

TODD A. WILSON

The Curse of the Law and the Crisis in Galatia

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Mohr Siebeck

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The Curse of the Law and the Crisis in Galatia

Reassessing the Purpose of Galatians

Mohr Siebeck

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To Katie

Ἑλληλῶν τὰ βάρη βαστάξετε
καὶ οὕτως ἀναπληρώσετε τὸν νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ

Preface

Felix Jacoby once observed that Herodotus ‘is not a subject for *dissertationes inaugurales*, the young authors of which appreciate one side only of this complicated figure (which is at the same time so simple as a whole), and see that side incompletely or from a wrong angle’.¹ One is tempted to say the same of the Apostle Paul. Yet I have come to believe that the reward to be gained by engaging with so complex and fascinating a figure surely justifies the endeavour, even if it does not entirely excuse a certain incompleteness of presentation.

The writing of this monograph, which began life as a doctoral thesis, would not have been possible without the generous support of a number of people. I owe an enormous debit of gratitude, first of all, to my doctoral supervisor Professor Graham N. Stanton. I could have hardly asked for a more gracious and encouraging person with whom to work. I would also like to thank my examiners, Professor Markus Bockmuehl and Dr. Simon Gathercole, who helped me refine the argument of the thesis in several places.

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I also owe a warm word of thanks to the elders, staff, and congregation of College Church in Wheaton for their support and encouragement with this project.

¹ Jacoby, *Atthis* (1949), 321 n. 5; cited in Harrison, *Herodotus* (2000), vii.

Our three children, Ezra John, Liza Rae, and Annie Clarendon, greatly enriched the entire experience of research and writing. Their delightful diversions played a vital role in keeping me both sane and motivated!

It is only fitting that I save my final word of thanks for my wife, Katie. She has been steadfast, courageous and ever-supportive. What more can I say than that by bearing burdens she has fulfilled the Law of Christ. To her I dedicate this work.

Soli Deo Gloria

October 2006
Wheaton, Illinois

Todd A. Wilson

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Notes

Citations in this monograph are in the form of *Author Surname, Short Title* and *Date*. Full details can be found in the bibliography. Abbreviations follow the listing given in P. H. Alexander et al. (eds.), *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical and Early Christian Studies*. The NA²⁷ convention is followed of excluding accents where manuscript variants are cited. Biblical references are in the form of *chapter.verse*. Where no book is mentioned, the reference is from *Galatians*.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Why then does Paul bring up the matter of the Law again at this point?

As far as his own theology is concerned, he could do well without it.¹

The above epigram, taken from H. D. Betz's monumental *Galatians* commentary, poses the question this study seeks to answer: why does Paul return to the issue of the Law in 5.14?² Given his sustained and at times fierce polemic against the Law earlier in the letter, why does he take up the issue again at this point? This move can hardly be explained as an idiosyncrasy of Galatians or a slip on Paul's part, since 5.14 is followed by *three more* references to the Law (5.18, 23; 6.2) in the so-called ethical section of the letter.³ In fact, the issue of the Law appears to be an 'undercurrent' in 5.13–6.10.⁴ This study must therefore address the question of why there is any further mention of the Law in 5.13–6.10 as a whole. What is the rationale for Paul's four references to the Law in the ethical section of Galatians?

This is a crucial question for our understanding of Galatians because it has a direct bearing on several classic problems of interpretation, including (1) how 5.13–6.10 relates thematically to the rest of Galatians, (2) how 5.13–6.10 contributes to the rhetorical function of the letter, and (3) how 5.13–6.10 helps to redress the crisis in Galatia. In addition, an answer to the question of the rationale for Paul's four references to the Law in the ethical section of Galatians will inevitably inform how one understands the perennial issue of the place of the Law in Paul's theology and ethics.

¹ Betz, *Galatians* (1979), 275, commenting on 5.14.

² Throughout this study I shall use the capitalised 'Law' only to refer to the Law of Moses. Here I anticipate the conclusions of Chapters 5–6, where I argue that all four references to νόμος in 5.13–6.10 refer to the Law of Moses. Occasionally, I shall also use the term Torah as a synonym.

³ For convenience I shall on occasion follow the convention of referring to 5.13–6.10 as the 'ethical section' of Galatians, yet acknowledging the difficulties with this particular designation. See, for example, the discussion in Martyn, *Galatians* (1997), 482–84, 482 n. 41. On 5.13–6.10 as a discrete unit within Galatians, see Barclay, *Obedience* (1988), 24. On 5.13 as the beginning of the ethical section (or parenthesis), see the oft-cited study by Merk, 'Beginn der Paränese' (1969), 83–104.

⁴ Winger, 'Law of Christ' (2000), 538; cf. Eckert, *Verkündigung* (1971), 134; Mussner, *Galaterbrief* (1974), 370; Lührmann, *Galatians* (1992), 100; Hansen, 'Ethic of Freedom' (1997), 220.

Galatians 5.13–6.10 within the Letter to the Galatians

Before considering the various rationales for Paul's four references to the Law in 5.13–6.10, it is worth briefly discussing the current state of the question regarding the relevance of 5.13–6.10 to Galatians. This will prove useful for at least two reasons. First, the central question of this study, the rationale for Paul's four references to the Law in 5.13–6.10, is actually a subset of the larger question of the rationale for 5.13–6.10 in Galatians as a whole. Secondly, identifying the current state of the question with regard to the role of 5.13–6.10 in Galatians should, in turn, clarify how the results of this study contribute to that classic interpretative conundrum.

In the last twenty years, particularly within English-speaking scholarship, a widespread consensus has emerged on the question of the relevance of 5.13–6.10 to Galatians and to the situation in Galatia. In short, most scholars now agree that 5.13–6.10 is both *integral* to the letter and, at least to some extent, *relevant* to the situation.⁵ Few follow the lead of those who have claimed, in various ways, that 5.13–6.10 is more or less unrelated to the rest of Galatians or that it has little or no specific bearing on the situation in Galatia.⁶ Instead, it is commonplace for interpreters to affirm without further ado that this section of the letter is not only vital to the argument of Galatians but also pertinent to the situation in Galatia; indeed, for some these closing chapters constitute the *Höhepunkt* of the letter.⁷

While most scholars now affirm that Galatians contains a unified argument, they account for the coherence of the letter in different ways. In her recent monograph, *Die Galater zurückgewinnen: Paulinische Strategien in Galater 5 und 6* (2005), S. Schewe identifies three models scholars use to explain the thematic and functional unity between 5.13–6.10 and the rest of the letter: (1) the dogmatic model, which treats 5.13–6.10 as a necessary exposition of the ethical shape of the Christian faith;⁸ (2) the rhetorical model,

⁵ While several factors have contributed to this changed landscape in Galatians studies, Barclay's highly influential monograph, *Obedying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (1988), is often referred to as having played an important role. See further below.

⁶ For a succinct survey of these approaches, see Barclay, *Obedying* (1988), 9–16.

⁷ Suhl, 'Galater und Geist' (1989), 284; Matera, 'Culmination' (1988), 79–91; Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and Stoics* (2000), 131; Barclay, *Obedying* (1988), 216–20. Fee, *Presence* (1994), 420, claims that 5.13–6.10 is 'the crux for understanding Galatians as a whole'.

⁸ Schewe, *Galater 5 und 6* (2005), 16–26, points to the commentaries by Becker, *Galater* (1998) and Mussner, *Galaterbrief* (1974) as exemplary of this approach. Cf. Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998), 80 n. 13: 'Paul's discussion of Christian moral identity arose as a consequence of his own theological presentation'. The exposition of 5.13–26 proffered by Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and Stoics* (2000), 131–77, should be included here as well, even though he utilises a model derived from Stoic ethics rather than Christian theology. In 5.13–26 Paul explicates his vision of the 'genuinely Christ-believing form of life' (131).

which when Galatians is classified as deliberative rhetoric, understands 5.13–6.10 as Paul's climactic appeal to the Galatians to desist from certain behaviour and to adopt a different course of action;⁹ and (3) the historical model, which interprets 5.13–6.10 against the backdrop of a particular reconstruction of the exigencies of the situation that calls forth this section of the letter.¹⁰

However, Schewe takes issue with each model for failing to provide a satisfying account of the *thematic and functional unity* of Galatians. In different ways, all three approaches, she argues, end up treating 5.13–6.10 as a *Fremdkörper* within the body of the letter. While insisting on the essential unity of Galatians, each of these models assumes some kind of a *Themaverschiebung* between the earlier parts of the letter and 5.13–6.10. Even the historical model employed by Barclay, arguably the most successful account of the unity of Galatians on offer, supposes that Paul deals with basically *two different issues* in the two different sections of the letter (roughly speaking, chapters 1–4 and 5–6). Thus, for Barclay the alleged unity of the letter depends to a large extent upon his particular reconstruction of the situation (see further below). As a result, however, as Schewe rightly points out, 'Hauptteil und Schlußpassus haben unüberbrückbar *zwei* Themen, wenn sie nicht mehr über die historische Adressatensituation zusammengehalten werden'.¹¹

⁹ Schewe, *Galater 5 und 6* (2005), 26–48. Kennedy, *Interpretation* (1984), 144–52, has been particularly influential in propagating the view that Galatians is deliberative rather than forensic, as Betz argued. According to Kennedy, *Interpretation* (1984), 146: 'What Paul is leading to in chapters 1–4 is the exhortation of chapters 5–6. This is the point of the letter'. Cf. Hall, 'Rhetorical Outline' (1987), 277–87; Vouga, 'Rhetorischen Gattung' (1988), 291–92 (with comparisons to Demosthenes); Vouga, *Galater* (1998), 5–7; Smit, 'Deliberative Speech' (1989), 1–26 (though he claims that 5.13–6.10 was a later addition). On the propriety of analysing Galatians according to the ancient rhetorical handbooks, see especially Kern, *Rhetoric and Galatians* (1998); though see also Mitchell, 'Reading Rhetoric' (2001), 333–55, who, drawing upon John Chrysostom's *Galatians* commentary, provides critical interaction with Kern's thesis and concludes, somewhat provocatively: 'On the matter of the rhetorical genre and imagined situation of Galatians, Chrysostom clearly sides with Betz' (355). See also most recently Tolmie, *Persuading* (2005).

¹⁰ Schewe, *Galater 5 und 6* (2005), 49–59, identifies Betz as the forerunner of the historical approach (cf. 42–48), but takes Barclay, whose debt to Betz she rightly detects, as the prime exponent of this approach, especially insofar as Barclay, *Obedience* (1988), 26, explicitly eschews dependence upon rhetorical analysis: 'It is clear that our question can only be solved through careful exegesis and historical reconstruction'.

¹¹ Schewe, *Galater 5 und 6* (2005), 57 (emphasis original). Hays, 'Law of Christ' (1987), 269, already identified this as a problem with Betz's understanding of the relationship between 5.1–6.10 and the rest of Galatians: 'Betz seeks to establish a connection between the parenetic material and the rest of Paul's argument by a hypothesis about the occasion and purpose of the letter'.

Therefore, the question now for students of Galatians is not *whether* 5.13–6.10 relates to the earlier parts of the letter, but *how* it does so. While the focus of this study is more narrowly circumscribed around the issue of the rationale for Paul's four references to the Law in 5.13–6.10, we shall want to bear in mind this discussion and in the end ask how an answer to the question of the rationale for Paul's references to the Law may shed light on this ongoing and perennial issue in the interpretation of the letter.

Various Rationales for Paul's References to the Law in 5.13–6.10

There are essentially four ways in which scholars have explained the rationale for Paul's four references to the Law in 5.13–6.10. The first of the four views considered below operates on the assumption that Paul's references to the Law in 5.13–6.10 are in one way or another the expression of his own convictions about the perpetuity of the Law for the believer, while the latter three views tend to give more prominence to Paul's attempt to address the various exigencies of the situation in Galatia.

Paul invokes the Law as an abiding standard of behaviour

On this first view, Paul's appeal to the Law to sanction a charge to love (5.13–14; 6.2) is hardly surprising. Instead, this is precisely what one would expect from someone like Paul who insisted on the Law as an abiding moral norm. 'It is characteristic of Paul's mode of thinking that he should return to the law at this point [5.14], and bind the command of love upon the hearts of the Galatians by an appeal to the law'.¹² While the Mosaic Law no longer enslaves believers with its curse or binds them with its 'ceremonial' stipulations and legal sanctions, it still reveals the moral will of God. Believers are, therefore, to fulfil the Law insofar as it no longer serves as a national charter for Israel but has been transposed to a new setting within the life of the church, where, if it is rightly understood and interpreted, it can serve as a standard for the behaviour of believers.¹³

Paul can thus call for the fulfilment of the Law within the context of Christian exhortation since the Law itself is an expression of God's will for

¹² Ridderbos, *Galatians* (1953), 200. See the classic essays by Cranfield, 'St Paul' (1964), 43–68, and Wilckens, 'Entwicklung' (1982), 154–90 (cf. 174); and, more recently, Martin, *Christ and Law* (1989), 147–54; Schreiner, *Law and its Fulfillment* (1993), 145–78; Bayes, *Weakness* (2000), especially 165–74.

¹³ Hong, *Law* (1993), 182; Thielman, *Paul & the Law* (1994), 139–42; Das, *Jews* (2003), 166–86; George, *Galatians* (1994), 380: 'Paul's ethical argument throughout this entire passage [5.13–26] is based on the premise that the moral law of God, far from being abrogated by the coming of Christ, remains the divinely sanctioned standard for Christian conduct and growth in grace'.

his people and centres upon the love of one's neighbour (5.14; Lev 19.18).¹⁴ As a result, Paul's statement in 5.18 that believers are not 'under Law' should be taken to refer to a particular function of the Law – not the Law *per se*.¹⁵ Similarly, Paul's comment in 5.23 (often translated: 'Against such things there is no Law') implies that the 'fruit of the Spirit' actually meets the moral requirement of the Law.¹⁶ The Law of Christ in 6.2 is likewise to be taken as a reference either to that aspect of God's Law which persists into the new era of salvation or to the Mosaic Law itself as it is now reinterpreted by Christ and fulfilled through bearing one another's burdens.¹⁷

This basic line of interpretation has been prominent among Patristic and Reformed exegetes, who in one way or another are happy to affirm what in Reformation nomenclature came to be referred to as the 'third use' of the Law.¹⁸ Augustine was little troubled by Paul's continued references to the Law in 5.13–6.10, since the Law contained both 'sacramental works' and 'works having to do with good morals', the latter of which, when properly understood, continued to be obligatory for believers.¹⁹ Calvin makes similar sorts of distinctions in order to uphold the moral obligation of the Law for the life of the Christian.²⁰

A variation of this basic approach can be found among some scholars known as supporters of the New Perspective on Paul. J. D. G. Dunn, for example, insists that Paul's criticisms of the Law are carefully targeted, not wholesale, and should not be taken to imply a complete disavowal of the Law for the Christian.²¹ What has changed is the Law's function within the new era of salvation-history. 'With the transition to a new epoch, the law's role as

¹⁴ Cf. Hong, *Law* (1993), 190–91.

¹⁵ Cf. Hong, *Law* (1993), 184; George, *Galatians* (1994), 388.

¹⁶ Ridderbos, *Galatians* (1953), 208: 'The reference presumably is to the curse, the spoliation, which the law brings upon the disobedient (cf. 3:10, 13). Hence the law is not *against* those who walk by the Spirit because in principle they are fulfilling the law (verse 14). In this again it is evident that the requirement and the strength of the law continue'.

¹⁷ Hong, *Law* (1993), 173–76.

¹⁸ Cf. Ebeling, 'Triplex Usus Legis' (1963).

¹⁹ Plumer, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians* (2003), sections 43–44 (on 5.13–14). Cf. Aquinas, *Galatians* (1966), 172, who, when discussing 5.18, argues that the believer is obligated, though not *motivated*, by the moral precepts of the Law. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom* (1985), 274–79, 310–23, adopts essentially this same approach: the Law is no longer the *conditio salutis*, but it does provide moral guidance.

²⁰ Calvin, *Galatians* (1993), 164 (on 5.18). While the believer's conscience is not bound by the Law for salvation, this does not, Calvin insists, render the Law superfluous for Christian living; see especially Calvin, *Institutes* (1960), 3.19.2. Cf. Hesselink, 'Calvin and Christian Freedom' (1995), 77–89. This was evidently the consensus among Puritan divines; see Kevan, *Grace of Law* (1964), 167–223.

²¹ Dunn, *Paul* (1998), 632. Cf. Sanders, *Jewish People* (1983), 93–122.

guardian of Israel's distinctiveness was at an end. The obligation to walk in a way appropriate to the relationship given by God remained'.²²

Another variation of this same approach is to argue that Paul, in keeping with many of the other earliest Jewish followers of Jesus, believed that the Law was obligatory for Jews and Gentiles in different ways: that is, for Jews *as Jews* and for Gentiles *as Gentiles*.²³ The Jewish theologian M. Wyschogrod explains this approach:

Over the centuries, Christian debate about the law has revolved around the before-Jesus and after-Jesus axis. The idea was that the law was in full effect before the coming of Jesus, but that with his coming, large parts of it were suspended. The problem then was which parts were declared inoperative and which not. This question was never answered with the requisite clarity, though not a few Christian authors have tried. There is yet another way of looking at the problem which may be more productive for Jewish-Christian relations. Jews have long believed that the full Mosaic law was binding only on Jews. Non-Jews were duty-bound to obey the Noachide commandments, and if they did so, God was fully pleased.²⁴

According to Wyschogrod, the Noachide commandments constitute for Paul, and for much of the early church (cf. Acts 15), the Law for Gentiles.²⁵ While Jews are under obligation to observe, in Paul's terms, the 'whole Law' (5.3), i.e., to live as Jews, Gentiles are to conform to the basic moral standards of the Law, which includes avoiding things such as incest, murder and robbery. Thus, when Paul refers to Gentiles fulfilling the Law, he has in mind the Law *as it applies to Gentiles* (cf. 1 Cor 7.19).²⁶ And when he warns the Galatians that the 'works of the flesh' exclude one from the 'kingdom of God' (5.19-21), he identifies behaviour that overlaps considerably with those 'cardinal'

²² Dunn, *Theology*, 116.

²³ See Wyschogrod, 'Jewish Postscript' (1988), 185-87; Wyschogrod, 'Mosaic Law' (1993), 451-59; Wyschogrod, *Abraham's Promise* (2004), 160-64, 188-201; Tomson, *Jewish Law* (1990); Tomson, 'Law Teaching' (1996), 251-70 (cf. 268); Tomson, *From Heaven* (2001), especially 179-90; Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law* (2000), 145-73; Bauckham, *James* (1999), 148-51; Segal, *Paul the Convert* (1990), 187-223; Segal, 'Universalism' (1994), 1-29; Finsterbusch, *Lebensweisung* (1996), 97-184; Müller, *Tora* (1998), 174-99. Cf. Reinmuth, *Geist und Gesetz* (1985), 54-66.

²⁴ Wyschogrod, *Abraham's Promise* (2004), 162.

²⁵ It is, of course, somewhat anachronistic to speak of Noachide commandments during the NT period, since the earliest explicit formulation of the doctrine comes not until the second century C.E. While there are important precursors to this later rabbinic formulation (cf. especially *Jub.* 7.20-21), probably the most that can be said for Paul is that something like a pre-rabbinic equivalent of the Noachide commandments may have informed his 'halakhic' approach to Gentiles. Cf. Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law* (2000), 145-73; van de Sandt and Flusser, *Didache* (2002), 238-70 (especially 265-69).

²⁶ Tomson, *Jewish Law* (1990), 175-78.

sins proscribed by the Law, which Jews, generally speaking, believed even Gentiles were to observe.²⁷

On the question of Paul's rationale for continuing to refer to the Law in 5.13–6.10, then, each of these approaches comes out looking somewhat similar. While scholars within the Reformed tradition tend to utilise the distinction between various aspects of the Law, some of which are now obsolete,²⁸ those who identify with the New Perspective on Paul tend to mark different priorities within the Law, some of which now take precedence over others.²⁹ The third approach mentioned above takes a slightly different tack by distinguishing between different aspects of the Law along the Jew–Gentile axis. In the end, however, each of these readings depends upon a similar line of argument: Paul's positive affirmations of the Law in 5.14 and 6.2 (and perhaps 5.23) refer to the Law as, in some sense, an abiding standard of behaviour, while Paul's negative comments in 5.18 (and elsewhere) should be taken to refer to a particular feature or function of the Law.

Much can be said for this basic approach, not least its ability to take at face value Paul's 'positive' appeals to the Law within the context of his discussion of Christian ethics. This view also rightly questions whether Paul's language of the fulfilment of the Law (5.14; 6.2) can be regarded simply as an *ad hoc* device used to score points over his opponents, rather than something that emerges organically from and thereby reflects his own theological convictions. The principal setback with this whole approach, however, has been, and continues to be, the difficulty it has providing convincing readings of Paul's seemingly dismissive comments about the Law in Galatians (2.19; 3.23–25; 5.1). Perhaps equally problematic for this view is the fact that Paul nowhere appeals simply and directly to the Law itself to sanction his ethical injunctions, something one might have expected him to do from time to time if the Law was for him really an abiding standard of behaviour. Even his comments about the fulfilment of the Law in 5.14 and 6.2 are not prescriptive, but descriptive.³⁰

²⁷ On 5.19–21, see Müller, *Tora* (1998), 175–78; Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law* (2000), 168. Neyrey, 'Bewitched' (1988), 88, comments in passing that the 'works of the flesh' are infractions of 'basically the Ten Commandments'. Cf. Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie* (1992), 260.

²⁸ Thielman, 'Coherence' (1992), 252: 'Paul could distinguish between aspects of the law which were obsolete and aspects of continuing validity'.

²⁹ Dunn, *Paul* (1998), 656: 'Where the requirements of the law were being interpreted in a way which ran counter to the basic principle of the love command, Paul thought that the requirements could and should be dispensed with'.

³⁰ Betz, *Galatians* (1979), 235; Westerholm, 'Fulfilling the Law' (1986–87), 235–37; Barclay, *Obeying* (1988), 142.

Paul shows that his Law-free gospel does not entail lawless living

The second approach finds the climax of Paul's polemic against the Law in Galatians in his clarion call to Christian freedom in 5.1 and 5.13. Freedom, however, can easily be misconstrued as license, permission to dispense with moral norms of whatever kind. Paul was keenly aware of this danger. Therefore, after reminding the Galatians of their call to freedom (5.13a), Paul immediately turns to warn them of freedom's misuse (5.13b). He then appeals to the standard of the Law itself to press the point that Christian freedom carries its own moral requirements, which are not at odds with what the Law itself upholds (5.14, 18, 23; 6.2).³¹

This is, at any rate, the explanation of those who are convinced that Paul refers to the Law in the ethical section of Galatians in order to avoid misunderstandings or respond to objections.³² As S. Westerholm suggests, Paul's references to the Law in 5.13–6.10 reveal that he still has his 'nomistic opponents still very much in mind' and that he has specifically framed his discussion 'in terms designed to meet a potential objection to his call for freedom'.³³ Drane argues similarly: 'Having dismissed the relevance of the Law and the rite of initiation into the Law-oriented community, Paul now feels himself constrained to demonstrate that this does not, in his view, lead to lawlessness'.³⁴

J. L. Martyn adopts a similar approach in his *Galatians* commentary, suggesting that one of Paul's main aims in 5.13–6.10 is to answer the Agitators' charge that he has failed to provide the Galatians with detailed guidance in everyday life: 'Being an unfaithful student of the Law-observant apostles in the mother church of Jerusalem, Paul failed to give you the Law, thus allowing you to remain a group of sailors on the treacherous high seas in nothing more than a small and poorly equipped boat'.³⁵ Thus, while Paul's gospel and pastoral guidance are essentially Law-free, this does not entail

³¹ Bachmann, *Sünder oder Übertreter* (1992), 119: 'In 5,13-26 sucht der Apostel nämlich in einem ersten Durchgang zu zeigen, daß sittlich vollkommenes Leben der Christen möglich ist und daß es, wenn sie auch nicht ὑπὸ νόμον sind (5,18b), doch nicht in Konflikte mit dem νόμος führt' (cf. 69, 84). Cf. Becker, *Galater* (1998), 83: 'Die christliche Freiheit, wie sie Paulus versteht, ist nicht gegen das Gesetz (5,14.18.23)'; Fung, *Galatians* (1988), 243; Söding, *Liebesgebot* (1995), 187–226 (especially 215–16, 218–19).

³² Suhl, 'Galaterbrief' (1987), 3119–27, argues that Paul demonstrates for the Galatians in 5.13–25 what he has already shown to be the case for himself in 2.19–20: namely, that his Law-free gospel does not lead to sin. Cf. Wilckens, 'Entwicklung' (1982), 176.

³³ Westerholm, 'Fulfilling the Law' (1986–87), 231. Cf. Westerholm, *Israel's Law* (1988), 201–02, where he stresses the polemical function of these references: 'Paul is concerned to show that the ethical behavior of Christians is better, not worse, than those living "under the law"' (202).

³⁴ Drane, *Libertine or Legalist* (1975), 52–53.

³⁵ Martyn, *Galatians* (1997), 481, 305. Cf. Martyn, 'Law-Observant' (1985), 307–24.

lawless living or, in Martyn's own words, becoming enslaved to the 'Impulsive Desire of the Flesh'.³⁶ In fact, Paul's concrete pastoral guidance outstrips even the very best the Law has to offer.³⁷

This way of understanding the rationale for Paul's continued references to the Law in 5.13–6.10 has traditionally been closely connected to a similar way of understanding the role and relevance of the ethical section of Galatians as a whole. The question, then, has often been broader than why the Law in 5.13–6.10, but why this section of the letter at all? This particular question, however, is asked far less frequently than it once was. Galatians scholarship, in fact, appears to enjoy something of a consensus on this point: chapters 5–6 are immediately relevant to the situation in Galatia. Thus, construing the rationale behind Paul's references to the Law in the ethical section (simply) as a means of forestalling misunderstandings or answering possible objections is now generally regarded as inadequate. While there may well be a defensive note to at least some of what Paul says about the Law in 5.13–6.10, there is reason to suspect that there may be more going on in this section.

Paul wants to continue his polemic against the Law

Scholars who advocate this third approach to the question of the rationale for Paul's four references to the Law in 5.13–6.10 will often stress that these references appear between two forceful polemical appeals to resist circumcision and to reject those advocating it (5.1-12; 6.11-18).³⁸ Therefore, they argue, if we are to read 5.13–6.10 within its context, we should give due weight to this fact, which would suggest that with his references to the Law in 5.13–6.10, Paul is not on the defensive, but on the offensive. He is not defending himself against misunderstandings, but offering a trenchant criticism of those in Galatia who either advocate or embrace the Law.³⁹ On this reading, Paul's comments in 5.18 and 5.23 are to be understood as 'disparaging references' to the Law,⁴⁰ while his remarks about the fulfilment of the Law in 5.14 and 6.2 can be viewed as further distancing the Galatians from the Law.⁴¹ For these scholars, Paul's provocative association of the Law

³⁶ Martyn, *Galatians* (1997), 479–501, 524–40.

³⁷ Cf. Westerholm, *Israel's Law* (1988), 201–02.

³⁸ Cf. Matera, 'Culmination' (1988), 79–91.

³⁹ Russell, *Flesh/Spirit* (1997), 143–70, views 5.13-26 as a polemical contrast between two opposing ways of life based either upon the flesh or the Spirit, thereby bringing Paul's argument against the 'Judaizers' to a climax. Cf. Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence* (1992), 140–60; Hamerton-Kelly, 'Sacred Violence' (1990), 55–75.

⁴⁰ Howard, *Crisis* (1990), 12–13. Cf. Borgen, *New Perspectives* (1987), 241; Hansen, 'Ethic of Freedom' (1997), 220. Kwon, *Eschatology* (2004), 195–98, argues that Paul's polemic against the Law here and throughout Galatians focuses primarily, though not exclusively, upon its moral impotence.

⁴¹ See, e.g., Esler, *Galatians* (1998), 204, 231.

with the flesh in 5.16-18 is particularly significant. By exposing the close affiliation between these two, Paul can press the point that the Law has only deleterious consequences for ethics. Indeed, to turn to the Law is to *return* to the flesh.⁴²

The strength of this approach is that it avoids unnecessarily disconnecting 5.13-6.10 from the rest of the letter, not least its immediate context, which includes strong words about both circumcision and the Agitators (5.1-12; 6.11-18). That the issue of the Law is still very much on Paul's mind is strongly suggested not only by his continued references to the Law (5.14, 18, 23; 6.2), but also by his linking the Law with the flesh and contrasting the Law and the Spirit (cf. 3.1-5; 4.21-31). Especially noteworthy is Paul's use of 'under Law' in 5.18, a phrase that has appeared several times earlier in the letter (3.23; 4.4, 5, 21); its use here is doubtless intentional and may invoke these earlier discussions.⁴³

It is less clear, however, whether this line of interpretation can adequately account for *each* of Paul's references to the Law in 5.13-6.10. While one could certainly argue that Paul's references to the Law in 5.18 and 5.23 are polemically motivated, this is less clear with his reference to the fulfilment of the Law in 5.14 and 6.2. Of course, one could argue that the Law of Christ in 6.2 is a polemical formulation, but the difficulty with this is that 6.1-5 appears to be particularly bereft of polemics and instead looks like a rather straightforward series of exhortations and admonitions. Therefore, regardless of the extent to which there are polemics in 5.13-6.10, Paul probably had additional reasons for admonishing the Galatians to love one another and thus fulfil the Law (of Christ).

Paul demonstrates the superfluity of the Law for ethics

We come now to the fourth approach, which is also arguably the consensus view among scholars.⁴⁴ For those who see Paul more or less dispensing with

⁴² Lightfoot, *Galatians* (1896), 209; Howard, *Crisis* (1990), 13-14; Mussner, *Galaterbrief* (1974), 378; Lührmann, *Galatians* (1992), 101: 'Paul faults the law also in the realm of ethics for promising more than it can accomplish: bestowing blessing, righteousness, and life'. Elliott, *Cutting too Close* (2003), 287-322, argues that in Gal 5-6 Paul associates the Law and circumcision with the Anatolian Mother of the Gods and self-castration.

⁴³ Dunn, *Galatians* (1993), 301.

⁴⁴ See, though with some variations, Gaventa, 'Singularity' (1991), 147-59; Wessels, 'Responsible Freedom' (1992), 461-74; Lategan, 'Christian Ethics' (1990); Thielman, *Law and New Testament* (1999); Murphy-O'Connor, *Critical Life* (1996), 200; Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: His Story* (2004), 132; Martyn, *Galatians* (1997), 19 (though see above); Suhl, 'Galater und Geist' (1989), 283; Dunn, 'Covenantal Nomism' (1991), 125-46; Dunn, *Galatians* (1993), 285; Dunn, *Theology of Galatians* (1993), 101-04; Williams, *Galatians* (1997), 28, 144-53; Fee, 'Life of Obedience' (1994), 201-17; Fee, *Presence* (1994), 420-54; Witherington, *Galatians* (1998), 381, 397, 411-12. Cf. Thielman, *Paul & the Law* (1994), 140; Longenecker, *Triumph* (1998), 84.

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