit in all this?" Close at hand—the next use of flesh in 5:16 employs the flesh/Spirit dualism. Why wait? One possible reason is that

the use of the term Spirit in an ethical dualism is uncommon, and Paul may wish to allow the ambiguity and malleability of the term flesh to effect the transition. Paul's usage of Spirit/flesh dualism in vice and virtue lists is unprecedented in his other epistles, and elsewhere he employs the ethical dimensions of flesh/Spirit duality only in Rom. 7-8.<sup>206</sup>

We would also note that in Paul's similar constructions of the "set free to be a slave" motif (Rom. 6:17-22; 1Cor. 9:19) he does not employ the Spirit either. In 1Cor. 9:19-23, like Galatians, law is also the context. In Rom. 6:17-22, the theme is becoming *slaves to righteousness not sin*. In Galatians, however, the communal need is much more apparent, as the model is *slaves to others not self*.

Paul also may wish to present his rare *positive* observation on the Mosaic law in 5:14 (below) before bringing the Spirit into the equation in 5:16, as the Spirit has so far been set in opposition to the law throughout the epistle. This again indicates a *purposeful* continuity of thought throughout the epistle, despite Paul's seeming arbitrariness. Paul's purpose is not beholden to the antithetical constructions he uses here; he adapts them and disposes of them as needed. (The charts above tell a compelling story of disposable antitheses.) It would surely be a mistake to try and discern Paul's foundational beliefs or symbolic universe by the tensions he creates or the battles he stages for his dramatic presentations. Paul's story is the one that remains after he puts all the versatile actors in his dramas to bed.

## Fulfilling the Law of Christ

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Gal. 5:14, NKJV)<sup>207</sup>

Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (6:2, NKJV)

Paul’s citation of Lev. 19:18 probably indicates an early Jesus tradition, and Jesus’ use of this passage is well attested the Synoptics.<sup>208</sup> That this invokes Jesus in some sense is also suggested by the use of “law of Christ” in 6:2, and by the love principle introduced in 5:6 and 5:13, pointing back to Christ’s sacrificial love in 2:20. Affirming the obvious connection between verses 13 and 14, we have noted that the freedom in 5:13 echoes that in 5:1 which Christ enacts and intends. Christ is not only the means but the model for the new life of freedom—service, self-sacrifice, loving one’s neighbor as oneself. Verse 14 presents the LXX proof text/Jesus tradition as justification for the imperative in verse 13.

We would note here how well verses 13 and 14 work together. The paradoxical juxtaposition of the former slavery with the new “slavery” in 5:13-14 is evidence of Paul’s deftness in establishing antithetical tension. It serves to clarify the choices of freedom in Christ and serving one’s neighbor in love versus the return to former slavery under the law or the elemental spirits and losing Christ. It also serves to stress that the eschatological new creation does indeed have a sort of ethical *nomos* juxtaposed against the law of the present evil age.<sup>209</sup> Appealing to the heart of the law as Jesus understood it provides further legitimation. But most interestingly here (and in 6:2), Paul does not speak of keeping the law, but of *fulfilling* it.

Both 5:14 and 6:2 employ the same concept Jesus employed in Matt. 5:17—to *fulfill* the law.<sup>210</sup> In James 2:8, the term *fulfill* is also applied to Lev. 19:18—called the “royal law.” Paul uses the term *fulfill* in regard to the law in Romans 8:3-4 and 13:8-10, the latter also referencing Lev. 19:18. This verse was rarely quoted in Judaism,<sup>211</sup> so its presence in the Gospels and elsewhere in the New Testament probably does indicate a strong Jesus tradition.<sup>212</sup> In light of the often-perceived disparity of Paul and James regarding the relation of faith and works in justification, these agreements are compelling.

Most compelling is the fact that the Greek word *fulfill* is never used to refer to the law in the LXX, nor is its Hebrew counterpart in the Tanak.<sup>213</sup> The concept of fulfilling/completing/fully accomplishing the Jewish law is unique to Jesus and the Christian tradition. The ambiguity of this term as applied to the law is also well suited to the Christian use. It can be understood as “summing up” the law,<sup>214</sup> but it more properly refers to completing it and satisfying its requirements. The term preserves the tension between being set free from the law (or dying to it) and yet fulfilling it in the ethic of love. We can understand this within the apocalyptic framework and tension of the already-and-not-yet in Galatians, and in the tension between the salvation-historical and apocalyptic dimensions.<sup>215</sup>

What is “the law of Christ” in 6:2? Is it “the law” in 5:14? Is the way the law is fulfilled in Lev. 19:18 (5:14) comparable to how bearing each other’s burdens fulfills the law of Christ (6:2)?<sup>216</sup> If the term “royal law” in James 2:8 refers to Lev. 19:18 in Jesus’ teaching and early Christianity, how do the terms “law of freedom” in James 2:12 and

“law of Christ” in Gal. 6:2 correlate? Do the latter terms bear relation to the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” in Rom. 8:2? Regrettably, we cannot pursue these questions here. I would at the least concur with Witherington that it is unlikely Paul means the “law of Christ” as the Mosaic law, especially in light of 1Cor. 9:19-23, esp. 21.<sup>217</sup>

Establishing some semblance of ethical nomos and legitimating it over against the continued validity of the Mosaic law was critical for Paul’s presentation to the Galatians to be practical. This establishment (5:6, 13-14) would logically precede his reintroduction of flesh/Spirit as an ethical dualism (5:16-18), and the subsequent vice and virtue lists (5:19-24). A restatement of the dualistic indicative/imperative (5:25) precedes practical applications of his “law of Christ.”

It will not be possible to consider all the unique situations that might be indicated in the Galatians paranesis, but precisely discerning every aspect of the occasion of the epistle was never the primary goal. Nor was it necessary to identify every meaningful connection of theory and ethic in Galatians. The foregoing observations of continuity are more than sufficient to confirm my thesis and facilitate a meaningful conclusion.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusions

Demonstrating the continuity of Galatians 1:1-5:12, 6:11-18 with the disputed paranetical sections in 5:13-6:10 has not been problematic. However, we have need to exercise caution regarding what theology we can construct from Paul's theologizing activity in Galatians. There is clear continuity of purpose, a passionate concern for those he has devoted himself to, and a commitment to this cause. Paul is on a mission; he is trying to win a fight. However, engaging Paul's reinterpretations, antithetical constructions, and indicative/imperative formulas has shown us he has many weapons of "truth" to accomplish his purpose. Paul uses various *truths* to communicate *his truth* for the Galatians, which he somehow derives from *The Truth*. By the latter I do not mean to imply abstraction or transcendence, only that which for Paul is most real, at the heart of his storied universe, that by which all else is interpreted, valued, judged.

Discerning the first level of truth became easier with a recognition of the symbolic tools that were being redeployed and the narratives that were reinterpreted as needed. Correlation of indicative and imperative here is all part of the formula. If one does not fit, Paul changes it. Isaac becomes the father of the Gentiles and they become the true children of Israel, while the Israelites become the slave children of Hagar. Thus, the Gentiles are the freeborn rightful heirs. Now Paul can "twitch his nose" and change the Gentiles into the slaves that God has set free. The imperative is the same either way:

“You are the freeborn, so don’t let them make you into slaves.” “You have been set free, so don’t go back to slavery.”

Likewise, the antithetical constructions Paul employs make some point, but they are not the real issue. They can illuminate and clarify even as they caricature and hyperbolize. Then they may come back and play a different role. The charts above told a revealing story of disposable antitheses.

This does not imply that antithetical poles like faith and Spirit do not on another level represent an experienced reality or that they lack real value and substance. One talks of Abraham’s true faith, and colors it purple. Having experienced faith, we would look to ours for a hint of color. The Spirit was experienced as a reality to the Galatians, so every time the dualistic abstraction is invoked, it has a certain concreteness and validity to it. This can obscure a certain degree of disparity, but to be really effective, the symbolic meaning cannot contradict the experiential understanding. If every time the Galatians experienced the Spirit they got into fights, “love one another in the Spirit” would be ineffective paranesis.

On the next level, the correlations are more concrete, closer to the occasion of the epistle and Paul’s practical purpose. *Circumcision* can be used in plays on words and double-entendres, but does not lend itself well to an abstraction in this context because it is the *real* danger. It can be associated with “the flesh” at one point and “slavery” at another, but it cannot function well symbolically on its own (here). Thus, most of Paul’s comments on circumcision are straightforward. “Christ will be of no benefit to you.” Paul may make a play on words to take a “cut” at the opponents. He may make an appeal



to the freedom Christ died for. But coming back to the subject of circumcision is coming back to the concrete occasion: the *real* danger.

Paul's response to the real danger, that crucial message which he must impart, is *his truth*. We might say it is his *gospel truth*, because it is to be communicated and understood. The gospel is always the "good news" on the one hand, but it is a message communicated to produce a response, and how it is defined will have different ramifications in different social settings. Here the gospel says: "Getting circumcised is contrary to the gospel of grace. The other gospel you heard is a lie." Here the gospel says: "You have got to stop fighting, because there are no divisions in Christ." These are the arguments Paul must be successful in communicating.

He may use various other *truths* to communicate and persuade, but they are secondary. Paul's understanding of Hagar and Ishmael has nothing to do with why he so desperately doesn't want the Galatians circumcised. Not even the story of Abraham's promised seed is anywhere near the center of his belief system. The gospel may have been preached in Abraham (3:8), but Paul affirms that this faith was recently revealed (e.g. 3:23, 25). These stories are not so sacred and immutable that they can escape Paul's twisting and contorting them however he must to get the right meaning. It is the *meaning* that is inspired. If Hagar has to become Jerusalem and Sinai to get the meaning, Paul will make it happen. He understands the stories as inspired in that they are invested with a message that always transcends and relativizes the narrative.

Even the Galatians' experience of the Spirit of God, which Paul says is proof they are Abraham's children, has just become a *means* to declare this indicative for the

purpose of reinforcing the imperative: “Don’t be circumcised! Don’t envy your neighbor and cause divisions. You are not subject to the law.” There is no foul here for Paul, nor with framing the fruit and vice lists under Spirit/flesh dualism—which Paul had never used in this kind of ethical sense before—nor with expanding the vice lists to fit the Galatian squabbles. Something bigger is afoot, relativizing all of this.

How can we know when something transcends Paul’s crucial issue or main theme (his gospel truth) and approaches *The Truth* for Paul? We begin by isolating the main theme from the truths used as arguments for it. For instance, some might consider the main theme of Galatians to be the Spirit versus the flesh. However, Paul never even broaches the subject of the Spirit till his “ending with the flesh” argument begins in 3:2. His entire history communicated in the first 2 chapters does not require any mention of the Spirit. The Spirit is not even present in his opening 5 verses where God and Christ are named 6 times—10 times including pronouns. The Galatians’ experience of the Spirit, because it is non-falsifiable, may have been the strongest part of Paul’s argument; thus, he bases his whole ethic on the Spirit. But the Spirit is clearly not the main issue.

Of all the categories listed in our chart, multiple mentions of *circumcision* in Paul’s opening account in ch. 2 signal a main issue. Paul never names circumcision in chapter 3 or 4. He cannot use the term because the Jewish narratives all feature and command it, and he cannot allegorize it. He focuses on the *law* instead, presented as an inferior covenant, a guardian, comparable to idolatry, as slavery. When Paul names circumcision again in ch. 5, it is clear it was always in focus; *it* is the slavery, and he is mad: “cut off from Christ,” “will pay the penalty,” “castrate themselves!” The ending of

the epistle attacks the circumcisers' motives again: hypocrites, boasters in the flesh, afraid of persecution. And he then restricts the final blessing to those who agree that circumcision means nothing! And now we understand that the double anathemas in the beginning were directed here also—a curse on the circumcisers beginning to end.

Have we effectively singled out the major theme in this letter? Circumcision? Couldn't it really be *the law*? The *works of the law*? Yes, but... One can stop eating kosher or keeping Sabbath at any time; circumcision is forever—the permanent identity marker that so enrages Paul that we have to ask *why*. Why, indeed. Furthermore, without discerning the true heart of Paul's storied universe, many of the “connections” I have concluded could not be affirmed to have foundations transcending this context.

Where does Paul's truth for the Galatians connect with *The Truth* for Paul? I indicated previously that it would be a mistake to try and discern Paul's core beliefs and symbolic universe by the antithetical tensions he establishes or the narratives he reinterprets. However, by dismissing the more obviously utilitarian and malleable truths, isolating the concrete issues specific to this occasion and Paul's practical purposes and goals specific to this social context, the “last man standing” may begin to resemble *The Truth* for Paul. Standing outside all the antithetical constructions and narrative reinterpretations and indicative/imperative formulas we found the *circumcision controversy*, framing the epistle from the first anathema, through Paul's years of struggle with the circumcision faction, through the angry polemics, to the final denial of blessing. This is the core of Paul's main message to the Galatians. Everything connects somehow. But it is not *The Truth*; it is not the crux of what Paul believes.

The framework of the present crisis has another structure standing outside of it, over it, before it, and after it. It is revisited throughout, yet never relativized, never reduced to a means, never invoked without some clue that it is the crux of everything.

Paul an apostle—through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (1:1a, 1c, 3-5)

For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; 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. (2:19-20)

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified! (3:1)

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”— (3:13)

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (3:27-28)

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. (5:1)

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love. (5:6)

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (5:13-14)

And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (5:24)

Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. (6:2)

May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body. (6:14-17)

My thesis affirms the direct relation of Paul's theology to his ethical system in Galatians, and I have demonstrated convincing connections. But I have determined that these connections transcend Paul's theologizing. Paul's ethics do not ultimately derive from his reinterpretations or antitheses or indicative/imperative formulas, or any *doing* of theology. Their origins are not in Paul's apocalyptic framework or a salvation-historical perspective or the eschatological already-and-not-yet. These perspectives are important, and the lines of connection run through them again and again and are enriched by them. But for Paul, there is one truth that permeates them all, yet stands outside them all, fixed at a finite place in time and space where the infinite impinges on the cosmos and where, for Paul, all truth converges: *the cross of Jesus of Nazareth*. Here all divisions and special privilege are abolished and all stand equal before God, who shows mercy to all.

To begin to reconcile any of the many difficulties in Paul, and gain, not just a *new perspective*, but *Paul's perspective*, there is only one vantage point where we may see things as he did.

It is one of the great paradoxes of Paul's thought...that the very heart of his symbolic world, his gospel and his theologizing is a contingent historical event and God's response to it: the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Here the eternal and the temporal, the contingent facts of history and the eternal truths of theology come together.<sup>218</sup>

Paul sees the cross at the heart of the story of Jesus. The cross not only marks the transition from old world to new creation (1:4, 6:14-15), not only stands absolutely opposed to anything which limits the grace of God or persists in setting division between peoples (2:21; 3:13-14), but also sets the pattern for Christian conduct as self-giving love (2:20). In this way not least the ethic of the Spirit is conformed to the pattern of the cross; the Spirit whose lead the Galatians must follow is the Spirit of the crucified.<sup>219</sup>

## Notes

1. In Dunn's address at the T. W. Manson Memorial Lecture, 1982, commenting on E. P. Sanders' contribution to the dialogue in his book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. For more developed versions of this address, see Dunn, "The New Perspective in Paul," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 65 (1983), 95-122; and "The New Perspective in Paul," in *Jesus, Paul and the Law* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 183-214.
2. Augustine, *Confessions*, tr. Edward Pusey (New York: Random House, 1949).
3. *Ibid.*, Book VIII, 166-67.
4. *Ibid.*, Book VIII, 154.
5. See Augustine, *A Treatise on the Predestination of the Saints*, in *New Advent* website: <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1512.htm>>
6. See Augustine, *A Treatise Against Two Letters of the Pelagians: In Four Books Written to Boniface, Bishop of the Roman Church*, book I:17-24, in *Christian Classics Ethereal Library* website: <<http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF1-05/npnf1-05-36.htm>>
7. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1978), 357ff., esp. 368-72; Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 924.
8. Erickson, 925.
9. William C. Placher, *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction*. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983, 184-5; Erickson, 926.
10. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works Volume 34, Career of the Reformer IV* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1960), p. 336-337, available online: <<http://www.modernreformation.org/mlconversion.htm>>
11. Martin Luther, *The Jews and Their Lies*, tr. Martin H. Bertram, in *Medieval Sourcebook* website: <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/1543-Luther-JewsandLies-full.html>>
12. See n. 1.
13. W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, 3rd ed. (New York; Evanston: Harper & Row, 1967).
14. *Ibid.*, 221-2.
15. *Ibid.*, 322.
16. *Ibid.*, 323.
17. *Ibid.*, 321-3.
18. Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," in *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963), 199-215.

19. Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).
20. Krister Stendahl, *Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).
21. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 15.
22. The author of Acts also portrays him thus in 22:3; 26:4-5.
23. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977).
24. E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985).
25. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 12.
26. *Ibid.*, 17-18.
27. *Ibid.*, 75, 422.
28. *Ibid.*, 422.
29. *Ibid.*, 514.
30. *Ibid.*, 442, 474, 499, 555.
31. *Ibid.*, 443.
32. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 35.
33. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 547-9.
34. *Ibid.*, 551.
35. *Ibid.*, 552.
36. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 165-6, n.38.
37. N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 19.
38. See esp. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998).
39. James D. G. Dunn, "In Search of Common Ground," in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 334.
40. Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 429-31, 444, and elsewhere.
41. *Ibid.*, 404-7.
42. Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 264.
43. Willi Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 58.
44. J.C. O'Neill, *The Recovery of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1972), 47.
45. Martin Dibelius, *James: A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 11th ed., revised by Heinrich Greeven, *Hermeneia: a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 3.

46. This is in substantial harmony with the traditional Lutheran view. Luther sees these “admonitions and precepts” as a follow-up, lest outsiders misunderstand the Christians’ liberty: “In order to avoid the appearance as if Christianity militated against good works or opposed civil government, the Apostle also urges us to give ourselves unto good works...” Martin Luther, *A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, trans. Theodore Graebner (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1939), 129. This book in pdf format is available online at: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/luther/galatians.pdf>>
47. Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Ethics: The Legacies of Jesus and Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 169.
48. John M. G. Barclay, *Obedying the Truth: Paul’s Ethics in Galatians* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2005), 13, and elsewhere.
49. Walter Schmithals, “The Heretics in Galatia,” in *Paul and the Gnostics*, trans. John Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 13-64.
50. Robert Jewett, “The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation,” in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues In Rhetorical And Historical Interpretation*, ed. Mark D. Nanos (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 344-7.
51. Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 273-4, and elsewhere.
52. *Ibid.*, 14-25.
53. George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 145.
54. Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 41 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 185-6.
55. James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary, Vol. IX (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 20.
56. Betz has observed three key examples of indicative/imperative in Galatians 5:1, 13, and 25. See *Galatians: A Commentary*, 254-5.
57. John M. G. Barclay, “Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case,” in *The Galatians Debate*, ed. Mark D. Nanos (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 367.
58. Betz., 5-7.
59. Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: Commentary on Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 21-3; and Witherington, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 292.
60. Barclay, “Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter,” 367-82; Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 36-41.
61. “Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter,” 368-70.
62. *Ibid.*, 372-5.
63. *Ibid.*, 376-8.
64. *Ibid.*, 381.



65. Betz, 5.
66. Jewett, 344-5; Longenecker, xciv.
67. We cannot here engage the debate as to whether the term *Judaizers*, traditionally assumed to refer to those who promoted circumcision for Gentiles, more properly refers to those Gentiles who responded to the message and were circumcised. It seems best, therefore, to avoid the term. I will therefore refer to those opposing Paul's law-free gospel in Galatia as the *opponents*. There is no conflict in referring to a *Judaizing* movement, however.
68. Though *Christian* may be an anachronistic term, we use it here and throughout this thesis to refer to those who are considered to be followers of Christ.
69. Dunn, *Galatians*, 9; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 42; "Mirror-Reading," 378, 380.
70. Betz, 7; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 25; Longenecker, xcv; Matera, 162-3; Dunn, *Galatians*, 10.
71. F. F. Bruce, *Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 24-5; Dunn, *Galatians*, 10; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 43.
72. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 23.
73. Dunn, *Galatians*, 12-15.
74. According to Paul's account, the men from James came *before* the confrontation with Peter and the hypothetical break with Jerusalem, so they would not have had the corrective agenda yet. The alternative would be that the conciliar reversal occurred *before* the confrontation with Peter, which then could not have precipitated the break. The only other possibility is that Paul (and Luke, in Acts 15) misrepresented the council's endorsement in the first place and no great reversal of position actually took place; so with Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles* (New York: Cambridge, 1989), 55.
75. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 43-4, n. 18; "Mirror-Reading," 380.
76. Barclay, "Mirror-Reading," 379.
77. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 71.
78. *Ibid.*, 58.
79. *Ibid.*, 59-60.
80. Betz, 9; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 70, 106.
81. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 70-72.
82. Josephus, *Against Apion* 2, ch. 8, 170-71. Available online at: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/apion-2.htm>>
83. *Ibid.*, ch. 9, 179-81.
84. *Ibid.*, ch. 8, 168.
85. *Ibid.* ch. 14, 281-6.
86. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 76.
87. Matera 165; Watson 65; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 82.

88. Dunn, *Galatians*, 150; Matera 164.
89. Matera, 166.
90. Dunn, *Galatians*, 155-6; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 85.
91. The concept of circumcision of the heart is seen in Deut. 10:16, 30:6 and in Jer. 4:4, 9:25-26. Jubilees 1:23-26 seems to affirm the eschatological significance of Deut. 30.
92. Davies, 203-5; Dunn, *Galatians*, 153-4; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 84.
93. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 296.
94. Betz, 138; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 87, n. 28.
95. Bruce, 154-5; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 219.
96. Betz, 139-41; Dunn, *Galatians*, 161-2.
97. Matera, 167; Bruce, 156; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 87-8.
98. The Lutheran method had been to resolve this riddle by asserting that Paul has in mind the attempt to establish one's self-righteousness by law-keeping. However, the context here neither focuses on the hubris of self-righteousness nor the practical impossibility of keeping the law. See Dunn, *Galatians*, 171.
99. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 67; Bruce, 160 ff.
100. Dunn, *Galatians*, 164.
101. Paul's wording here is interesting: "so that **we** might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." To suppose that Paul is saying the *Jews* will receive the Spirit when the blessing comes to the *Gentiles* may be reading far too much theologically into the pronoun choice. In this context, it seems more likely that Paul uses the pronoun *we* to demonstrate his solidarity with the Galatians over against the circumcision faction. Dunn suggests that the pronoun *we* would include all the *nations*—including Jews—who have received the Spirit, *Galatians*, 179. See also n. 134.
102. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 228; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 88; Bruce, 168.
103. Dunn, *Galatians*, 179.
104. Martyn, J. Louis, *Galatians*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 343-4; Bruce, 169-70;
105. Bruce, 170.
106. Betz, 155-6; Longenecker, 128-30; see Witherington's critique in *Grace in Galatia*, 242-3.
107. If this were not the Galatians' understanding also, Paul would have lost all credibility right here. It seems better to allow that we may lack some data.
108. The Hebrew word *seed* (*zera*) is also used to refer to a singular person in Genesis 4:25, speaking of Seth. In Gen. 21: 13, the LXX translates the Hebrew word *son* as *seed* in speaking of Ishmael.
109. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 122-3; Dunn, *Galatians*, 183-5; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 244.

110. From R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913). Available online at: [http://wesley.nnu.edu/biblical\\_studies/noncanon/ot/pseudo/jubilee.htm](http://wesley.nnu.edu/biblical_studies/noncanon/ot/pseudo/jubilee.htm)
111. Betz, 159; Longenecker, 133.
112. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 253-4; Longenecker, 139.
113. There have been a multitude of interpretations here, so Dunn 190-91; Longenecker 140-41. Suffice to say this seems to distance God from the giving of the law versus his direct promise to Abraham with no intermediaries.
114. Betz, 164.
115. Ibid., 165.
116. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 260.
117. Dunn, 194-5
118. So in NRSV. *Paidagogos* is translated as *tutor* in the NASB and NKJV, and as *schoolmaster* in the KJV.
119. Baptism is not mentioned elsewhere in Galatians, nor being “clothed” with Christ. 3:27-28 may be an early baptismal formula familiar to the Galatians, Witherington, 270; Longenecker, 154. In any case, since Paul does not elaborate, the concepts specifically as worded must not be essential to Paul’s argument here. Baptism was a foundational concept in Christianity (e.g. Romans 6:3-11) and would have been understood. Being “clothed” with righteousness, salvation, strength, and glory are familiar concepts in Jewish thought, Longenecker, 156.
120. The NASB and NKJV “does not differ at all from a slave” seems to be less of an overstatement (at least to modern ears). “No better than” seems to imply lack of intrinsic worth; “not superior to” might be a better rendering to refer to legal or social status, so Dunn, *Galatians*, 210.
121. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 287.
122. Witherington notes four possible interpretations of “elemental spirits” according to Greco-Roman thought, but being loathe to validate the interpretation of them as *beings*, dismisses the reference in 4:9 as too ambiguous to be conclusive, *Grace in Galatia*, 284-6, 297. Longenecker notes six possibilities, but finds no external evidence for an interpretation as *beings* before the third or fourth century CE, 165. Bruce, however, suggests that they were counterfeit gods (as in 1Cor. 12:2), which had been demythologized; this seems to harmonize vs. 3 and 8 better, 202. Dunn notes that “by nature” here does not denote a Hebrew concept and probably indicates a more Stoic perspective on the nature of reality; Paul may have in mind the distinction between “‘gods in reality’ and ‘gods by human convention,’” *Galatians*, 224; so Betz, 214. Betz, contra Longenecker and Witherington, would opt for the more demonological understanding, which he finds attested in Hellenistic (apocalyptic) Judaism, 215.
123. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 96-7.
124. Dunn, *Galatians*, 223.
125. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 296.
126. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 91-2.

127. Longenecker, 199ff; Betz, 246; Dunn, *Theology of Paul's Letter*, 96; Dunn, *Galatians*, 243; Martyn, 433ff.

128. However, most scholars are hesitant to allow for a connection. Betz sees no indication of Paul's knowledge of the Philonic allegory, 239; Longenecker leans toward independence, 205; Bruce sees "no relation," 215. Witherington, however, seems to allow for a deeper connection, 325; Dunn notes that the Greek word *allegory* is used only here in the N. T., but common to Philo, *Theology of Paul's Letter*, 123.

129. Longenecker, 205.

130. Martyn, 433; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 325.

131. Dunn, *Galatians*, 246, 257.

132. Bruce, 223.

133. Betz, 249.

134. Similarly, the closing section in 6:11-18 directly relates to the arguments and motivations of the circumcision faction, and is not problematic.

135. So Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 240; Bruce also engages it thus, 226; pace Betz, who sees a radical break from 4:31 to 5:1, 255; Dunn appreciates the abruptness of the exclamation as Paul's design to ensure recognition of its cruciality as much more than an obvious conclusion to the previous section, *Galatians*, 261.

136. Betz, 254-6.

137. Bruce, 229-30.

138. Dunn, *Galatians*, 269-70; Bruce, 231-2; Betz, 261-2; pace Witherington, 369, who follows Longenecker in restricting Paul's pronoun *we* to refer to Jewish Christians, as if Paul were saying: "[even] we Jewish Christians [must] hope for righteousness through the Spirit, by faith." In this understanding, verse 6 is divided and 6a appended to 5; so with Longenecker, 229. This understanding seems forced; the sense of [*even*] *we Jews* does not seem explicit enough to be Paul's intended point. Rather than *we* (in 5:5) referring to Jewish Christians and *you* (in 5:4) referring to the Gentile Galatians, as suggested by Witherington and Longenecker, it seems more contiguous with Paul's indicatives that the division be between those who *hope through the Spirit* (in solidarity with Paul, 5:5) and those who *seek justification through the law* (in solidarity with the opponents, 5:4). Thus, the *we* and *you* would conform to the divisions in the Galatian crisis, not the divisions that are done away with in Christ. Furthermore, the implied precision of Paul's use of first and second person pronouns is probably overstated; for example, see 4:6, which would have to be interpreted, "because you Gentiles are children, God has sent his Spirit into the hearts of us Jews, crying, 'Abba, Father!'" To maintain Paul's pronoun precision thusly results in absurdities. See also n. 97.

139. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 93-4

140. Dunn, *Galatians*, 175-6.

141. Witherington, *The Paul Quest*, 283.

142. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 96.

143. *Ibid.*

144. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 46.
145. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 283; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 96-7.
146. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 97.
147. See the discussion in Betz, 321-3; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 451-3, esp. 453; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 98, notes 53 and 54; and Dunn, *Galatians*, 544-5. I have omitted the discussion of the Nineteenth Benediction due to uncertain dating, though an early date might indicate the closest parallel to Paul's blessing here.
148. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 98.
149. Watson, 19.
150. Ibid.
151. Ibid., 39.
152. The Galatian situation may not be a precise fit in other ways, though. Paul's Galatian conflict was not with the traditional power-structures of Judaism, or Jesus as Messiah would have been a key issue of conflict. The Jerusalem apostles were a reform movement themselves, and had their own conflicts with their religious tradition. We have no concrete evidence that the opponents in Galatia officially represented Jerusalem, but in any case, Jewish-Christianity in general was a reform movement within Judaism. We may actually have a struggle between reform movements in Galatia. (As an aside, we might also note that Paul's theologizing sometimes involved opposition from other charismatic leaders, such as the "super-apostles" in Corinth.)
153. Ibid., 20.
154. Ibid., 40.
155. Ibid., 46.
156. Ibid., 47.
157. While Watson shares an agenda to discredit the traditional Lutheran interpretation, his approach too inherently involves disparaging Paul's motives. Watson challenges the truth of Paul's accounts (e.g. 54) and Paul's concern for truth altogether (e.g. 46). Watson's Paul cares not whether what he says is true; he cares only about what he is trying to accomplish—for Watson, this is always to effect the complete separation of the church from the synagogue, see 46-7.
158. Ibid., 46.
159. Witherington, *The Paul Quest*, 297.
160. Ibid., 300.
161. Ibid.
162. Ibid., 168-9.
163. We are referring to those responsible for the sectarian rules and pesharim found in caves near Qumran, whether or not the sect actually lived there.
164. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 98.
165. Watson, 63-72.
166. John J. Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, ed. John J. Collins, *Semeia* 14 (1979): 9.

167. Wayne A. Meeks, “Social Functions of Apocalyptic Language in Pauline Christianity,” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World*, ed. David Hellholm (Tubingen: Mohr, 1983), 689.
168. See Dunn, *Theology of Paul’s Letter*, 44, 47-48.
169. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 102.
170. Though some scholars have observed the lack of explicit references to the resurrection in Galatians, it is implicit throughout. The occasion of the Galatian epistle dictates the importance of stressing the “already” experience of the Spirit and new life in Christ over the “not yet” future hope of resurrection.
171. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 103.
172. Though this usage is in the disputed section that we have yet to address in the next chapter (5:13-6:10), it is introduced here for the sake of continuity.
173. We could also include implicit references to death, such as 3:15, where the theme of the last will and testament reinforces the idea of the promise coming through death, and 3:27, where baptism into Christ (explained as baptism *into his death* in Romans. 6:3ff.) results in radical social reordering and confirmation as heirs of the promise to Abraham.
174. The term *kosmos* is used in a more negative light here to represent the present world, which is passing away.
175. Dunn, *Galatians*, 177.
176. See Dunn, *Theology of Paul’s Letter*, 86.
177. Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 179-80.
178. *Ibid.*, 318-19; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 101.
179. We can already recognize here, in line with our thesis, that not further engaging the practical aspects of this radical eschatological reordering of society would have been a severe deficiency in Paul’s argument to the Galatians.
180. Meeks, *op. cit.*
181. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 104-5.
182. *Ibid.* Unfortunately, we cannot within the scope of this paper pursue an examination of the many parallels here.
183. Note here also the imprinting of the apocalyptic motif—heavenly Jerusalem as our mother—on the salvation/historical—Sarah, the mother chosen according to God’s promise.
184. Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 4, 7-8.
185. *Ibid.*, 138.
186. *Ibid.*, 140.
187. *Ibid.*, 168-9.
188. *Ibid.*, 169.

189. For more on Christ's death accused by the law and the believer's identification in his death, see 169-70; for more on Paul's identification with Christ in his death, see 146-8.

190. Contra Watson, 46, and elsewhere.

191. Witherington, *The Paul Quest*, 269.

192. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 71.

193. See Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 62-70; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 203-212.

194. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 206, 209.

195. *Ibid.*, 181.

196. See *ibid.*, 180, n. 4.

197. There are a number of reasons given: the promise comes directly from God and is permanent; the law was added because of transgressions, was ordained through angels and a mediator, and is only temporary, until the heir comes. However, we see that the heir of promise—Christ—has come, fallen under the curse of the law, become a curse himself, and abolished the curse of the law, so that the blessing/promise might come to the Gentiles. Furthermore, we will see that the child of promise → freedom, and the child of flesh → slavery. The subsequent identification of law observance as a return to a yoke of slavery certainly involves the idea of leaving the promise for the law, and thus choosing between the promise and the law. Perhaps the antithesis in this case is restricted to the *human response*. We cannot pursue this complexity any further here, except to note that we must insist on explicit correlations between antitheses that clearly transcend their immediate contexts.

198. We have previously noted the persecution theme and the imperative to cast out the bondwoman and her son.

199. Emphasis mine, and throughout.

200. Also Phil. 2:16; cf. 1Cor. 9:26.

201. Engberg-Pedersen, 168-9.

202. For reasons previously stated, we substitute “the flesh” for the NRSV’s “self-indulgence.”

203. Betz, 254-6.

204. In 1Cor. 9:19 and 2Cor. 4:5, this is Paul's example also.

205. This does not preclude that the opponents' doctrine exacerbated the original divisions (perhaps extremely so), nor that the original divisions did not have a facet of Jewish/Gentile distinction to them.

206. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 178-9.

207. New King James Version, copyright © 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc. This text is used here to maintain the consistent translation of *πληρώω* and *αναπληρώω* as *fulfill*.

208. Mark 12:31; Matt. 19:19, 22:39; Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:8-10; James 2:8.

209. This would address some of the important needs of the Galatians as we have understood them (and as have scholars quoted).

210. πληρόω in Matt. 5:17 and Gal 5:14; ἀναπληροω in Gal. 6:2.
211. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 383.
212. See n. 204.
213. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 138.
214. As in NRSV rendering of Gal. 5:14. See n. 203.
215. See Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 135-45; see also Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 381-4.
216. See Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 423-8; see also Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 126-34.
217. See Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 424-5; idem., *The Paul Quest*, 264, 270; pace Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 132-4.
218. Witherington, *The Paul Quest*, 284.
219. Dunn, *Theology of Paul's Letter*, 120.



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