

## THE PARADOX OF THE LAW IN PAUL

THE PARADOX OF THE LAW IN PAUL  
SCHOLARLY RESPONSES

By

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## Chapter 1

If we want to understand Paul we cannot suspend judgment on his view of the law and leave it as a perpetual question mark in our thinking.<sup>1</sup>

The issue of the law in Paul's letters has been the focus of a great deal of scholarly research. Although there is extensive literature on the topic there never seems to be a lack of questions asked and problems analyzed. One particular problem which arises, especially in Galatians and Romans, is the apparent paradox in Paul's thinking on the law. On the one hand, Paul states that Christ-believers<sup>2</sup> have died to the law (Gal. 2:19; Rom. 7:4, 6), are redeemed from under the law (Gal. 4:5), and are not subject to the law (Gal. 5:18). On the other hand, believers are said to fulfill the law (Gal. 5:14, 22-23; Rom. 8:4; 13:8-10); after all, "the law is holy" (Rom. 7:12) and "spiritual" (7:14), and "the commandment is holy and just and good" (7:12). How is it that Paul views the law in seemingly opposite ways? It is the goal of this project to explore the various scholarly reactions to this question.

In this endeavor my project will address questions such as, where in Paul's letters do we find this paradox? Does the occasion for and time of the particular letter affect Paul's presentation of law? Do the various influences on Paul's writing and theology affect his statements? Does Paul see the law playing a continuing role in the lives of Christ-believers? Why or why not? If so, is it important for all believers or only some? In what ways do various contrasts present in Paul's writings (i.e. new age vs. old age, flesh vs. spirit, doing vs. fulfilling the law) relate to his apparently contrasting view of the law? What role does the Spirit play in Paul's discussion of the law? Does the picture which emerges from Paul's letters fit with the prophecies from the Hebrew Scriptures (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:26-27)?

With the vast amount of scholarly discussion on the law in Paul's writing it is often difficult to wade through the various responses to the issue at hand. The goal of this project then is to organize the responses to the question and present an overview of the state of the question in recent research.<sup>3</sup> In pursuit of this goal the current work will be presented in four chapters.

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<sup>1</sup> T.R. Schreiner, *The Law and its Fulfillment* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993) 13.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term "Christ-believers" throughout instead of Christians. The term "Christian" tends to create a picture in the mind of the reader of a strictly Gentile, post-Jewish community. "Christ-believer" on the other hand allows for the easy inclusion of Jewish Christ-believers.

<sup>3</sup> Considering the scope of this project I have decided to pursue depth rather than breadth. Therefore, by "recent research" I mean those major scholarly works that have dealt with the issue of the paradox of the law in one way or another in the past 40 years

First, an introduction to Paul and his letters to the Galatians and Romans will be given.<sup>4</sup> In this chapter four of Paul's characteristics will be explored in order to give the reader a general understanding of the man behind the letters. Following this introduction to the author, the foundational questions of to whom the letters were written, when, and why will be addressed. This introductory chapter will therefore give the necessary background information to the reader in order to position them to effectively engage the more in-depth material presented in the chapters to follow.

In the second chapter the reader will begin to be introduced to the various responses to the question at hand. In this chapter I will address the scholarly responses to Paul's negative statements about the law. Subtopics to be addressed in this chapter include the difference between "getting in" and "staying in" the people of God, the difference between "doing" and "fulfilling" the law, and the social function of the law.

Conversely, in the third chapter I will explore the arguments presented for Paul's seemingly positive statements about the law. This chapter requires three subsections, namely, one for those who argue that the law plays a defined role for all believers, another for those who argue for a differing role for Jewish versus Gentile believers, and finally, one for those who argue that the Mosaic law is no longer binding on Christ-believers. An appendix which addresses the interesting position of Räisänen will close this chapter.

In the fourth and final chapter of this project I will summarize the main points presented, offer some critical reflection on the issue and suggest future avenues of study for this interesting topic.

## Paul

One cannot hope to understand what Paul wrote in his letters without some foundational knowledge of who Paul was. Paul is given many labels throughout scholarship. There are four in particular that I see as especially important for understanding how Paul approaches any given topic in his letters. Consequently, in the course of this introduction to Paul we will see the importance of viewing him as a Jewish, eschatological, letter writing, apostle to the Gentiles.

First, Paul was a Jew. We can see in Paul's letters themselves that Paul was "an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of

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or so with most of my sources following the publication of E.P. Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977). In a project of this length I will not be able to engage all scholars who have written on this topic, but I feel as though the current project presents a sufficient overview of the literature at hand.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians 3 and Philippians 3 are also important in this discussion but since they are outside the scope of this project (which is Galatians and Romans) they will not be addressed here.

Benjamin” (Rom 11:1; also 2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5). In his life as a zealous Jew he lived according to the customs of his ancestors and in fact he advanced beyond many of his contemporaries in this area (Gal 1:14). He was a zealous Jew, who persecuted the very church he would one day help to expand (Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6; 1 Cor 15:9). While Paul’s outlook on Judaism changed after his remarkable experience of the risen Christ, he nevertheless remained a Jew. In Paul’s experience of the risen Christ (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; Gal 1:16) he experienced a call. His account of this experience indicates that it was for the purpose of his apostleship that Christ was revealed to him (Gal 1:16), not for the purpose of deserting Judaism. His experience of Christ and his resultant faith in Christ was not an abolishment of his life in Judaism, but instead a fulfillment.

Chester similarly states that “Paul sees his life as a Jew as part of God’s purpose.”<sup>5</sup> Yet, Chester argues that Paul did in fact undergo a conversion. He recognizes Paul’s use of the term call to characterize this change, but suggests that Paul sees “call” as “conversion.”<sup>6</sup> Although he does argue that Paul experiences a conversion, he states that perhaps a change of religion is not necessarily the defining characteristic of conversion.<sup>7</sup> In fact, we see in Paul’s letters that he does, while at the same time, does not change religion. As Chester states “It was Judaism *per se* that Paul left behind, and viewed from this perspective, Paul did change religion. On the other hand, Paul will not simply write off his past as worthless . . . In this sense Paul did not change religion.”<sup>8</sup> Chester therefore suggests that one cannot ignore the element of conversion which appears to be present in Paul, but at the same time, one cannot ignore his continued respect for his “former life in Judaism.”

Second and related, Paul saw himself as an apostle (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; 9:1-2). In fact, in his letter to the churches in Galatia he defends this very fact. In this defense he clarifies that it was not by human authority that he was commissioned as an apostle, but by Christ and therefore by God himself (Gal 1:1; Rom 1:5). His apostleship was established before his own birth and it was when God revealed Christ to him that he received his commission to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles (Gal 1:15-16). This was his mission; this was his message as an apostle of Christ. Paul’s authority as an apostle was at stake when he discussed any issue that was at odds with the other apostles. One such issue was the role of the law for Gentile believers. The message which Paul proclaimed was different from what had been proclaimed before, as is

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<sup>5</sup> S.J. Chester, *Conversion at Corinth: Perspectives on Conversion in Paul's Thought and the Corinthian Church* (New York: T&T Clark, 2003) 163.

<sup>6</sup> Chester, *Conversion*, 153.

<sup>7</sup> Chester, *Conversion*, 155.

<sup>8</sup> Chester, *Conversion*, 162.

evidenced by the apostolic council (Acts 15; Gal 2), and consequently we see in his letters a defense of his position as an apostle.

The question then becomes, Was Paul an apostle for the Gentiles only? Paul seems to express in his letters that his mission was primarily for the Gentiles. He calls himself the “apostle to the Gentiles” (Rom 11:13), the “minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles” (Rom 15:16), and the one called “to proclaim him (Christ) among the Gentiles” (Gal 1:16). Furthermore, Paul was “entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised” (Gal 2:7). In fact, it was decided by James, Cephas and John that Paul, and Barnabas, would go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised (Gal. 2:9). It appears then that there were two separate missions present in the early church: one to the Jews and one to the Gentiles. Based on Paul’s own writing it seems as though Paul’s primary responsibility was to the Gentiles. This does not mean that there were no Jewish members of the communities to which Paul wrote;<sup>9</sup> it simply means that Paul saw himself as primarily an apostle to the Gentiles. Sanders argues that while Paul may have started by trying to reach both ethnic groups, in the end his mission to the Gentiles was (in some measure) a success while his mission to the Jews was (largely) unsuccessful.<sup>10</sup> The question that arises and consequently influences how one responds to the paradox question is: can Paul’s message found in his letters be applied to both the Jewish and Gentile Christ-believers found in the early church? What ethnic group predominates in Paul’s various communities and are Paul’s letters then universally applicable or narrowly focused?

Third, Paul’s eschatology was well established when he wrote his letters and therefore influenced all that he said and did.<sup>11</sup> Paul believed Jesus to be the Lord and with his coming the present evil age was coming to an end (Gal 1:3-4). Like many other Jews Paul looked to the coming of the Messiah and the promised “Age to Come.”<sup>12</sup> While the promised new age was not yet a full reality Paul did think that the future was invading the present and the people of God were living in the overlap of the new age and the old age.<sup>13</sup> The old age was characterized by Torah; it was the time of the “old covenant” made between God and his chosen people: the Jews (2 Cor 3). The new age, on the other hand, was the time when God

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<sup>9</sup> We see that Paul is concerned with “saving” both Jews and Gentiles throughout his letters. I.e. 1 Cor 1:21-24; 9:19-22; Rom 10:1, 12-13; 11:13-14.

<sup>10</sup> E.P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 185.

<sup>11</sup> A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism Of Paul the Apostle* (New York, Seabury, 1968).

<sup>12</sup> C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed* (London: A&C Black, 1991) 8.

<sup>13</sup> R. Bultman, “Πιστεύω,” Pages 174-228 in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol VI*, edited by Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 222.

would reconcile all humanity to himself, both Jew and Gentile (Rom 5:11; 2 Cor 5:19). This age was characterized by the Spirit and consequently the fulfillment of the new covenant; a covenant made not only with the physical descendants of Abraham, but also his spiritual descendants (Gal. 3:6-9; 29). Paul's eschatology also provided him with a great sense of urgency. The complete fulfillment of the new age was not a distant reality for Paul, but one that could arrive at any moment and in fact had already begun in the Spirit (Rom 8:23).<sup>14</sup> Paul was not so much interested in being "an innovator."<sup>15</sup> Instead, Paul's goal was to aid believers in how to live in these overlapping times while waiting for the completion of the new age, in light of the death and resurrection of Christ.

Finally, Paul used letters to communicate with his churches.<sup>16</sup> The only extant material we have from Paul is his letters and this fact cannot be ignored when trying to determine how Paul felt about any given issue, the law included. Paul wrote specific letters to specific groups of people about specific issues. These were not theological treatises, but focused responses. As Dunn states,

A letter, more or less by definition, is part of a dialogue, and to abstract it from that dialogue is to lose something of its quality as answer to actual questions or propositions posed, and as questions or propositions requiring in turn an answer from actual recipients.<sup>17</sup>

As a letter and consequently as a representation of one side of a debate, a letter represents its author without the author being able to act and react as an author would if he were face to face with his recipients.<sup>18</sup> The rhetoric of the letter itself then becomes important to understand. Perhaps Paul did not feel as strongly as some of his statements suggest, but the lack of personal interaction forces him to take an extreme position. Middle ground would not do; it would not convince; would not persuade, without the charismatic presence of the author. When examining the paradox of the law in Romans and Galatians therefore, it becomes especially important to ask why the discussion of the law would be present in these

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<sup>14</sup> C.K. Barrett, *Romans*, 8; G.D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994) 470; E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977) 447, 450; N.T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005) 146.

<sup>15</sup> E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 453.

<sup>16</sup> For the purpose of this project, I will be following the general scholarly consensus that of the 13 letters attributed to Paul, seven are authentically Pauline: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon. (Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 431; A. Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 41).

<sup>17</sup> J.D.G. Dunn, *Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993) 3.

<sup>18</sup> H.D. Betz, *Galatians*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 24.

particular letters at all. Where does the discussion fit within the purpose of the letter itself? In order to answer this question one needs knowledge of the letters themselves.

### **The Epistle to the Galatians**

#### *To Whom was Paul writing?*

The letter to the Galatians is one of the most animated and engaging letters that Paul wrote.<sup>19</sup> Within the first two verses of this compact letter the reader is confronted with the first issue which must be resolved. Who exactly are “the churches of Galatia” (1:2)? In the early first century, the region of Galatia was located in the central plateau of Asia Minor.<sup>20</sup> While this might seem to answer the above mentioned question, the region was quite large and diversified and it is most likely that Paul’s letter was not meant for the entire region.<sup>21</sup> Instead two main theories known as the North Galatian and South Galatian hypothesis (hereafter NGH and SGH respectively) have emerged in response to this question. As Betz states, “geographically, the name Galatia can refer to two adjacent territories in Asia Minor: to the ‘territory’ in the central parts (the so-called ‘North Galatian’ theory) or the ‘province’ (the so-called ‘South Galatian’ theory).”<sup>22</sup> For the purpose of this project, the various arguments made in favour of the NGH and SGH do not matter as much as what they point to.<sup>23</sup>

While there is obvious diversity in opinion as to what region of Galatia the letter was intended for, there is general agreement as to the ethnic background of the recipients of the letter; an issue more influential for the present discussion. What is clear about the recipients from Paul’s letter itself is that they were primarily Gentile (4:8; 5:2f; 6:12f).<sup>24</sup> It is possible that there were Jewish members of the communities, but they were the minority. If Paul’s letter was intended primarily for Gentiles, one may argue that the issue he deals with and the advice he gives are meant primarily for Gentiles.

#### *When was Galatians written?*

The dating of Paul’s letters tends to be difficult and Galatians is the prime example of this difficulty. As Bruce suggests “it is the most difficult

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<sup>19</sup> While there has been debate over which letters constitute the genuine Pauline epistles, the authenticity of Galatians is rarely questioned. (see Betz’ commentary for some arguments which question Pauline authorship).

<sup>20</sup> H.D. Betz, *Galatians*, 1. It was there that ethnic Galatians lived.

<sup>21</sup> See H.D. Betz, *Galatians*, 1-2 for an explanation of the setting of Galatia and the influence of the Celts and Hellenism.

<sup>22</sup> H.D. Betz, *Galatians*, 4.

<sup>23</sup> See Betz’ commentary, also those of Bruce and Longenecker for more extensive overviews of the NGH and SGH debate.

<sup>24</sup> H.D. Betz, *Galatians*, 4; J.L. Martyn, *Galatians*, 16.

of Paul's 'capital letters' to date precisely."<sup>25</sup> In spite of this difficulty, the consensus tends to be that Galatians was written during Paul's Ephesian ministry.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, most scholars place the dating of the letter somewhere between 50-55 CE.<sup>27</sup> Martyn argues that it does not matter when exactly Galatians was written, but instead where in regards to Paul's other letters it lies. In response to this question, Martyn argues that Galatians was most likely written after 1 Thessalonians and before Philippians (around 50 CE).<sup>28</sup> Whatever the case, Galatians appears to be one of the earliest extant letters of Paul and therefore it holds an important place in deciphering what Paul's theology may have looked like.

### *Why did Paul write it?*

Before one can argue anything about what Paul intended to say and how this reflects his stance on any issue, one final question must be answered: why did Paul write Galatians in the first place? As mentioned above, the churches which Paul was writing to in Galatia were made up primarily of Gentile members. As can be seen throughout Paul's writings one of his foundational arguments was that Gentiles did not have to be circumcised in order to become followers of Christ; they did not have to become Jews (Rom 2:28-29; 1 Cor 7:19; Gal 3:2-3). Instead, he argued that the distinctions between Jew and Gentile, between slave and free, no longer mattered, but all were now heirs in Christ according to the promise made to Abraham (Gal 3:28-29). Paul states that "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything" (5:6) and therefore Gentiles could receive the promise of salvation as Gentiles. When this fundamental assertion was challenged by another missionary group in Galatia, Paul responded swiftly with this letter. Betz states that Paul writes the letter because "the Galatians had changed their mind about him, about his message and about themselves."<sup>29</sup> Galatians then is a defense of Paul's message as well as his authority to present such a message (his apostleship).

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<sup>25</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 43.

<sup>26</sup> Bruce, *Galatians*, 44; F.J. Matera, *Galatians* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992) 26.

<sup>27</sup> H.D. Betz, *Galatians*, 12; J.D.G. Dunn, *Epistle to the Galatians* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993) 8; P.F. Esler, *Galatians*, 34; D. Luhrmann, *Galatians: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 3.

<sup>28</sup> J.L. Martyn, *Galatians*, 19-20. F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1982) 55 too addresses where in relation to Paul's other letters Galatians lies, but differs from Martyn in arguing that Galatians is the earliest of Paul's extant letters.

<sup>29</sup> H.D. Betz, *Galatians*, 8.

Who were Paul's opponents<sup>30</sup> in Galatia? While Paul does not mention them explicitly he does allude to them at various points in his letter (1:7; 5:10, 12; 6:12-13). Longenecker argues that three features of the opponents emerge from Paul's letter: (1) "the agitators were probably highly gifted rhetoricians with impressive skill in interpreting the scriptures of Israel"; (2) they "might well have claimed the sponsorship of the Jerusalem church"; and (3) they "preached a form of Christianity that showcased Abrahamic descent in conjunction with the covenantal law of Moses."<sup>31</sup> These three characteristics make the opponents fierce competitors and help to explain why Paul wrote Galatians in the way that he did. Because they were gifted rhetoricians, Paul responded in impressive rhetoric. Because of their claim of sponsorship from the Jerusalem church, Paul stresses his position as an apostle. Finally, and most important for our discussion, because of the opponents' emphasis on the law of Moses, Paul highlights the issue of the law in his letter.

It seems from Paul's response (the letter itself) that the opponents challenged Paul on two fronts. First, they attacked the validity of Paul's apostleship. This is a smart strategic move on behalf of the opponents because if a teacher's authority and validity is challenged it makes it much easier to challenge what that teacher says or does. People are more likely to accept and follow the teachings of someone with authority than someone who is an outcast, who is not supported by the organization they wish to be a part of. Paul addresses this issue promptly in his letter and argues that while he may not be one of the initial twelve, his apostleship is commissioned by God and supported by the "pillars" of the church (1:1, 15-16, 18-19; 2:7-9).

The second challenge was to Paul's foundational assertion that Gentiles do not have to be circumcised or to follow the other "works of the law" in order to become heirs of the promise (2:16; 4:5-7). The opponents moved into the communities which Paul established and tried to convince the Gentile followers of the necessity of circumcision and the law as means of gaining righteousness and entering the chosen people of God.

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<sup>30</sup> Note that while in some literature these opponents are referred to as 'Judaizers' this is an inaccurate title. One who "judaizes" is one who is not already a Jew but undergoes certain practices in order to become like a Jew. As Dunn suggests: it describes "the range of conduct covered by the term God-fearer (or within Palestine also the term 'resident alien') and" it signifies "an embracing of much that characterized the Jewish way of life, enough at any rate for the judaizing individual to be acceptable to devout Jews" (*Jesus, Paul, and the Law* 149). It seems from the picture which emerges from Paul's letter that his opponents are in fact already Jewish, not Gentile God-fearers and therefore not Judaizers. (Sanders 1983, 18 suggests that they are Jewish Christians)

<sup>31</sup> B. Longenecker, "Galatians," in *Cambridge Companion to St Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 64-65. J.L. Martyn, *Galatians*, 18 also argues for the last two characteristics of the opponents: connection with Jerusalem and focus on Sinaitic law.

It becomes clear that the Galatians were struggling with what it meant to live in the freedom of the Spirit which Paul had preached to them (Gal 5:1, 13, 17). The opponents then offered a logical means of fighting against the powers of the flesh: the law.<sup>32</sup> Dunn argues that “what Paul was facing was an attempt to undo (as Paul would see it) or to complete (as the other missionaries would see it) Paul’s work in Galatia.”<sup>33</sup> Although the opponents may have viewed their work as a completion of Paul’s, Paul viewed them in a different light. They were not helping, but hindering his work in Galatia and therefore he reacts with this impassioned letter, hoping to gain back what he had lost to these opponents.

### **The Epistle to the Romans**

#### *To Whom was Paul writing?*

The question to whom Paul was writing in Rome is not as complex as it was with Galatians. It is clear from the letter itself that the recipients were Roman Christ-believers (Rom. 1:7). Not only are these recipients “chosen by God” but according to Paul their faith has been proclaimed throughout the world (1:8). He praises the Roman church for their steadfast faith in spite of the fact that, unlike Galatians and the communities of Paul’s other undisputed letters, Paul did not found the church in Rome.<sup>34</sup> He never had the opportunity to share his message with this particular church, despite many attempts (1:13). Since Paul wished many times to come to Rome, one may propose that the Roman church had been present for some years before Paul actually wrote the letter. This indicates a strong Gentile mission outside of Paul’s own ministry.<sup>35</sup> Thus, there were other missionaries spreading the “message” of God at the same time as and perhaps before Paul.

While it is clear that Paul is writing to the Christ-believing community in Rome, what is not as clear is the exact ethnic make-up of this church. Was it primarily Gentile or Jewish? Or was there a mix of the two groups in the church at Rome? According to Cranfield, “the arguments put forward to prove that the Roman church was at this time predominantly Gentile fall – no less than those adduced to prove it was predominantly Jewish – far short of conclusiveness.”<sup>36</sup> After all Paul seems to indicate the presence of both Jews (2:17-28; 7:1; 16) and Gentiles (2:13-32; 11:13; 15:14-16) in the Roman church. In fact, Sanders argues that Romans is “unique in the Pauline correspondence in containing so many clues to the presence of Jewish Christians among the

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<sup>32</sup> H.D. Betz, *Galatians*, 29, 273.

<sup>33</sup> J.D.G. Dunn, *Theology of Galatians*, 11.

<sup>34</sup> Colossians would be another exception, but since it is not one of Paul’s undisputed letters, it will not be used here.

<sup>35</sup> C.K. Barrett, *Romans*, 6.

<sup>36</sup> C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans 1-8* (New York: T&T Clark, 1975) 18.

readership.”<sup>37</sup> Jews and Gentiles were worshipping together and Paul took no issue with this. In fact, he calls for mutual acceptance (Rom 15:7) as Abraham is the “mutual father” of both Jew and Gentile (Rom 4:12).<sup>38</sup> The relational problems that appear to be present between the “strong” and the “weak” in Romans seem to have to do with the return of the Jewish Christ-believers after the edict of Claudius.<sup>39</sup> Paul hopes then to “unify the divided factions of Christian Jews and gentiles (thus 15:7-13).”<sup>40</sup> Consequently, unlike Galatians, what appears to be present in the community at Rome is not “an overwhelming majority and a tiny minority,” but a more balanced ethnic group.<sup>41</sup>

Nanos addresses this issue differently and argues that the concern should be “not so much with who was present, but rather, with whom he was really instructing.”<sup>42</sup> The question then becomes, not who is a part of the Christ-believers in Rome, but “whom did Paul intend to inform and influence by this ‘reminder:’ Christian Jews, Christian Gentiles, both equally, or perhaps both to varying degrees?”<sup>43</sup> He argues that Paul’s statement “first for the Jew and then for the Gentile” (1:16; 2:9, 10) actually describes “the missionary pattern to which he was committed.”<sup>44</sup> The church in Rome then was most likely made up of both Jewish and Gentile Christ-believers with Paul’s message addressed to the Jew first and then the Gentile. Thus, both were being instructed by the letter, but in different ways.<sup>45</sup>

#### *When was Romans written?*

Of Paul’s authentic letters, Romans is argued, by some, to be his last. Like the dating of Galatians, the dating of Romans often relies on the information provided in Acts. Based on the analysis of the reign of Gallio (Acts 18:12-17) and Paul’s missionary journeys most authors place the writing of Romans around 55 CE. Barrett suggests that it is “overwhelmingly probable”<sup>46</sup> and Cranfield that “it is virtually certain”<sup>47</sup> that the letter was written during the three months which Paul spent in Greece, as referred to in Acts 20:2-3. This comes at the end of Paul’s so-called “third missionary journey,” at the close of his Ephesian period. Although

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<sup>37</sup>E.P Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish people*, 184.

<sup>38</sup>A.A. Das, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 50-51.

<sup>39</sup>Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 51.

<sup>40</sup>Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 52.

<sup>41</sup>C.E.B Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*, 21; Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 52.

<sup>42</sup>M.D. Nanos, *Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 76.

<sup>43</sup>M.D. Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 76-77.

<sup>44</sup>M.D. Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 15.

<sup>45</sup>I will come back to Nanos’ argument in Chapter Three of this work.

<sup>46</sup>C.K. Barrett, *Romans*, 3.

<sup>47</sup>C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*, 12.

Acts simply states that Paul spent those three months in Greece, most authors argue that because of Paul's close relationship with the church at Corinth (Rom 16:1, 23), Romans was most likely written from Corinth itself.<sup>48</sup>

#### *Why did Paul write it?*

Deciphering the purpose of Romans is a much more difficult task than what was present in Galatians. As stated by Jervis, there is a

unique tension that exists in Romans between letter genre and content. As a Pauline letter, Romans appears to be a real communication, a substitute for conversation – in short a 'particular' or 'circumstantial' letter. Yet it is difficult to propose any particular occasion or purpose for Romans that makes sense of its content.<sup>49</sup>

The situation of Romans is unique since Paul did not found the Roman church. Therefore, he could not be responding to individuals straying from the teaching which he had established there (as in Galatians). Jervis suggests that three answers arise to the question of authorial intent in Romans. First, the purpose of the letter was theological. That is, it stemmed from Paul's desire to lay out his gospel in a systematic way, as a doctrinal statement.<sup>50</sup>

Second, the purpose of the letter was missionary. Viewing the letter from this stance, one can see Paul's purpose for writing Romans as a means to extend his missionary work to the west.<sup>51</sup> It is in this purpose that we find the argument that Paul wrote the letter as an opportunity to introduce himself and his message.<sup>52</sup> Since Paul had not visited the church at Rome before, and because the information it would have of him would have come from secondary sources, in order to position himself for a successful visit it would be important for the church to receive a positive introduction to the apostle. Furthermore, Paul's goal to travel to Spain was going to require the help of other Christ-believers along the way. If Paul hoped to receive help (both spiritual and monetary) from the Roman church it is understandable why he would need to explain who he was and the message he preached. In this sense Romans can be seen as Paul's manifesto.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, when Paul reached Rome, two Christ-believing

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<sup>48</sup> C.K. Barrett, *Romans*, 3; C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*, 12. For a more full discussion of the timing issue, see Barrett's commentary.

<sup>49</sup> L.A. Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans: A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 14.

<sup>50</sup> Jervis, *Purpose of Romans*, 14.

<sup>51</sup> Jervis, *Purpose of Romans*, 19.

<sup>52</sup> C.K. Barrett, *Romans*, 6; C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*, 23.

<sup>53</sup> C.K. Barrett, *Romans*, 7.

groups<sup>54</sup> would meet and therefore an explanation of his message beforehand would aid in this process of amalgamation.<sup>55</sup> Paul was therefore laying the necessary groundwork for a continued successful mission to the Gentiles of the Mediterranean world.

The third purpose proposed was pastoral. Jervis states that the arguments in favour of this purpose see Romans as a way for Paul to address "certain errors of either doctrine or behaviour at Rome."<sup>56</sup> This purpose would be the same as what is evidenced by Paul's letter to the Galatians.

Jervis suggests that the reason why there appears to be so many purposes for the writing of Romans is because scholars tend to focus on the content of the letter instead of its structure. She sees this as problematic and states that "clues from the formal features of the text may, in fact, offer more evidence of an authors purpose," than content would.<sup>57</sup> She, therefore, focuses on the structure of the letter itself and comes to the conclusion that Romans was written in order to establish an apostolic relationship between Paul and the Roman Christ-believing community.<sup>58</sup> Paul sees himself as responsible for offering "what he considered to be his particularly powerful presentation of the gospel to them."<sup>59</sup> In fact, the main function of the letter, according to Jervis, "was to allow the Christians at Rome to hear the power of the gospel from him, since he knew himself to be their divinely commissioned apostle."<sup>60</sup> To this end, Jervis' explanation is furthest from the pastoral purpose and closest to the missionary purpose for the writing of Romans.<sup>61</sup>

### **Where does law fit in the letters?**

It is clear that Paul had specific, although different, goals in writing Galatians and Romans. The question that arises for us now is where does the law fit into these goals? Why did Paul make mention of this issue at all? For the Galatians, Paul, as a Jew and yet as a follower of

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<sup>54</sup> As noted above, the church at Rome was founded by other missionaries than Paul. While it seems as though the beliefs and practices of the Roman church were similar to Paul's churches there would inevitably be some variation. Romans then acts as a means to prepare the church at Rome for Paul's message so that when Paul arrived there would be no surprises. For example, I am a member of a church which just recently merged with another church and the merger was made smoother by the fact that both churches knew what the foundational message of the other was. Although there were differences present, the transition was made easier by this previous knowledge of the other.

<sup>55</sup> C.K. Barrett, *Romans*, 7.

<sup>56</sup> Jervis, *Purpose of Romans*, 14.

<sup>57</sup> Jervis, *Purpose of Romans*, 29.

<sup>58</sup> Jervis, *Purpose of Romans*, 159.

<sup>59</sup> Jervis, *Purpose of Romans*, 161.

<sup>60</sup> Jervis, *Purpose of Romans*, 164.

<sup>61</sup> Jervis, *Purpose of Romans*, 163.

Jesus, had to defend his apostleship and his message of hope for the Gentiles. He had to remind the church which he started of the very foundation on which he established it. He had to remind the Galatians of the fact that the only true gospel was that which he had proclaimed to them (Gal 1:6-9). Paul presented the gospel which came directly "through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:11-12) and therefore he could not understand why the church was turning to a false gospel; one which relied on works of the law for justification. In order to reiterate the status of his message as the only gospel and in order to fully discount the message of his opponents Paul had to address the question of the law. Because his opponents placed such a large emphasis on the law, it only makes sense that Paul too would address the position of the law and its place in justification. Paul would not have been able to ignore the issue of the law if he wanted to discount his opponents. He needed to prove that their way of viewing the law and consequently living it out was incorrect and that his was in line with God's intentions.

In Romans, we find Paul faced with different reasons for the composition of his letter. As stated above, Paul was not trying to gain back the church in Rome from some strong opponents. The Roman church did not seek out his help as far as we can tell and Paul did not see it as necessary to correct them in their errors. If one sees Paul's purpose in writing Romans as an introduction of himself one may see the place of the discussion of law as a function of his need to distinguish himself from others. Knowing that his message differed from the message of other missionaries at the time (as Galatians was proof), Paul needed to address every point of possible conflict in order that the Romans would not be surprised when he finally did visit them. The issue of the law was one particular area where great diversity of thought was present. Similarly, if one sees Paul's purpose in writing Romans as Paul presenting his particular take on the gospel as a result of apostolic commission, the law remains important. We know that Paul's understanding of the gospel did not ignore the law and therefore one would not be surprised to find mention of it in his presentation to the Romans. Furthermore, as a Jew, Paul could not simply disregard the law and its role in the tradition of his ancestors. The truth of the matter was that before Paul's call the law was foundational to who Paul was (Gal 1:14). The law then was an important topic not only for Paul's overall message, but for Paul himself. Therefore, in Paul's effort to give a proper introduction of himself and his "powerful presentation of the gospel" to the church at Rome, the question of the law could not be ignored.

If it was Paul's goal to convince the believers in Galatia that his message was the true way of understanding things, why, then, the conflicting nature of his discussion of the law in Galatians? Would his statements that believers are dead to the law and yet fulfill it not confuse

the readers in Galatia rather than prove to them that Paul presented the only gospel? Likewise, if Paul was trying to present a clear picture of himself and his gospel to the church at Rome, why would he express apparently contradictory ideas about something as foundational as law? Finally, what kind of picture emerges of the apostle when both letters are examined side by side? Did he change his mind on the issue between the time he wrote Galatians and the time he wrote Romans? Is he simply not a consistent thinker on this question, or any other for that matter? Is there some other explanation for why he makes these seemingly contradictory statements?

## Chapter 2

“In the same way, brothers, you have died to the law through the body of Christ” (Rom 7:4).

Paul’s statements against the practice of the law are clear and abundant. He states that circumcision is of no real value (Rom 2:25-29; 3:30; 4:9-11; 1 Cor 7:18-19; Gal 2:3; 5:6; 6:15). He argues against the efficiency and moreover the necessity of the “works of the law” which once held a place in the pursuit of righteousness (Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16; 3:11). Furthermore, while Paul does make seemingly positive statements about the law,<sup>1</sup> these statements are in fact addressing other questions than the law’s ability to bring about righteousness.<sup>2</sup> The scholars who will be consulted in this chapter largely agree with the above statements.<sup>3</sup> The time of the end of the law has come and the time for faith and the Spirit is now the reality of the Christ-believing community.<sup>4</sup> While the time of the end of the law has come, it has come in a specific way. The scholars examined in this chapter present various explanations as to why law no longer plays a role in a believer’s initial justification. Paul’s negative statements about the law cannot be ignored and these authors give various explanations as to why Paul sees the law as no longer playing a role in one’s entry into the people of God.

This chapter will explore four major arguments in favour of the “end of the law” as entrance requirement. First, the question “is law part of the entrance requirement for all believers” will be answered by exploring the work of E.P Sanders. Sanders’ response revolves around his Christological soteriology and because of this he answers the aforementioned question with a resounding, no. Second, many scholars argue that there is a difference between the “doing of the law” and the “fulfilling of the law.” In this section we will explore the response of the researchers who suggest that it is in fact impossible to “do” the law and

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<sup>1</sup> The “law” is generally understood as the Mosaic law by most of the scholars in this chapter. According to Westerholm, “the ‘law’ in Paul’s writings frequently (indeed, most frequently) refers to the sum of specific divine requirements given to Israel through Moses . . . not the Pentateuch as a whole but the Sinaitic legislation” (*Perspectives*, 299).

<sup>2</sup> The scholars surveyed in this chapter tend to argue that Paul’s positive statements about the law deal not with initial justification but with continued practice. We will return to this discussion in Chapter 3 of this work.

<sup>3</sup> As in any survey no scholar will fit perfectly into the categories I have constructed. While the authors in this chapter largely argue that law no longer holds force for Christ-believers in their initial justification, they cannot ignore the positive statements which Paul does make about the law. Therefore, many of these authors will appear again in the third chapter of this work.

<sup>4</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977) 447.

therefore this “doing of the law” can no longer aid in one’s retrieval of righteousness. There is nothing anyone can “do” to gain God’s approval and therefore the law cannot aid in “getting in” to the people of God. The authors who will be the focus of this argument are Schreiner, Das and Westerholm. The third argument, and most documented of the four, is the argument against the social distinction which the law brings. Scholars such as Dunn, Wright, Boyarin, and Barclay suggest that Paul argues against the law as entry requirement because instead of bringing righteousness the law only promotes an unhealthy nationalism, exclusivism, and/or social distinction among believers. Instead of promoting one family, it breaks that family apart. Finally, the chapter will close with an exploration of Watson’s interesting sociological theory and its influence on the place of the law in the Christ-believing communities which Paul addressed.

### “Getting in”

The work of E.P Sanders holds a prominent place in Pauline scholarship on the law. It was with the advent of his impressive *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* that a whole new outlook on Paul was born.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it seems appropriate to begin with his response to the question of the place of the law in Paul’s letters. Sanders addresses the apparent paradox of the law by suggesting that Paul’s positive and negative statements about the law arise as the answer to different questions. He argues that Paul’s answer about the place of the law in the Christ-believing community varies depending on the question asked.<sup>6</sup> Paul uses *nomos*, then, in “two quite distinct contexts, one in discussing how one gets ‘in’ (not by works of law), the other in discussing how one who is ‘in’ behaves (he keeps the law).”<sup>7</sup>

Consequently, Sanders suggests that righteousness is about transferring from one state to another; it is not about behaviour.<sup>8</sup> The terminology, which Paul uses when referring to how one gets in to the people of God, is different from the language he uses when discussing how one who is already a member behaves after the fact. Sanders illustrates this fact well by placing two charts side by side in his book *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*.<sup>9</sup> One chart presents Paul’s transfer

<sup>5</sup> While the phrase “The New Perspective on Paul” was coined by Dunn, it relies on Sanders’ foundational work regarding covenantal nomism as found in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977).

<sup>6</sup> E.P Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 10, 86.

<sup>7</sup> E.P Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 10. The focus of this chapter will be on the first context presented in this reasoning: the “getting in” argument. The “staying in” argument will be addressed in the following chapter.

<sup>8</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 544; idem, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 8-9.

terminology, while the other presents Paul's terminology for behaviour and its consequences. When examining these charts it becomes clear that "law" is not a transfer term, but instead it appears on the list of terminology for behaviour.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, the most used and most common term to express the transfer to being Christian is 'believe.'<sup>11</sup> Thus, Sanders argues that Paul is addressing two different issues when he asks about the process of transferring into the people of God versus the behaviour of those people after the fact.

Paul makes clear in his letters to the Galatians and Romans that one is not justified/made righteous by works of the law (Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16; 3:11). One becomes a member of the people of God, one becomes a 'son of Abraham,' not by the works which he does, but by the faith that he has. This becomes particularly evident in the case of the letter to the Galatians. As we saw above, the letter to the Galatians was written primarily to address the situation of the Gentile believers in Galatia; the issue was whether or not these believers had to submit to the law of Moses in order to be considered full members of the chosen people of God. Paul shows us in this letter that he does not consider law to be an essential requirement for entrance into the community of believers. As argued by Sanders, in Galatians "Paul's argument is not in favour of faith per se, nor is it against works per se. It is much more particular: it is against requiring the Gentiles to keep the law of Moses in order to be true 'sons of Abraham.'"<sup>12</sup> Therefore, Galatians 3 is not a rebuttal of Judaism, but a rebuttal of the Jewish position of the law in initial justification for Gentiles. For Paul, then, circumcision and other concrete aspects of the law such as food and Sabbath laws are not necessarily a problem in their own right. The problem arises when circumcision is made an essential requirement for membership.<sup>13</sup> Paul consequently presents a limited, while still significant, rejection of the law. When addressing the question of how one enters the people of God, Paul answers vehemently, "not by works."

Why/how can Paul argue in this way? According to Sanders, Paul gives two major answers as to why righteousness can no longer come from the law but must be by faith after the Christ event: the inclusion of the Gentiles and the death of Christ.<sup>14</sup> First, Paul sees Jews and Gentiles as standing on equal ground (Rom 1:16; 2:6-11; 3:9, 22, 29; 4:9, 11-12, 16; Gal 3:6-9; 3:26-28; 5:6). Unlike the Jewish understanding that the Jews held an exalted place in the scheme of salvation Paul argues that both

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<sup>10</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 463.

<sup>12</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 20.

<sup>14</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 489-490.

Jew and Gentile alike are sinners and in need of salvation.<sup>15</sup> Because Jews and Gentiles are in the same position in regards to justification, there must be one way for all to gain salvation. If law were the only way to gain justification this would give Jewish believers an unfair advantage over the Gentiles, an advantage which Paul tells us they do not have (Rom 3:9). Therefore, a new way, a way distinct from Jewish and Gentile practice, thought, belief, etc. must be provided for entry into the people of God. Sanders suggests that the innovative aspect of Paul's position on the Gentiles was not so much that they could join the people of God (this was after all a common understanding in Jewish messianic thought) but the fact that Paul seems to suggest that the people of God are "a third entity which must be entered by Jew and Christian alike on the same ground."<sup>16</sup> The promise cannot be inherited on the basis of law because this would exclude the Gentiles and the Gentiles cannot be excluded because Christ came as the saviour of the whole world, not just part of it.<sup>17</sup>

If people cannot be justified by the law, how then does Paul suggest that they are made righteous? According to Sanders' reading of Paul, it can only be through faith. Sanders suggests that the reader finds evidence in Romans that God justifies both Jews and Gentiles, not on the basis of law, but by faith (Rom 3:29f; 4:9-14; 4:16).<sup>18</sup> Paul uses the story of Abraham as proof for this fact (Rom 4:2-4; 4:10f.; 4:13; 4:16f.; Gal 3:8-9). Abraham was given God's promise based solely on his act of faith, not based on any works of the law which he may have performed; his story comes before the establishment of the law and therefore it is impossible that his righteousness was based on law. Therefore, Paul suggests that Jew and Gentile become heirs of the covenant made with Abraham by faith and not by the covenant made with Moses by works.

The second reason why Paul sees righteousness as not coming from the law, according to Sanders, is based on Christ's death. Paul states this clearly in his letter to the Galatians: "for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing" (Gal 2:21). It appears then that righteousness was never intended to come from the law. For if "a law had been given that could make alive, then righteousness would indeed come from the law" (Gal 3:21). But since Christ was sent, and was sent for the purpose of salvation, then the law could not possibly make a person righteous.<sup>19</sup>

Because of Christ's death the faith of Abraham is now open to all people, both Jew and Gentile. Paul tells us that it is now by faith that one enters the people of God and therefore it cannot be by law. Sanders

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<sup>15</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 489.

<sup>16</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 29.

<sup>17</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 490.

<sup>18</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 34.

<sup>19</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 484, 490; idem, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 27.

suggests that righteousness cannot come by law, because scripture tells us that it comes by faith (Gal 3:11f; Rom 4:2f; 10:5, 11).<sup>20</sup> The argument for faith then is really an argument against the law.<sup>21</sup> While it is an argument against the law, it must be understood in what way it is against the law. The law itself is not bad. The problem arises when the law is seen as the means to an incorrect end.<sup>22</sup> As Sanders states, "Effort itself is not the sin; the sin is aiming towards any goal but being 'found in Christ.'"<sup>23</sup> Salvation comes only through Christ according to Paul and therefore there cannot possibly be any other way of gaining righteousness, the law included.<sup>24</sup> In Sanders we find the argument that Paul does not suggest that the law is bad in and of itself. In fact, "the law is good, even *doing* the law is good, but salvation is only by Christ; therefore the entire system represented by the law is worthless for salvation."<sup>25</sup> Consequently, "doing" the law as a means of gaining salvation is seen as wrong, according to Sanders, simply because it is not faith.<sup>26</sup>

Why then the law (Gal 3:19)? According to Sanders, the law was given a temporary purpose in God's plan. It was given by God in order to consign all things to sin, so that salvation must be on the basis of faith.<sup>27</sup> But, since the time of faith is now a present reality, the law can no longer hold its previous role; sin is now outside the realm of God's plan.<sup>28</sup> Sanders sums up his position, therefore, as follows,

Paul's logic seems to run like this: in Christ God has acted to save the world; therefore the world is in need of salvation, but God also gave the law; if Christ is given for salvation, it must follow that the law could not have been; is the law then against the purpose of God which has been revealed in Christ? No, it has the function of

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<sup>20</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 480.

<sup>21</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 491.

<sup>22</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 551.

<sup>23</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 482.

<sup>24</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 519.

<sup>25</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 550.

<sup>26</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 550.

<sup>27</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 475, 483; idem, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 73.

<sup>28</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 73. Here Sanders suggests that while before this point Paul seems to argue that sin was used by God in order to hold people captive so that He could save all people by faith, Romans 6 seems to present a different picture. In fact Romans 6 reveals that sin seems to have an "independent status and is not subject to God's control." The law can therefore no longer be equated with sin, since sin is outside God's plan, but the law is within it. The law is seen as good, given by God in order to be obeyed, but it is used by sin to produce "a situation *contrary* to the will of God."

consigning everyone to sin so that everyone could be saved by God's grace in Christ.<sup>29</sup>

### Inability Argument

Sanders contends that the possibility or rather impossibility of fulfilling/doing *all* the law should not be seen as the main reason why Paul is against the law as a means to righteousness.<sup>30</sup> The scholars I will address in this section maintain otherwise.<sup>31</sup> Before I can explore this argument completely it becomes important to address the difference between the "doing" and the "fulfilling" of the law. How does one "fulfill" the law and not "do" it? Are these concepts not related and in fact dependent on one another? Most scholars who address the "doing" versus the "fulfilling" question see the difference as one of quality versus quantity. "Doing" the law therefore suggests that one keeps each and every one of the individual prescriptions of the law; it is an issue of quantity. "Fulfilling" the law, on the other hand, is a matter of quality. When one "fulfills" the law they are able to produce the righteousness which the law aimed at and therefore all of the individual prescriptions are not necessarily needed.

When examining commentaries on the Pauline letters (esp. Galatians) many commentators see Paul as arguing that the law is impossible to "do." According to these commentators what people who try to "do" the law forget is (1) that it is impossible to "fulfill" all that the law requires by "doing" the law, (2) that complete and perfect obedience to the law is beyond our capabilities as humans, and (3) the nature of the Torah itself reveals our inability to fulfill it.<sup>32</sup> Boyarin suggests that "there is an outer aspect to the law, the 'doing' of the law, which was special to the Jewish people alone and which has been abrogated in Christ, and an inner, spiritual aspect of the law which is for everyone and which has been fulfilled in Christ."<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, it is clear that Paul does not see the practice of circumcision (a concrete example of the law) as holding any real value (Rom 2:25-29; 3:30; 4:9-11; 1 Cor 7:18-19; Gal 2:3; 6:15), yet he suggests that it is important for everyone to fulfill the law (Rom. 8:4; 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14, 22-23). "Fulfilling" the law therefore has to be different

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<sup>29</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 475.

<sup>30</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 21-23.

<sup>31</sup> The three authors who will be the focus of this chapter are T.R. Schreiner, A.A. Das and S. Westerholm.

<sup>32</sup> H.D. Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 145; J.D.G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 226; idem, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993) 171.

<sup>33</sup> D. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994) 134-135.

from “doing” the things of the law for it to be for Gentiles as well as Jews.<sup>34</sup> Thus “doing” the law must be separate from “fulfilling” it.

Schreiner states that Sanders’ treatment of the problem of the law is weak. He says that “Sanders’ interpretation amounts to Paul insisting that his view is true simply because he said so.”<sup>35</sup> Instead of Paul being against law because it is not faith, Schreiner sees law as problematic for another reason: it is impossible to “do.” Using Galatians 3:10 as a proof text, Schreiner argues that Paul can be seen as arguing according to the following syllogism:

Those who do not keep everything written in the law are cursed (3:10b).

No one keeps everything written in the law (implicit premise).

Therefore, those who rely on the works of the law for salvation are cursed (3:10a).<sup>36</sup>

Salvation cannot come through works of the law because works of the law lead to a curse. Furthermore, Schreiner suggests that the inability argument is supported by the Old Testament; Paul quotes from the Jewish Scriptures to show that no one is capable of keeping the law.<sup>37</sup> He states that “Paul probably read the history of Israel’s remarkable failure to obey and concluded that Israel (and, therefore, all people) *could not obey* the law.”<sup>38</sup> The Old Testament sacrifices after all were not meant to atone, but were there to point to Christ.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to the examples found in Galatians of human inability to keep the law (Gal 3:10, 11-14; 5:3; 6:13), Schreiner suggests that the human inability argument can also be found in Romans. While it may not be as straightforward in Romans, Schreiner suggests that the argument can still be made. He examines Romans 1:18-2:29 and 3:9-26 and sees Paul as arguing that all humans are sinners. Because of this understanding of human nature, it can then be inferred, according to Schreiner, that humans are incapable of doing the law. Since no one is righteous (Rom 3:10) and no one does what is good or kind (Rom 3:12) then no one can be right before God (Rom 3:20, inferred). The understanding is that if it were possible to do the whole law, without it being a curse, then not all people would be sinners. “To rely on the law to gain the inheritance” then “is a false path, for no one can sufficiently fulfill

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<sup>34</sup> J.D.G Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 227.

<sup>35</sup> T.R. Schreiner, *The Law and its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993) 46.

<sup>36</sup> Schreiner, *Law and its Fulfillment*, 45.

<sup>37</sup> Schreiner, *Law and its Fulfillment*, 47.

<sup>38</sup> Schreiner, *Law and its Fulfillment*, 49.

<sup>39</sup> Schreiner, *Law and its Fulfillment*, 44, 62-64.

the requisite commands.”<sup>40</sup> Only Christ is able to fulfill the requisite commands and consequently faith in Christ is what leads to salvation, not the useless attempt to gain justification on one’s own.

Andrew Das also argues that it is human inability to keep the law which leads to the diminished status of the law in the justification of believers. Das’ *Paul, the Law and the Covenant* is organized in such a way as to prove the human inability argument. Das spends the first five chapters of this work presenting arguments which are meant to dispel the possible objection that the Jews never believed that they had to fulfill the law perfectly/fully.<sup>41</sup> After he presents this argument he then addresses the various scriptural texts that support the idea that humans are incapable of doing the law (Gal 3:10; Rom 2; 3:27-4:8; 7; 9:30-10:8).<sup>42</sup> In Gal 3:10 he sees clear proof that Paul thought humans incapable of doing what the law requires. In this verse Das sees Paul as arguing that the law requires perfect obedience, an obedience which no one has ever attained.<sup>43</sup>

While Gal 3:10 gives the strongest proof of the human inability argument, Das also suggests that much of Romans supports this argument as well. In Romans 2 the reader is confronted with the picture of Paul questioning whether or not the Jews had obeyed the law as it was required. In Romans 7 he “develops the plight of the individual under the law” and consequently reveals the inability of the individual to do the law.<sup>44</sup> Paul explains in this chapter that “sin and the flesh stand in the way of successful accomplishment of what the law demands” and therefore this chapter “corroborates the dark situation described in Rom 3:19-20 and Gal 3:10,” which is that “humanity has proven itself incapable of living up to the high standards of the law.”<sup>45</sup> Finally, Romans 9:30-10:8 further supports Das’ argument that humans are incapable of doing what the law requires. Here Paul “consistently returns to the importance of doing what the law requires” and consequently to the argument that humans are incapable of doing just that.<sup>46</sup>

As argued by Das, the whole “gracious covenantal framework of Judaism has collapsed” and a new framework of grace founded in Christ has taken over.<sup>47</sup> Law plays no role in righteousness because no one is capable of doing what the law requires. The only route believers have

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<sup>40</sup> Schreiner, *Law and its Fulfillment*, 125.

<sup>41</sup> A.A. Das, *Paul, the Law and the Covenant* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001) 9.

<sup>42</sup> Das, *Paul, Law and Covenant*, 9-10; idem, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 2007) 134.

<sup>43</sup> Das, *Paul, Law and Covenant*, 146.

<sup>44</sup> Das, *Paul, Law and Covenant*, 233.

<sup>45</sup> Das, *Paul, Law and Covenant*, 10.

<sup>46</sup> Das, *Paul, Law and Covenant*, 11.

<sup>47</sup> Das, *Paul, Law and Covenant*, 9.

then is faith. Faith in Christ is the only way to gain righteousness and therefore this faith replaces the previous necessity to “do the law.”<sup>48</sup> In fact, Das argues that “for Paul, God’s law has pointed to the necessity of faith all along” and this faith “now finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.”<sup>49</sup> Paul may be pessimistic in his anthropology<sup>50</sup> but he is rather optimistic in his soteriology.

The final scholar whose work will be examined in this section is Stephen Westerholm. In Westerholm’s *Perspectives Old and New on Paul*, he presents a comprehensive overview of what he calls “the Lutheran Paul and his critics.”<sup>51</sup> In this endeavour he spends the first two thirds of his book critically summarizing scholars who have engaged the question of Paul and his theology of the law. His third and final section of the book then adds his own engagement with the question at hand. Through extensive definition work and detailed scriptural analysis Westerholm presents an impressive look at how Paul addresses the place of the law in the lives of Christ-believers.

Like Das, Westerholm argues that Paul operates from a well-developed anthropological pessimism.<sup>52</sup> Humanity since the time of Adam has been in a state of corruption which it cannot escape. Paul states that, “Humanity *in Adam* does not – and effectively cannot – submit to the law.”<sup>53</sup> With the fall of Adam, humans were placed under the power of “the flesh” and that “flesh” does not have the capacity to submit to God’s law (Rom 8:7-8; cf. 7:14-25).<sup>54</sup> Humans in “the flesh” are sinners and therefore they “are neither able nor inclined to submit to God’s law.”<sup>55</sup> They cannot do the good which the law requires. In fact, according to the law, “*all* human beings are bound to do what is right and good; the law spells out those obligations and requires that they be *done*; but human beings do not do them.”<sup>56</sup> Because humans do not do the law, but must do it if they are under the law, then they are cursed by the very law that is supposed to bring about blessing (Gal. 3:10). If one could do the law, they

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<sup>48</sup> Das, *Paul, Law and Covenant*, 256.

<sup>49</sup> Das, *Paul, Law and Covenant*, 213.

<sup>50</sup> Das, *Romans Debate*, 226.

<sup>51</sup> S. Westerholm, *Perspective Old and New on Paul: The Lutheran Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

<sup>52</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 420; idem, “Paul’s Anthropological ‘Pessimism’ in its Jewish Context,” Pages 71-98 in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment*, edited by J.M.G. Barclay & S.J. Gathercole. (New York: T&T Clark, 2006)

<sup>53</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 419 in regards to Romans 8:7-8.

<sup>54</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 418, 420.

<sup>55</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 441-442; idem, “The New Perspective at Twenty-Five,” In *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 2, edited by D.A. Carson, Peter T O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001) 37; idem, “Paul’s Anthropological ‘Pessimism,’” 77.

<sup>56</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 441. See also, “Paul’s Anthropological ‘Pessimism,’” 74-80.

would not be cursed by the law and since we are told that they *are* cursed and in need of Christ, it follows that no one “does” the law. Therefore, “no human being (no ‘flesh’) *can* be righteous in God’s sight (Ps 143:2).”<sup>57</sup> This assumption was not new with Paul, as is evident by the fact that it comes initially from the Psalms and not one of Paul’s letters.<sup>58</sup> What was new was the idea that this applied to Jews under the law as well as Gentiles.<sup>59</sup>

Westerholm suggests that this must have been a post-Damascus development in Paul’s thought.<sup>60</sup> For it is clear that Paul used to think that it was possible to please God at least to some extent (Phil 3:6). It is only with the realization of the necessity of Christ in salvation that Paul suggests that righteousness cannot be attained even in a small part through the law.<sup>61</sup> Westerholm suggests that for Paul “the scripture itself confirms that no one can be found righteous by (or under) the law.”<sup>62</sup> Instead righteousness can only be found in Christ. The problem then in a letter such as Galatians is not with Judaism or the law per se, but with humanity. The question then becomes “what is wrong with humanity that Judaism cannot remedy?”<sup>63</sup> According to Westerholm, Paul answers, humanity’s innate inability to please God.

Because human beings are incapable of doing what the law requires, every effort made is “salvifically unhelpful” and therefore “justification must be received (by faith) as a gift of God’s grace.”<sup>64</sup> Westerholm suggests that “doing the law” refers to the obligation of those under the law “to carry out, to perform, its individual and specific requirements (5:3).”<sup>65</sup> The law states that those who adhere to it adhere to all of its requirements and Paul has already indicated that humans are incapable of doing the law in this way. Because this is the case, justification cannot come from the law, but must be through faith in Christ, who bore the curse of the law for us (Gal 3:13). Consequently, “faith and deeds (or faith and law) are seen – in this context at least – as exclusive alternatives.”<sup>66</sup>

That the law requires deeds shows, in fact, that it is not faith (Gal 3:12).<sup>67</sup> While the weakness of the law (Rom 8:3) lies in the fact that no

<sup>57</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 442.

<sup>58</sup> While Paul does quote it in Rom 3:20 and Gal 2:16, it is not his creation.

<sup>59</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 442.

<sup>60</sup> Westerholm, “Paul’s Anthropological ‘Pessimism,’” 80.

<sup>61</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 421. Westerholm proposes that in this way Sanders’ suggestion that Paul moved from Solution to Plight was correct.

<sup>62</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 375.

<sup>63</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 381.

<sup>64</sup> Westerholm, “New Perspective at Twenty-Five,” 37.

<sup>65</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 436.

<sup>66</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 305.

<sup>67</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 430, 435.

humans can “do” what it requires, the “efficacy of the path of faith lies in what Christ has done for those cursed by the law (3:13).”<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, since both Jews and Gentiles are sinners, they are on the same page in terms of justification and therefore must have the same mode of entry into the people of God. This mode of entry cannot be the law, since neither Jew nor Gentile can “do” the law and instead “the goal of the law can only be attained apart from the law, by faith.”<sup>69</sup> Therefore, Westerholm states that Paul’s argument is as follows,

1. God requires goodness of all human beings (a goodness that is spelled out in the Mosaic law).
2. By God’s design, Christ died for our sins.
3. If, in God’s view, humans could be righteous by doing what is good (= through the law), then Christ would not have had to die.
4. Hence, in God’s view, humans cannot do the goodness God requires of them: ‘No one will be justified by the works of the law’.<sup>70</sup>

### **Social Distinction Argument**

While Sanders argues against the law as entry requirement because it is not faith, and Schreiner, Das and Westerholm argue against it because of the human inability to “do” it, the next group of scholars suggest that Paul’s issue is more of a social one. Yes, Paul argues that Gentiles should not be circumcised, but he has different reasons for this than the primacy of faith. Yes, Paul sees the law as requiring works, but it is not the human inability to abide by these works that is the issue at hand. The following scholars instead argue that Paul is against the works of the law since these very works serve to alienate Jew from Gentile. The problem with the law then moves from an individual issue to an issue of group dynamics.

The first and most prolific writer in favour of this argument is James D.G. Dunn. Dunn suggests that Paul argues against the law as a form of social distinction.<sup>71</sup> The issue is not with the law itself, but with the exclusive nature of the “works of the law.”<sup>72</sup> In order to understand Dunn’s argument fully we must first address the concept of the “works of the law.” The concept of “works” occurs frequently in Paul’s letters to the Galatians

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<sup>68</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 304.

<sup>69</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 329.

<sup>70</sup> Westerholm, “Paul’s Anthropological ‘Pessimism,’” 96.

<sup>71</sup> J.D.G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 216; idem, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Trinity, 1991) 136-137; idem, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993) 136; idem, *The Theology of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993) 92; idem, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998) 145.

<sup>72</sup> Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 200.

and Romans (Rom 3:20, 27-28; 4:2-6; 9:31-32; 11:6; Gal 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10, 12). The frequency of its use, especially in a few short verses in Galatians, suggests something of its importance in Paul's approach to law. Dunn proposes that "'works of the law' became a key slogan" in Paul's letters, "because so many of Paul's fellow Jewish believers were insisting on certain works as indispensable to their own (and others?) standing within the covenant."<sup>73</sup> Paul's contemporaries were addressing "works" and further insisting on their importance. Therefore, Paul could not address the place of the law without addressing these "works" as well.

According to Dunn, and many other "New Perspectivists,"<sup>74</sup> the "works of the law" stands for those things which are required of an individual following the law, which distinguishes them as followers of the law; they are actions which the law mandates.<sup>75</sup> Dunn sees these actions primarily as those practices within the Torah which separate the Jew from the Gentile; they are boundary markers.<sup>76</sup> When God established his covenant with the people of Israel he gave them the law, which separated them from every other nation, and consequently revealed that they held a privileged position in God's eyes. It also revealed to the "chosen people" that which God required of them in order to atone for their inevitable sin. Since the establishment of the Torah the Jewish people and their identity have been threatened many times. Dunn suggests that it is when a group experiences threat that it will emphasize its boundaries and these boundaries became the bodily rituals that marked Judaism as a distinct nation.<sup>77</sup> These requirements were then narrowed down by most observers to three specific areas which distinguished them most from the people around them: circumcision, food laws and observance of holy days.<sup>78</sup> The laws which governed these three "works" then became the focal point of the law for many Jews, with circumcision being the most important for many of them. They became the "obligations of the law which were reckoned especially crucial in the maintenance of covenant

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<sup>73</sup> J.D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul: Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 16.

<sup>74</sup> While the "New Perspective on Paul" has certain core tenets, not all "New Perspectivists" agree on everything. In fact many proponents of this "New Perspective" state clearly that the perspective which they offer should not be thought of as "the New Perspective" but only one of many. Dunn, *New Perspective on Paul*, x.

<sup>75</sup> Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 219; idem, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 135; idem, *New Perspective on Paul*, 23-24.

<sup>76</sup> Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 216; idem, *The Partings of the Ways*, 136-137; idem, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 136; idem, *Theology of Galatians*, 92; idem, *Theology of Paul*, 145; idem, *New Perspective on Paul*, 9; E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 102.

<sup>77</sup> Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 216-217.

<sup>78</sup> Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 191, 217; idem, *The Partings of the Ways*, 137; E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 101.

righteousness, in the maintenance of an individual Jew's status within the covenant."<sup>79</sup> These then were the "works of the law."

Dunn does adjust his approach to the "works of the law" somewhat in his *New Perspective on Paul*. He states that the "works of the law" may represent more than just the boundary marking observances of the Jews. At the same time, one cannot ignore the fact that it was these boundary marking exercises which led to "the first recorded statement of the great principle of justification by faith alone."<sup>80</sup> Whether or not there were other "works" which Paul might take issue with, these boundary-marking-works were the ones he reacted against directly in his letters.

The law started then as a sign of the covenant between God and the Jews, but soon became a mark of distinction between Jew and Gentile instead.<sup>81</sup> The "works of the law" that Paul so vehemently opposes then are those practices which create a social distinction between Jews and Gentiles. This social distinction allows the Jews to see themselves as justified in separating themselves from the Gentiles around them and to see themselves as having a privileged relationship with God; this is the problem, according to Dunn.<sup>82</sup> It was this sense of Jewish privilege that Paul opposed. Paul's criticism of the law then was not "a criticism of the law as such," but "a criticism of Paul's fellow Jews for assuming that their historic status of privilege under the law still held good, even after the coming of their Messiah."<sup>83</sup> Paul's concern then appears to be with the relation of Jew and Gentile and therefore those things which serve to hinder this relationship must be done away with.<sup>84</sup>

Paul believed that with the coming of Christ all social distinctions were erased (Gal 3:28). Therefore, "works" which served to foster these distinctions were especially problematic for Paul. The practice of these exclusive "works" essentially served to limit the level of grace that Gentiles could experience.<sup>85</sup> Gentiles were effectively being placed outside of the boundary of those who can be saved, outside those who are heirs of the promise made to Abraham. The Jews were using these "works" as nationalistic badges, badges which Gentiles could not wear.<sup>86</sup> This goes against Paul's message which states that both Jew and Gentile can now come under the promise made to Abraham (Gal 3:28-29). Justification then "focuses on the need to overcome the barrier which the law was seen

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<sup>79</sup> Dunn, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 136.

<sup>80</sup> Dunn, *New Perspective on Paul*, 28.

<sup>81</sup> Dunn, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 265.

<sup>82</sup> Dunn, *New Perspective on Paul*, 16.

<sup>83</sup> Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 145.

<sup>84</sup> Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 130.

<sup>85</sup> Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 137.

<sup>86</sup> Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 194.

to interpose between Jew and Gentile.<sup>87</sup> The law has an interim role in the history of God's people. It helped to define sin.<sup>88</sup> It helped to cover sin and remove guilt through sacrifice, before the coming of Christ.<sup>89</sup> Finally, it restricted Israel's contact with Gentile nations and their idolatry.<sup>90</sup> With the end of the time of the law a new way of defining the people of God had to come about. Dunn suggests that faith, then, becomes the new identity marker for all the people of God, both Jew and Gentile.<sup>91</sup> Dunn goes on to suggest that if faith is now the way one enters into the people of God, one's life after entry should also be governed by faith.<sup>92</sup> Faith replaces "works."

The second scholar who adheres to the social distinction argument is N.T. Wright. Wright, like Dunn, suggests that the "works of the law" are the badges of Jewish membership (i.e. Sabbath, food, circumcision), which separated the Jew from the Gentile.<sup>93</sup> For Wright, the issue is one of nationalistic privilege. If Jews keep practising these "works" they continue to define themselves as a separate nation, a separate family from the Gentiles. Wright argues that one family cannot be characterized by possession of the Torah as this would create two distinct families.<sup>94</sup> This was problematic because Paul wanted the people of God to be one family, not two.<sup>95</sup> According to Wright, Christ then is the end of the law (Rom 10:4) in the sense that he is the end of national privilege.<sup>96</sup> The Jewish nation no longer holds a privileged status, but instead all are equal in their position before God.

The question then becomes, "are God's people defined by Jewish badges or in some other way?"<sup>97</sup> Paul answers this question, according to Wright, by suggesting that the badge of membership for believers after Christ is no longer the nationalistic badges of Judaism, but it is faith.<sup>98</sup> The old covenant of law was replaced by the renewed covenant of faith. Wright states that the evidence for the renewal of the covenant was God's gift of the Spirit to the Gentiles.<sup>99</sup> Now that Gentiles had the Spirit, through

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<sup>87</sup> Dunn, *New Perspective on Paul*, 16.

<sup>88</sup> Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 133-134.

<sup>89</sup> Dunn, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 190.

<sup>90</sup> Dunn, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 199.

<sup>91</sup> Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 196.

<sup>92</sup> Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 133. I will explore this argument and what it means for the place of the "law" after entry into the people of God in Chapter Three of this work.

<sup>93</sup> N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 240; idem, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 132.

<sup>94</sup> Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 166.

<sup>95</sup> Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 150.

<sup>96</sup> Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 242.

<sup>97</sup> Wright, *What Saint Paul Said*, 120.

<sup>98</sup> Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 156.

<sup>99</sup> Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 154.

faith and not works (Gal 3:2-5), “works” become unnecessary. “Works” may not hold any place in how one becomes justified, according to Wright, but “works” do remain important in defining who is already a member of the people of God.<sup>100</sup> “Works” then are done away with in their role in initial justification, but not necessarily in how one who is justified lives. It is in the first sense that the law no longer holds force for Christ-believers.

Daniel Boyarin agrees with Dunn and Wright on the definition of the “works of the law.” He too sees these works as those Torah practices which serve as boundary markers between Jews and Gentiles.<sup>101</sup> For Boyarin the problem with the law for Paul was that of ethnic exclusivism and inappropriate ideas of nationalism.<sup>102</sup> Similar to Wright, Boyarin states that Paul thought that the community of Christ-believers must unite into one seed, one family, and the law in its very purpose had always divided people into separate families. Thus, the law was no longer valuable in the current, post-resurrection era where all believers were to come under one roof and live as one family.<sup>103</sup> The law and its “works” were designed to exclude and therefore the law was no longer valid.

The final proponent of this argument who will be examined in this section is John Barclay. Barclay begins his conclusions about “faith and law in Galatians” as any proponent of the social distinction argument would. He suggests that “Paul does not oppose the ‘works of the law’ because they constitute (or encourage) the legalists attempt to earn righteousness before God.”<sup>104</sup> Instead, Paul’s concern is with, and only with, whether Paul’s Gentile converts should become proselytes; should they be circumcised and follow the Mosaic law?<sup>105</sup> For Barclay too, then, Paul’s attitude toward circumcision and other “works of the law” in Gentile justification was not necessarily a renunciation of “works” per se, but more a renunciation of the place that “works” were given.<sup>106</sup>

Barclay suggests that Paul opposes “works of the law” primarily because they impose a Jewish life-style on Gentiles (Gal 2:14).<sup>107</sup> Like Wright, he sees the issue to be ethnic exclusivism. Barclay calls this “cultural imperialism,” but the basic idea is the same: seeing Jewish identity and Jewish customs as superior to others and as the only marks

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<sup>100</sup> N.T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005) 112. I will come back to this side of the paradox in the section on “staying in” in Chapter Three of this work.

<sup>101</sup> D. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994) 107, 136.

<sup>102</sup> Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 52, 136.

<sup>103</sup> Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 145.

<sup>104</sup> J. M.G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: Paul’s Ethics in Galatians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 236.

<sup>105</sup> Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 235.

<sup>106</sup> Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 236.

<sup>107</sup> Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 239.

of membership in the people of God.<sup>108</sup> While the major argument of his book is based on the Galatian situation, Barclay does suggest that one can find evidence of Paul's rejection of nationalism in Romans as well. He states that "Paul's critique of Jewish 'boasting in the law' (2:17, 23) is not directed against individual Jews seeking credit for good works, but against the national pride that presumes on Israel's election privileges."<sup>109</sup> Paul, then, "renounces law observant Judaism not because it is legalistic but because it is nationalistic."<sup>110</sup>

Consequently, the "works of the law" and faith become yet another one of Paul's many antitheses. The "works of the law" are "culture-bound" and "man-centred" and they "fall into the category of 'what is merely human' in the light of the new values introduced by the new age," while faith "transcends human cultures and unites in Christ Jew and Gentile."<sup>111</sup> With the advent of faith and the ability to look beyond the cultural side of things, one can experience the supernatural side of things. Faith leads to the experience of grace, an experience that is not possible when one follows "works." In fact, Barclay proposes that "God's grace is highlighted and clarified when it is independent of works . . . God's grace is only fully evident where there is no 'work' to be rewarded."<sup>112</sup> With faith, one experiences grace and God's righteousness, not through "works of the law."

### **Sociological Function**

Francis Watson adds a unique voice to the debate with his *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*. Similar to those proponents of the problem of the social function of the law, Watson sees Paul's issue with the law to be more than just a theological one; the social dimension is present alongside the theological one.<sup>113</sup> He argues that critics of the "New Perspective" have not taken this fact fully into account. The relationship both between various Christ-believing communities as well as within any given community is an important issue for Paul. Therefore, proponents of the "New Perspective" such as Dunn and Wright are on the right path when they address this issue in their studies. The problem is that these scholars do not fully address the issue at hand. Watson suggests that while the concepts of "universality" and "exclusiveness" are valid when looking at Paul, they are left as mere concepts floating in the air above the text, rather than being applied to or affected by any "recognizable social

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<sup>108</sup> Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 239.

<sup>109</sup> Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 245.

<sup>110</sup> Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 240.

<sup>111</sup> Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 240.

<sup>112</sup> Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 247.

<sup>113</sup> F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 6.

reality.”<sup>114</sup> By asking questions such as, “What do these theoretical ideas mean in practice? What is their social correlate?” Watson quickly realized that perhaps the ideas of universality and exclusiveness had to be re-evaluated.<sup>115</sup> Perhaps the exclusive group was the Christ-believing church, not Judaism.<sup>116</sup>

Like Dunn and Wright, Watson agrees that the “works of the law” do in fact represent the “distinctive way of life of the Jewish community.”<sup>117</sup> Where he disagrees is in what these “works” entail. For Watson, the “works” are not restricted to the boundary marking exercises presented in Dunn and Wright, namely, circumcision, food laws and Sabbath laws.<sup>118</sup> The problem with Dunn’s approach, according to Watson, is that the focus of his approach is not on the practices themselves, but on the attitude which arises from them; it is “wrong to look for a ‘mind-set’ where Paul speaks of practices.”<sup>119</sup> Watson further disagrees with the “New Perspective’s” stance on inclusivity versus exclusivity. While New Perspective scholars such as Dunn and Wright try to “play down antithesis and controversy,” Watson sees this type of relationship between Paul and his Jewish contemporaries as foundational to his mission.<sup>120</sup>

Instead of seeing Paul as trying to maintain a relationship with the Jewish tradition that he came from, and the tradition which many of his followers arose out of, Watson suggests that in fact Paul was establishing a “sectarian separation between the Christian community and Judaism.”<sup>121</sup> He suggests that this separation occurred mainly for logistical reasons. Watson argues that one can see from Paul’s letters (as well as the account from Luke) how this process occurred. The evidence is as follows,

First, at an early stage in his Christian career, Paul’s missionary activity was aimed primarily at Jewish communities in the Diaspora. Second, the earliest Christian congregations inherited the issue of Gentile circumcision from the Diaspora synagogue. Third, an ideologically self-conscious Gentile mission arose from experiences of rejection by Jews and acceptance among Gentiles. Fourth,

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<sup>114</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 10.

<sup>115</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 11.

<sup>116</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 11.

<sup>117</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 19.

<sup>118</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 19. As seen above, Dunn does revise his presentation of the “works of the law” in his New Perspective on Paul, 22-25. While earlier he argued that “works” refer only to those boundary-marking exercises mentioned above, in his revised stance he suggests that “works” refer to the law as a whole, with specific focus on these three “works.”

<sup>119</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 21.

<sup>120</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 21.

<sup>121</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 21.

Paul's doctrine of 'freedom from the law' may be traced back to his alienation from the Jewish community, stemming from his missionary experience.<sup>122</sup>

Paul then established a new group, separate from Judaism because his gospel was largely ignored/rejected by the Jewish community. He had more success with Gentiles and therefore focussed his message toward them.

The question then becomes how is this "sectarian separation" lived out in the Pauline communities? We can find an example of how Watson thinks this plays out in Paul's letter to the Galatians. Watson suggests that the issue at hand in Galatians was an issue, not of justification, but of ecclesiology; should the church "exist as a reform movement within Judaism or develop its distinctive identity on the basis of sectarian alienation."<sup>123</sup> The answer that Watson comes up with is that the Galatian community shares the characteristics of a sect, not a reform movement. While the agitators in Galatia "are conscious of sharing religious traditions with the Jewish community as a whole . . . Paul disinherits the Jewish community and claims that his congregations of mainly Gentile Christians are the sole legitimate possessors of these traditions."<sup>124</sup> Watson sees it as clear that Paul was trying to establish a new sect and consequently fully separate himself and his communities from Judaism.

Because Paul desires to separate from Judaism, he needs to legitimate this separation.<sup>125</sup> This is where the discussion of the law enters in. In order to promote a separate community from the Jewish community, Paul could not advocate the practice of law, which was a particular Jewish practice. Paul opposes things like circumcision, then, "because it is the rite of entry into the Jewish people, and for that reason alone."<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, the faith/law antithesis was present in Paul, but it looks a bit different according to Watson. Instead of being an antithesis between "faith and morality-in-general" it should be seen as "an antithesis between life as a Christian, with its distinctive beliefs and practices, and life as an observant Jew."<sup>127</sup> Faith and law are effectively incommensurable;<sup>128</sup> faith is the way of the Christ-believing sect, whereas law is the way of the Jewish community.<sup>129</sup> While the new Pauline sect is

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<sup>122</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 69.

<sup>123</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 100.

<sup>124</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 132.

<sup>125</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 51.

<sup>126</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 130.

<sup>127</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 123.

<sup>128</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 245.

<sup>129</sup> While Watson does suggest that faith and law are incommensurable he does address some comparisons and contrasts between the community of faith versus the community of law in *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 245-258.

oriented towards Christ, the Jewish community is oriented towards the law of Moses. Watson suggests that “a community that identifies God by way of the one” (Christ) “will differ fundamentally from a community that does so by way of the other” (Moses).<sup>130</sup> Law no longer holds force then, because it is the way of the Jews and Paul’s communities are now something completely separate.

### **Conclusion**

All of the scholars addressed in this chapter see Paul as arguing for the “end of the law” in the process of justification for believers. Whether it is because faith and law are incommensurable for salvation (Sanders), because no one is capable of “doing the law” (Schreiner, Das, Westerholm), because the law creates an inappropriate and detrimental social distinction between Jews and Gentiles (Dunn, Wright, Boyarin, Barclay) or because the law is the characteristic way of entry for a group that Paul’s communities no longer belong to (Watson), the law can no longer hold the same position it once did as entry requirement. Paul clearly sees a new way of entry into the people of God, of fulfilling the law, of bringing Jew and Gentile together, and of defining the new sect which Paul established: faith. Faith then takes the former place of the law in a believer’s entrance into the people of God and begins to shape him accordingly. But living by faith does not necessarily mean living against the law and its principles. In fact law may still play a role in the lives of believers after faith. It is this side of the argument that we turn to next.

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<sup>130</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 55.



### Chapter 3

“Fulfill the law” (Rom 8:4; 13:8-10; Gal 5:14).

The authors examined in the last chapter suggested various reasons why Paul could say that believers were dead to the law (Gal 2:19; Rom 7:4, 6), or that circumcision has no real value in gaining righteousness (Rom 2:25-29; 3:30; 4:9-11; 1 Cor 7:18-19; Gal 2:3; 6:15). The problem becomes the fact that Paul does not stop at these negative statements about the law. Because Paul makes positive statements about the law, scholars must also find explanations for why Paul would view the law in this way in light of the previously mentioned negative comments. Therefore, many of the scholars examined in chapter two will appear again in this chapter. While there are a select group of scholars who suggest that the Mosaic law is no longer binding on Christ-believers, most of the scholars I survey in this chapter suggest that Paul’s positive statements about the law indicate that he saw some continued role for the law in the lives of believers. The question becomes exactly what role does it play? Is it a pervasive role? Does the role change depending on whether the believer is Jewish or Gentile? Does the definition of law change and therefore is it the “law” as one would have understood it in the past which still holds force? Or does the change in definition change the concept in such a way that one can not view it as a “continued role,” but as a new role for a new law?

Based on the answers to this sort of questioning three groups emerge: one which argues that Paul sees the law as holding the same role for all believers, another which argues that Paul saw the law as playing a different role for Jewish versus Gentile believers and finally, a group which argues that the law is no longer binding on any Christ-believer. The scholars within these three camps, especially the first, do differ significantly on how they argue their stance, but none the less these categories seem to be present. First, I will address those who see the law as functioning in some distinct yet pervasive way for all people. After presenting the arguments of scholars such as Cranfield, Dunn, Sanders, Schreiner, etc, I will examine the stance of scholars such as Bockmuehl, Nanos and Schweitzer who see Paul as arguing two different things for two different groups. Third, I will address those scholars who suggest that Paul no longer saw the Mosaic law as binding on Christ-believers what-so-ever (Fee, Westerholm). Therefore, Paul’s seemingly positive statements about the law must be seen as addressing something different than the Mosaic law. Finally, an appendix to the chapter will present the interesting position of Räisänen. While most of the authors discussed in this project focus their work on the confusing topic of law in Paul, Räisänen makes Paul out to be the confused one.

### “Against Misuse”

While most of the authors in this chapter argue for some limited role for the law, or better yet, for some limited law, in the lives of believers, Cranfield’s argument is the closest that one can find to the Mosaic law remaining valid for all believers in all cases.<sup>1</sup> For Cranfield’s Paul, it is not the law itself which is the problem, but instead it is a misunderstanding of the law’s purpose which is the issue. Cranfield suggests that the law itself “*establishes the possibility of legalism.*”<sup>2</sup> Because all are sinful and the law presents ways to deal with that sinfulness, sinful man will be tempted to use the law in order to “better (his) inevitable fallen position.”<sup>3</sup> Cranfield consequently suggests that the problem is that the law was given in order to point believers to Christ and those that see it as something which allows one to fulfill God’s requirements, misunderstand what God intended by the ‘law.’<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is this misunderstanding of the law which Paul argues against in his letters, not the law itself.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, when Paul states that believers have died to the law, he means, according to Cranfield, that they have died to the law’s condemnation, not the law itself.<sup>6</sup> Paul writes that believers are freed from the law (Rom 7:1-6). Instead of being freed from the law as entry requirement or as a form of social distinction, etc. Cranfield sees Paul as preaching freedom from “the-law-as-condemning or the law’s condemnation.”<sup>7</sup> The law’s role as a condemning force is no longer valid, no longer necessary, for Christ removes our condemnation.

Falling in line with the Calvinist stance on law and gospel, Cranfield can see the two as complementary rather than adversarial. The law therefore has a continuing validity in the lives of believers.<sup>8</sup> When Paul speaks of the difference between the letter and the spirit, he is discussing the law with and without Christ. Cranfield suggests that the difference between the letter and Spirit (Rom 7:6; 2 Cor 3:6) is that the letter is not God’s law as a whole, but the law observed without Christ as the focus; Christ makes it possible for individuals to be justified as sinners are incapable of doing so themselves.<sup>9</sup> Those who follow the ordinances of

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that Cranfield is one of the few scholars I will be addressing in this project who was writing before Sanders’ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. It is therefore much easier to see the influence on his work by the Reformers than those writing in the Post-Sanders era.

<sup>2</sup> C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans 9-16* (London: T&T International, 1979) 847.

<sup>3</sup> Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 847.

<sup>4</sup> Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 848-851.

<sup>5</sup> Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 853.

<sup>6</sup> Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*, 320.

<sup>7</sup> Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*, 330.

<sup>8</sup> Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 861.

<sup>9</sup> Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 847.

the law, without a focus on Christ, therefore only have the letter of the law without the Spirit, which is no real law at all since Paul tells us that the law is in fact spiritual (Rom 7:14).<sup>10</sup> It is for this reason that Cranfield can argue that “it is clear that we are true to Paul’s teaching, when we say that *God’s word in scripture is one...that gospel and law are essentially one.*”<sup>11</sup> When looking at law as a whole, in its relation to Christ, we see that law and gospel can go hand in hand.

Finally, Cranfield suggests that it may be the nature of some of the letters themselves that leads to Paul’s negative statements about the law. For example, Paul’s disparaging comments about the law in Galatians may be due to the letter itself. As was stated in the first chapter of this project, Paul was dealing with the presence of some fierce opponents in Galatia. Because his opponents “falsely exalted the law,” Cranfield suggests that Paul is “forced in some measure to depreciate it.”<sup>12</sup> All in all, Cranfield takes no issue with Paul’s presentation of positive statements about the law in his letters. In fact, he sees law, properly understood of course,<sup>13</sup> as holding continuing validity for all believers.

### “Staying In”

Sanders’ approach to the issue of law in Paul’s letters revolves around the phrase “different questions, different answers.”<sup>14</sup> That is, Paul’s answer to what role the law should play depends on the question asked of him. As we saw in the preceding chapter, if Paul were asked, what role does the law play in initial justification, in how one “gets in” to the people of God, Paul would respond with a resounding, Not by law.<sup>15</sup> When addressing the question of how one behaves who is already “in” the people of God, Paul’s answer changes.

Sanders explains that Paul’s varying responses are made evident in Paul’s terminology. As seen in chapter two of this work, Paul does not use law terminology when discussing how one “gets in” to the people of God. Instead, it is when he discusses behaviour after initial justification that law terminology enters into the discussion.<sup>16</sup> In fact when one looks at the phrases Paul uses to describe Christian behaviour one notices that “law” appears frequently. In Galatians we see that Paul describes how

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<sup>10</sup> Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 851.

<sup>11</sup> Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 862.

<sup>12</sup> Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 858.

<sup>13</sup> For Cranfield the law is made up of ritual and moral commands. While the believer is obliged to obey all parts of the law, the ritual law has been satisfied by Christ and therefore the believer while bound to that law, is not obligated to “do” it. It is therefore the moral commands of the law which continue to be outwardly foundational for believers (*Romans 1-8*, 299-300; 679; 713-715).

<sup>14</sup> Sanders, *Paul, the Law, Jewish People*, 10.

<sup>15</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 84.

<sup>16</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 6, 7, 9. See also page 20 above.

the Galatians should express their freedom in terms of the “whole law” (Gal 5:14) and the “law of Christ” (Gal 6:2). In Romans, he speaks of Christians acting in ways which fulfill the “righteousness of the law” (Rom 8:4) and in fact he suggests that the law is summarized as love your neighbour; a behaviour (Rom 13:8-10).<sup>17</sup> For Sanders then, Paul must have thought that the law still maintained some role in the lives of believers.

While law did not play a role in one’s initial justification Paul thought it necessary for Christians to “live holy and blameless lives” and “he was horrified when they did not do so.”<sup>18</sup> Ethics, therefore, remained important to Paul. While it is clear that some of the elements of the “old” law had been done away with, namely, circumcision, food and Sabbath laws, there were still ethical elements of the “old” law which remained foundational.<sup>19</sup> As Sanders suggests, the fruit of the Spirit which Paul lists in Galatians (Gal 5:22-23) coincides with the ethical elements of the Old Testament and therefore one can see the continuity between that law and the law that Christians are enabled to fulfill by the power of the Spirit.<sup>20</sup> In fact, Sanders argues that Paul “made no distinction between the law which Christians obey and the Mosaic law.”<sup>21</sup> The difference comes in the role of the Spirit in the fulfillment of the law after Christ.

For Paul, the law was God-given and yet it did not play a role in initial salvation. If this was the case, why did God give the law in the first place? While the law served to aid in how one lives a moral life and to point out what needs to be fulfilled in order to gain righteousness, it never carried with it “the power to enable people to fulfill it.”<sup>22</sup> This lack of power was made up by God, who by sending his son, “enables what the law requires to be fulfilled in those who walk according to the Spirit.”<sup>23</sup> Those in the Spirit, then, are enabled to “love the neighbour” which Paul tells us is the fulfillment of the “whole law” (Gal 5:14; Rom 13:8-10). Consequently, Sanders suggests that, by living in love, “those in Christ fulfill the law and not just aspects of it.”<sup>24</sup> What one sees then is Christians performing “good works” as a condition not of “getting in” but of “staying in” the people of God.<sup>25</sup> While some may see this line of argumentation leading to the conclusion that Christianity becomes a new

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<sup>17</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 94.

<sup>18</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 94.

<sup>19</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 100-101.

<sup>20</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 513.

<sup>21</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 96.

<sup>22</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 74.

<sup>23</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 74.

<sup>24</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 99.

<sup>25</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 517, 543-544. See also Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective*, 112; idem, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 119-122.

form of covenantal nomism<sup>26</sup> Sanders suggests that the covenantal categories are in fact transcended in Paul.<sup>27</sup> Christians are forbidden to take part in certain acts, not because of the threat of expulsion but because the result of these acts is a “union which is antithetical to the union with Christ.”<sup>28</sup> In spite of this, Law still holds force in the lives of believers because the Spirit enables the believer to live according to the principle of the law. If one lives by the Spirit, one inevitably performs the deeds of the Spirit which are in line with the law. If one does not live in this moral way, one cannot possibly have the Spirit and therefore cannot be a member of the people of God. Living according to the law is therefore an inevitable outworking of the Spirit.

### “Reduced law fulfilled”

While Sanders saw the law as still functioning as law, and therefore the law which believers fulfilled through the Spirit was the Mosaic law of the past,<sup>29</sup> many scholars suggest that Paul saw a reduced law as the law which believers fulfill. The general understanding of this group is that it is only in its reduced form that Torah can be fulfilled.<sup>30</sup>

Schreiner suggests that one Old Testament command is still in force for Christians and that is the command to love one’s neighbour (Lev 19:18).<sup>31</sup> This does not mean that other moral norms are excluded, merely that love is the law that Christians fulfill by the Spirit. The role of the Spirit is vital in this regard. Like Sanders, Schreiner suggests that humans are incapable of fulfilling the law, through love, by their own ability. Instead, obedience to and fulfillment of the law is only possible through the Spirit.<sup>32</sup> While unbelievers cannot keep the law, because they do not have the Spirit, believers are enabled and therefore expected to keep said law.<sup>33</sup> In examining Romans 2:29, Schreiner concludes that Paul thought that “the Spirit was given first and then the law was obeyed by Gentiles . . . the saving work of Jesus Christ radically changes people so that they can now obey the law they previously disobeyed.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Covenantal nomism is a phrase coined by Sanders to describe Palestinian Judaism in the first century. He presents the idea that while one’s initial place in the people of God is based on God’s work and not the individual’s, because of the covenant promise made by God to the descendants of Abraham (covenant), one’s holds one’s place by performing deeds in accordance with God’s law (nomism).

<sup>27</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 514.

<sup>28</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 514

<sup>29</sup> Sanders, *Paul, Law, Jewish People*, 114.

<sup>30</sup> H. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1987) 28; Watson, *Paul, Judaism, Gentiles*, 299-300.

<sup>31</sup> Schreiner, *Law and its Fulfillment*, 145, 149.

<sup>32</sup> Schreiner, *Law and its Fulfillment*, 149, 151, 173, 198, 203, 245.

<sup>33</sup> Schreiner, *Law and its Fulfillment*, 149, 152.

<sup>34</sup> Schreiner, *Law and its Fulfillment*, 203.

The fact that Paul sees ethics as important is clear from the fact that he does not stop at merely telling the churches to love one another. This apparently is not enough. Instead, Paul tells them how this love works itself out. As Schreiner states, "Paul believed that giving specific commands would strengthen believers to live in a more loving manner."<sup>35</sup> The goal is still love as the ultimate fulfillment of law, but other morals are clearly important in the process. One may be able to see love as a generally passive emotion, but Paul prevents this interpretation by his terminology. By exhorting the believers "to walk in the Spirit" (Gal 5:16). Paul clearly has the activity of believers in view.<sup>36</sup> This obedience to the Spirit and therefore to the law is active and must be worked out by active loving of the neighbour, not mere emotion. As Schreiner suggests, "the liberation from the law does not mean that now the external commands of the law are irrelevant for the believer,"<sup>37</sup> only that the one that fulfills the law of Christ, and loves the other by bearing their burdens, also fulfills the Old Testament law, as it is summed up in the law of love.<sup>38</sup> Schreiner continues this debate by asking the question, "Is the law of Christ limited to the law of love?"<sup>39</sup> His answer: yes and no. Love is foundational for Paul, but other moral norms must be included. This becomes clear from the fact that Paul tells his congregations what is loving behaviour (Gal 5:22-23; 6:1-2, 6-10) and what is not (Gal 5:15, 19-21, 26).<sup>40</sup>

With the coming of the Spirit comes the dawning of the age of the law written on the heart (Jer 31:33; Ezek 11:19; 36:26-27). Consequently, the moral norms of the law can now be kept because of the internal working of the Spirit of God. The law is no longer an external standard then; it is also an inward delight.<sup>41</sup> Believers are now enabled to fulfill the law of love, which is the summation of the Old Testament law, because of the work of the Spirit. The definition of the law therefore somewhat changed and it is this reduced law that is fulfilled by believers.<sup>42</sup>

Dunn too sees the law that is fulfilled by believers as the law of love. He argues that the "law which commends and confirms the right priorities, of faith and love" is the law which continues to have a positive role in the lives of believers.<sup>43</sup> The love command, according to Dunn, "is the summary, epitome, condensation of the whole law."<sup>44</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>35</sup> Schreiner, *Law and its Fulfillment*, 148.

<sup>36</sup> Schreiner, *Law and its Fulfillment*, 151.

<sup>37</sup> Schreiner, *Law and its Fulfillment*, 173.

<sup>38</sup> Schreiner, *Law and its Fulfillment*, 159.

<sup>39</sup> Schreiner, *Law and its Fulfillment*, 159.

<sup>40</sup> Schreiner, *Law and its Fulfillment*, 159.

<sup>41</sup> Schreiner, *The Law and its Fulfillment*, 245.

<sup>42</sup> Schreiner, *The Law and its Fulfillment*, 156.

<sup>43</sup> Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 231.

<sup>44</sup> Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 656-657.

those who live by love, as enabled by the Spirit, fulfill what the law requires.<sup>45</sup>

Like Schreiner, Dunn also sees the reception of the Spirit as fulfilling the Old Testament prophecy of the law being written on the heart. Because of this, Paul sees the believer as internally motivated to keep the law; “external constraint is replaced by internal desire and compulsion.”<sup>46</sup> That said, Paul clearly did not think it was enough to tell people that they should feel internal compulsion to fulfill the law. Paul seemed to have a fear that “freedom from the clear guidelines of a nomistic lifestyle would result in a casting off of all restraint.”<sup>47</sup> Therefore, Paul needed to make it clear that just because the believers had been given the Spirit, this did not give them the right to “kick over the traces and do whatever (they) wanted.”<sup>48</sup> The internal desire had to be coupled with some restraint.<sup>49</sup> Paul in fact made it clear that keeping the law by loving the neighbour would not be easy.<sup>50</sup> Truly loving the neighbour leads to a practical expression of that love and this means effort and work, not just a passive expression of feeling. Verses on the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) and bearing one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2) therefore become practical expressions of the kind of loving that a believer is expected to engage in. Law as it manifests itself in love therefore remains central for Paul.

Betz, too, suggests that while freedom from the flesh and even the law is given to those who have the Spirit, it is not to be taken for granted.<sup>51</sup> Betz sees believers as freed *from* slavery, but also freed *to* action. In this case he argues that the only way to protect one’s freedom is to exercise it.<sup>52</sup> While love does fulfill the law, law does not disappear.<sup>53</sup> Instead, law is now “the quantitative sum total of all laws.”<sup>54</sup> Law, as worked out in love remains foundational in the lives of believers and that love must be exercised (as can be seen in Paul’s emphasis on the fruit of the Spirit: Gal 5:22-23).

The importance of action which mimics the values of law is found in Barclay’s argument about the fulfillment of the law. In his reading of Paul, Barclay suggests that one can see an obligation to work; that believers need to “turn their faith into loving behaviour.”<sup>55</sup> In fact, “faith in Galatians is not just ‘believing the gospel’; it also includes a commitment to ‘obey the

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<sup>45</sup> Dunn, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 271, 291.

<sup>46</sup> Dunn, *Theology of Galatians*, 106.

<sup>47</sup> Dunn, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 287.

<sup>48</sup> Dunn, *Theology of Galatians*, 109.

<sup>49</sup> Dunn, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 287; *Theology of Paul*, 659.

<sup>50</sup> Dunn, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 292.

<sup>51</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 32.

<sup>52</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 258.

<sup>53</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 264; “Paul,” 195.

<sup>54</sup> Betz, “Paul,” 195.

<sup>55</sup> Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 94.

truth', and cannot be distinguished from the constant attempt to 'walk in the Spirit'.<sup>56</sup> The fulfillment of the law comes through love, yes, but it is more than that. We see by Paul's own words that this love has to be practically worked out in mutual service (Gal 6:2).<sup>57</sup>

While previous scholars have suggested that the law has been superseded by love, Barclay sees the actual demands of the law as more present in Paul. While one is not obliged to follow every single command laid down in the written law, Barclay suggests that the "moral standards of the law are taken up into and fully realized in the life of the Spirit."<sup>58</sup> The believer living in the Spirit takes upon him/herself all of the moral demands of the law and is able to live by them. While the moral standards are present, it is important to note Barclay's use of terminology. He states that they are "taken up into and fully realized." Consequently, it is not that Christ-believers "observe the law" per se but they fulfill it; they fulfill it through the one love-command.<sup>59</sup> That being said, the fruits which the Spirit produces, do in fact match up to the values of the law.<sup>60</sup>

#### **"Ethics Still Needed: Law still Needed?"**

Frank Thielman maintains an interesting position in the current debate. When examining his older work, *From Plight to Solution*, one is presented with a fairly pro-law stance. In this work, Thielman suggests that law is integral to Paul's theology. He states that "for Paul the law is necessary not only as a guide to Christian ethics but as a definition of Israel's (and the Gentiles') failure to keep the covenant and therefore of their need for God's eschatological, saving intervention."<sup>61</sup> Law therefore maintains a similar position for believers both pre- and post-Christ when we examine the law from a Jewish eschatological position. Paul argues in line with the common Jewish eschatological hope that "the age of the curse of the law is drawing to a close and the age of obedience to the law from the heart is beginning."<sup>62</sup> Therefore, Thielman suggests that if one examines Paul in light of his eschatology it becomes obvious that Paul "reserves a place for obedience to the law."<sup>63</sup>

While Paul did make negative comments about the law, these had to do primarily with the law's previous purpose to enclose people under sin.<sup>64</sup> While "the law could not be kept in the present evil age," Paul

<sup>56</sup> Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 236.

<sup>57</sup> Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 141.

<sup>58</sup> Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 141.

<sup>59</sup> Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 142.

<sup>60</sup> Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 143.

<sup>61</sup> F. Thielman, *From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul's view of the Law in Galatians and Romans* (Leiden: Brill, 1989) 49.

<sup>62</sup> Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*, 50.

<sup>63</sup> Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*, 54.

<sup>64</sup> Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*, 60.

argued that “in the eschaton it *would* be kept with the aid of the Spirit.”<sup>65</sup> It is the Spirit which empowers law fulfillment in the eschatological age and in fact requires it.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, Thielman proposes that Paul straightforwardly states that believers should keep the law.<sup>67</sup> In fact, in his examination of Paul’s letters he finds no evidence that Paul criticizes the doing of the law, but only the failure to do it.<sup>68</sup> Ethics clearly remain important to Paul, and he sees the law and its ethical focus as foundational to believers living in the eschatological age.

In his more recent work, *The Law and the New Testament*, Thielman changes his argument slightly with significant results. Instead of the law of the Old Testament remaining central for Christ-believers it is now the law of Christ. According to Thielman, in Christ, the divinely appointed role of the Mosaic law is brought to an end.<sup>69</sup> A different law, namely the law of Christ, is now fulfilled by those who have the Spirit.<sup>70</sup> This law is worked out in love, in ethical treatment of the neighbour, which is in line with the goal of the old law, but now made possible through the Spirit. Relationships and behaviour are important to Paul and while the Mosaic law builds a wall of division between Jew and Gentile, the law of Christ breaks it down.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, the Mosaic law cannot be seen as a positive in Paul’s letters. Consequently, in this work, Thielman suggests that it is not just one aspect of the Mosaic law that passes away, its role in enclosing people under sin, but that the Mosaic law as a whole is done away with. This is because enclosing people under sin is *the* role of the Mosaic law as a whole, not just one aspect of it. Therefore, its divinely appointed function is complete, and it passes from the scene.<sup>72</sup>

While the Mosaic law no longer holds force, the law that is fulfilled by believers is to some extent expressed in the Mosaic law.<sup>73</sup> What become central to a believer’s practice, according to Thielman, are the teachings of Jesus. If some of these teachings reflect or are even reliant on the Mosaic law, then this law can be seen to be continually valid. Therefore, while believers are no longer bound by the Mosaic law, they are bound to the law of Christ, which “absorbs within it elements of the Mosaic law.”<sup>74</sup> The law that remains foundational then for the behaviour of

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<sup>65</sup> Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*, 60.

<sup>66</sup> Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*, 89.

<sup>67</sup> Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*, 90.

<sup>68</sup> Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*, 121.

<sup>69</sup> F. Thielman, *The Law and the New Testament: The Question of Continuity* (New York: Crossroad, 1999) 9.

<sup>70</sup> Thielman, *Law and New Testament*, 19.

<sup>71</sup> Thielman, *Law and New Testament*, 19.

<sup>72</sup> Thielman, *Law and New Testament*, 20.

<sup>73</sup> Thielman, *Law and New Testament*, 27-28, 35.

<sup>74</sup> Thielman, *Law and New Testament*, 33.

Christ-believers is an altered law, the law as it has been absorbed and reinterpreted by Christ.

### **“Different Roles for Different People”**

While the scholars I have examined in this chapter thus far see Paul as arguing for the same role for all believers, the authors who follow see things a bit differently. The scholars of this section maintain that Paul viewed the law as holding a different place in the lives of Jews than of Gentiles. Like Sanders, it is a matter of “different questions, different answers.” While for Sanders the questions were “for what” questions, the following authors address the question “for whom?”

The four scholars of this section generally argue from the same theory, namely, the status quo theory. This theory states that Paul thought that people should remain in the state in which they were called (1 Cor 7:17-18, 20).<sup>75</sup> That is, “whatever condition in which a man has made his election a reality, that is to say, has become a believer, in that condition he is, as a believer, to remain.”<sup>76</sup> If a person entered the people of God as a Gentile, then that person should continue to live as a Gentile afterward. Similarly, if a person entered the people of God as a Jew, then that person should remain a Jew after the fact.

Schweitzer follows this theory and consequently suggests that law remains foundational for Jewish believers. While it is impossible to gain righteousness by the law, that fact does not take away the importance of remaining in the condition in which you are called and for the Jewish believers this condition was one of living by the law.<sup>77</sup> In fact, “that believers from Judaism should continue to live according to the law seems to him quite proper and in no way detrimental to their redemption.”<sup>78</sup> The problem arises, according to Schweitzer, when Gentiles try to do the same. For Schweitzer it is the doctrine of the “mystical being-in-Christ” that allows Paul to argue in such a way. By this he means that “from the moment that a man is in-Christ his whole being is completely conditioned by that fact. His natural existence and all the circumstances connected with it have become of no importance.”<sup>79</sup> If suddenly a person changes his way of living, or any circumstance of his natural existence, he acknowledges that his natural existence is what matters, not his being-in-Christ.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> While the principal scriptural basis for this theory is found in 1 Corinthians and not Romans or Galatians, it still affects how our scholars approach the law in these letters.

<sup>76</sup> Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 194.

<sup>77</sup> Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 217.

<sup>78</sup> Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 187.

<sup>79</sup> Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 194.

<sup>80</sup> Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 194-195.

Bockmuehl also follows the status quo theory.<sup>81</sup> According to Bockmuehl, the principle of Paul's argument would be for Jews "to keep the Torah (indeed Gal 5:3, too, may mean they are obliged to do so) and for Gentiles to keep what pertain to them- and only that."<sup>82</sup> While Jews are to continue to live by the whole Torah, Gentiles are to live only by those things of law which aid in maintaining relations between Jew and Gentile.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, Bockmuehl argues that it is the so-called Noachide laws which remain foundational for the Gentiles.<sup>84</sup>

Tomson too sees the relation of Jewish and Gentile believers as central to Paul. He even suggests that Paul "pleads for Jewish-Gentile co-existence."<sup>85</sup> Similar to Schweitzer, Tomson argues that when one enters the people of God one becomes part of a bigger whole. By "donning Christ" the individual becomes part of something bigger than themselves and their identity and therefore ethnicity and its consequent practices do not matter.<sup>86</sup> This is why Paul can argue for the continuing validity of law in the lives of Jewish apostles and believers.<sup>87</sup> Again, the problem comes when Jewish law and halakha are applied to Gentile Christians.<sup>88</sup> Tomson, as a result, follows the general "rule of thumb" that one should "remain in the calling in which one was called."<sup>89</sup>

Tomson takes his argument a bit further and suggests that the difference that one can see between and within Paul's letters themselves can be attributed to this "two group" mentality. He argues that Galatians defends the Gentiles, while Romans defends the Jews.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, while most authors suggest that Paul meant that Christ was either the end OR the goal of the law in Romans 10:4, Tomson suggests that Paul had both meanings in mind. He explains:

For Jewish believers, the law is not an end in itself, but is focused upon Christ. That is why he is its goal: observing the law in itself will never justify them. On the other hand, non-Jews are justified

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<sup>81</sup> M. Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000) 170.

<sup>82</sup> Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law*, 171.

<sup>83</sup> Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law*, 150, 172.

<sup>84</sup> Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law*, 172. See Bockmuehl's work for further explanation on the Noachide laws and their role in the lives of Gentile believers.

<sup>85</sup> P.J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 245.

<sup>86</sup> P.J. Tomson, "If this be from Heaven..." *Jesus and the New Testament Authors in their Relationship to Judaism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001) 182.

<sup>87</sup> Tomson, *Paul and Law*, 227, 237.

<sup>88</sup> Tomson, *Paul and Law*, 88-89.

<sup>89</sup> Tomson, *If this be from Heaven*, 181.

<sup>90</sup> Tomson, *If this be from Heaven*, 189.

without the law, namely, in Christ, who is the end of the law as universal prerequisite for salvation.<sup>91</sup>

Therefore, Christ can be either the end or the goal of the law for believers depending on whether they are Gentile or Jewish.

Finally, Mark D Nanos is an important proponent of the status quo theory. Nanos proposes that with the scholarly efforts of so many and therefore a renewed understanding of the books of the New Testament, that we can “now read the New Testament as a Jewish book.”<sup>92</sup> As a result of his research he therefore finds in Paul “a thoroughly Jewish” character who functions “entirely within the context of Judaism.”<sup>93</sup> If this is the case, one can imagine that Paul would not want to break entirely with the practice which so defines Jews: the law.

Like Dunn, Wright and others, Nanos sees Paul as arguing not against the practice of law as such, but against the ethnocentric exclusivism which its practice sometimes leads to.<sup>94</sup> The goal is for all to be equal as part of the one people of God. In order to live with each other, in the individual states in which they were called, the people of God therefore needed some guidelines. While Jews remained law-observant, Gentiles were to be law-respectful.<sup>95</sup> According to Nanos, Paul thought that Gentile believers had “to recognize the place of Israel and therefore respect it.”<sup>96</sup> How they showed this respect was by keeping the Noachide commandments.<sup>97</sup> Gentiles were not expected to keep the law in its entirety, but only in those ways which would aid in the forming of one community under the one and only God. Paul therefore preached a law-observant gospel for Jews and a law-respectful one for Gentiles.<sup>98</sup> This was not always easily worked out, as Nanos suggests that one can often see Paul “wrestling with the tension of continued law practice for Jews and love practice for gentiles.”<sup>99</sup> Paul therefore lays out the behavioural requirements of love, showing that Gentiles too had concrete actions that they had to take in order to live as members of the people of God.<sup>100</sup>

### **Law No Longer Binding on Believers**

All of the scholars examined in this chapter so far have suggested that Paul's positive statements about the law indicate some continued role

<sup>91</sup> Tomson, *If this be from Heaven*, 212.

<sup>92</sup> Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 4.

<sup>93</sup> Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 9.

<sup>94</sup> Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 9, 177.

<sup>95</sup> Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 23.

<sup>96</sup> Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 38.

<sup>97</sup> Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 51.

<sup>98</sup> Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 337.

<sup>99</sup> Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 165.

<sup>100</sup> Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 192.

for the law in the lives of Christ-believers. Whether it is the “whole law” for all believers (Cranfield), a reduced law of love (Barclay, Betz, Dunn, Schriener) for all, or the “whole law” for Jews, while just the Noachide laws for Gentiles (Bockmuehl, Nanos, Tomson, Schweitzer), the law still had some role. The scholars who I will address next suggest that Paul’s positive statements about the law do not indicate that he saw a continued role for the law after the coming of Christ. Instead the law had a limited role in God’s plan, a role which is now over with the coming of Christ (Gal 3:19, 25-26).

The voice of Stephen Westerholm is strong in support of this argument. According to Westerholm, while believers are said to fulfill the law in Paul’s letters this does not mean that they are to turn to the law for ethical guidance. Believers are able to fulfill the law in the sense that “the obedience offered *completely satisfies* what is required.”<sup>101</sup> The requirement is completely satisfied with the coming of the Spirit and therefore the requirement is no longer necessary. Fulfilling the law then, is not a requirement but a fruit of this new way of living.<sup>102</sup> As Christians live, according to the Spirit and the law written on the heart, they consequently fulfill the law making the law somewhat irrelevant. The positive statements about the law then are not so much positive statements about the law, but positive statements about the Spirit’s ability to fulfill the requirement of the law. The result of living according to the Spirit may be that the law is fulfilled, but it does not require conformity to Torah’s demands. Instead the “Christian duty” is to live in conformity to a “life ‘led by the Spirit of God.’”<sup>103</sup> This does not mean that Christians can ignore “deeds of righteousness;” in fact, by “sharing the cosmos with others, they are hardly exempt from its inbuilt expectations.”<sup>104</sup>

What is important to recognize, according to Westerholm is that, when Paul speaks of the behaviour of Christ-believers and of their “fulfilling” the law, he is “describing, not prescribing, their behaviour.”<sup>105</sup> Westerholm suggests that when Paul does prescribe behaviour, he does not use language of fulfilling the Mosaic law. Instead he uses Spirit language, i.e. “Walk by the Spirit and do not gratify the desires of the flesh (5:16; cf. Rom 8:12-13).”<sup>106</sup> In fact, “Paul’s purpose is to provide assurance of the quality of Christian conduct, not to define its several duties.”<sup>107</sup> Christ-believers are seen as enabled to serve God, “not in the

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<sup>101</sup> S. Westerholm, “On Fulfilling the Whole Law (Gal 5.14).” *Svensk exegetisk årsbok* 51-52 (1986-87), 234; *idem, Perspectives*, 436.

<sup>102</sup> Westerholm, “On Fulfilling the Whole Law,” 237.

<sup>103</sup> Westerholm, “On Fulfilling the Whole Law,” 236.

<sup>104</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 433.

<sup>105</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 434.

<sup>106</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 435.

<sup>107</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 435.

old way where conduct is prescribed by the law's letter, but in the new way of those who have "died" to the law but live through God's Spirit (Rom 7:6).<sup>108</sup> The paradox comes with the fact that those who have died to the law and its prescriptions actually fulfill the law.<sup>109</sup>

In Gordon D Fee's impressive monograph *God's Empowering Presence*, he presents many arguments similar to those of Dunn, Schreiner and Sanders. Like Sanders, Fee suggests that Paul's discussion of law has to do not so much with how one gets in, but in "how justified people live."<sup>110</sup> As previous scholars, and now Fee, suggest, it was a Jewish eschatological expectation that the Spirit would come to believers in such a way as to enable them to obey the law; written on their hearts instead of tablets of stone (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 11:19-20; 36:26-27).<sup>111</sup> Those in Christ would have an inner compulsion to live by the principles of the law and they would therefore live in such a way that made obvious their membership in the people of God. In fact, the Spirit working in the believer "produces the very fruit which the law aimed at but could not produce."<sup>112</sup> Believers who live by the Spirit therefore are able to "effect the righteousness that Torah demands" (Gal 5:13-6:10).<sup>113</sup> They are able to live as the Torah desired believers to live, without needing to follow every letter of the law.

Like most of the scholars addressed above, while not every "letter" of the law had to be followed, the law of love takes centre stage. Love is the fulfillment of law; it is that which the law aims at which can now be fulfilled by those who walk in the Spirit.<sup>114</sup> Fee suggests that love must rule over all and be the focus of the renewed covenant between God and man.<sup>115</sup> According to Fee, "Life described by the Torah is now lived by the power of the Spirit... Spirit represents a new law – that of life, given by Christ Jesus. As such the Spirit is the source of love, joy and peace in the present, as one awaits the future."<sup>116</sup> As we saw above, Fee sees love as fulfillment of law and the Spirit as the source of love. Therefore, if the Spirit is the source of love, it would follow that it is also the source of law in the lives of believers.

But this law is a new law, a new covenant between God and his people, according to Fee. Instead of law, the Spirit is now the identity

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<sup>108</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 437.

<sup>109</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 437.

<sup>110</sup> Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 418.

<sup>111</sup> Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 369.

<sup>112</sup> Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 370.

<sup>113</sup> Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 371.

<sup>114</sup> Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 385, 423.

<sup>115</sup> G.D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit and the People of God* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996) 105, 116.

<sup>116</sup> Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 476.

marker of God's people.<sup>117</sup> The Spirit, through enabling love, makes possible the fulfillment of the new covenant (Rom 7:5-6) where Torah is now fulfilled by those who walk in the Spirit (Rom 8:4) and are freed from the power of the flesh (Rom 8:2-3).<sup>118</sup> This freedom from the flesh is a qualified freedom though. According to Fee, one is freed from the power of the flesh in order to be enslaved to the power of love; "love is the proper way freedom from Torah's slavery expresses itself – with a new form of slavery, in behalf of one another."<sup>119</sup> Consequently, believers in the Spirit, once freed from slavery, take on another form of slavery: that of loving servanthood.

The question becomes, if love takes over the role of law, is law abrogated? Or does law, as law, still remain important? According to Fee, the Spirit has replaced Torah by fulfilling the aim of the Torah.<sup>120</sup> Because the law functioned as a way to identify the people of God and the Spirit is now this identity marker for believers, the Spirit does in fact make at least this role of the law obsolete. As we saw in chapter two, Fee suggests that "the Spirit is sufficient to do what the Torah was not able to do in terms of righteousness," in terms of initial identification with the people of God.<sup>121</sup> The Spirit, instead of the law, "leads people to live in such a way so as to express the original intent of Torah: to create a people for God's name, who bear God's likeness in their character, as is seen in their behaviour."<sup>122</sup> According to Fee then, Torah has been fulfilled in such a way by the Spirit that it almost makes Torah, as Torah, obsolete. While this may be the case, Torah, as part of the Old Testament story, is never obsolete for those who are descendents of that story: i.e. Christians.<sup>123</sup> Torah remains foundational then for believers as part of the great story of God's work to make a people for his name, a part that has been fulfilled in the giving of the Spirit and therefore remains important in its outworking in love.

## Conclusion

It is clear when examining Paul's presentation of the law that one cannot stop at his negative comments about it. Instead, he seems to have some positive appreciation for the law. Paul's identity as a Christ-believing Jew no doubt has a role to play in why he needs to address the possible continuing role of the law at all. As a Jew, Paul believes that the law was divinely-given. If this is the case, God must have had a plan for

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<sup>117</sup> Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 469, 813-816.

<sup>118</sup> Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 474.

<sup>119</sup> Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 423.

<sup>120</sup> Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 426.

<sup>121</sup> Fee, *Paul, Spirit, People of God*, 103.

<sup>122</sup> Fee, *Paul, Spirit, People of God*, 103.

<sup>123</sup> Fee, *Paul, Spirit, People of God*, 103.

the law that cannot simply be erased with the coming of Christ. The scholars in this chapter have dealt with this issue and have all come up with various explanations as to why Paul speaks positively about the law. While some suggest that the law remains relatively unchanged and universally applicable (Cranfield, possibly Thielman), most propose that Paul saw a reduced law as the one which Christ-believers are enabled to fulfill. For these scholars, love and its actions are seen as the fulfillment of law and are universally applicable.

On the other hand, a select handful of scholars suggest that law is not universally applicable, but instead is applied differently to Jewish believers than to Gentile believers. These scholars argue that while Jews are to remain Jews and therefore to continue to live lives of law, Gentile believers are freed from this obligation and are in fact expected only to live by those laws which aid in the social life of the community.

Finally, we see with scholars such as Westerholm and Fee that the law is no longer binding on believers. Therefore, when Paul makes positive statements about the law's fulfillment he means that Christ-believers have in fact fulfilled the aim of the law and it is consequently no longer necessary for or binding on them.

### Appendix: The Curious Case of Heikki Räisänen

The very existence of a project such as this indicates that Paul said some confusing things about the law. He often seems to be contradicting himself and apparently feels some tension over the question. While most scholars will look at this fact and come up with arguments that make Paul's thoughts coherent, Räisänen takes a different approach. He does not see the need to make Paul's arguments coherent, since he thinks that Paul himself is an incoherent thinker. If Paul is an incoherent thinker it would follow that his arguments would be incoherent and therefore the scholar who tries to make his arguments flow does not remain true to Paul's character. As Räisänen puts it, "contradictions and tensions have to be *accepted as constant* features of Paul's theology of the law."<sup>124</sup> This is inevitable and therefore must not be brushed under the table. This does not mean that we cannot deal with the issue of law. It just means that the reader of Paul must take these contradictions and tensions into account when deciphering what Paul in fact said.

Räisänen argues that it becomes quite clear that Paul presents two conflicting lines of thought: "he asserts both the abolition of the law and also its permanently normative character."<sup>125</sup> Paul is "torn in two different directions and is incapable of resolving the tension."<sup>126</sup> Why is this the case though? According to Räisänen, it has to do with Paul's Christological insights and at the same time his unwillingness to accept his own break with the law of his ancestors. Paul's arguments about law flow directly from his Christological conviction and not from the law itself.<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, Räisänen argues that Paul is led to self-contradiction because of his inability to accept his own break with the law.<sup>128</sup> In fact, Paul often tries to hush up his apparent argument for the abolition of the law; "he never admits that he has actually rejected large parts of the law."<sup>129</sup> For example, in Galatians 5:14, Paul is clearly speaking of love and not law, according to Räisänen. In examining this passage Räisänen suggests that Paul could have explained what he meant by love without reference to the law, but for Paul, it was seen as "a great 'plus' if something can be said to be in accordance with the law."<sup>130</sup>

Paul, as a Jew, would be wary of breaking with the law of his forefathers. As stated above, Paul, in his earlier life as a Pharisee, saw the law as God-given. If it was God-given, how could one merely leave it

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<sup>124</sup> Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 11.

<sup>125</sup> Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 69.

<sup>126</sup> Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 264.

<sup>127</sup> Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 154, 201.

<sup>128</sup> Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 199-202.

<sup>129</sup> Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 265.

<sup>130</sup> Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 63.

behind? Because of these convictions and his desire to maintain an air of continuity with the Jewish tradition, Paul was most likely “inclined to conceal his radicalism from others- and probably from himself as well.”<sup>131</sup> In fact, when he does argue negatively about the law, he seems to “argue further in the negative direction than he really intends.”<sup>132</sup> Räisänen suggests that Paul has in fact broken with the law and now needs to find “rationalizations” for how it is that he has broken with the “law” and yet is actually the one who truly upholds the law. His arguments about the law are therefore constantly changing and growing as he continues to look “for arguments for a radical stance toward the law, while at the same time trying to maintain a more conservative outlook.”<sup>133</sup> Because of the fact that Paul’s arguments are in a constant state of flux, one cannot hope to find coherency in his thought.

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<sup>131</sup> Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 201.

<sup>132</sup> Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 201.

<sup>133</sup> Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 202.

## Chapter 4

“Do not be deceived” (Gal 6:7)

### **Summary of Research**

Paul and his letters are complex and sometimes difficult to understand. It is common to leave one’s reading of his letters with more questions than one had going in to it. One major question that tends to arise is “What role does the law play in the lives of Christ-believers according to Paul?” As I have stated continuously throughout this project, Paul seems to say conflicting things about the law. Because of his seemingly incoherent statements about this topic, as well as its prominent place in many of Paul’s letters, most Pauline scholars would argue that one cannot ignore the law when trying to decipher what Paul said about any given issue. Consequently, practically every major work on Paul contains some analysis of Paul’s view of the law.

In this project I have presented some of the various arguments that scholars give for the two sides of the so-called “paradox of the law” in Paul. In my introductory chapter I laid out four characteristics of Paul that I think are foundational to understanding Paul and the way that he approached any given topic. Consequently, I presented the importance of seeing Paul as a “Jewish, eschatological, letter writing, apostle to the Gentiles.”<sup>1</sup> It is clear, at least from my reading of Paul’s letters, that Paul saw himself in this way and therefore we too, as readers of Paul, must take these characteristics seriously.

In chapter two I entered into the heart of the debate and presented various scholarly responses to Paul’s negative statements about the law. The general consensus described in this chapter was that Paul spoke negatively about the law in terms of its role in “getting in” to the people of God; as entrance requirement. While the scholars addressed in this chapter have varying reasons for this conclusion, the conclusion remains the same. For Sanders’ Paul, one cannot “get in” to the people of God by the law because of his “exclusivist soteriology.”<sup>2</sup> He argues that Paul sees salvation as coming through Christ and Christ alone and therefore it cannot possibly come through the law. His “fundamental critique of the law” therefore “is that following the law does not result in being found in Christ; for salvation and the gift of the Spirit come only by faith (Rom. 10.10; Gal. 3.1-5). Doing the law, in short, is wrong only because it is not faith.”<sup>3</sup> The law in itself is not problematic; it is only problematic when made a requirement for entrance into God’s people.

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<sup>1</sup> See page 3 of this current work.

<sup>2</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 550.

<sup>3</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 550.

Scholars such as Schreiner, Das and Westerholm approach the issue a bit differently. For these scholars Christ-believers are incapable of “doing” the law and therefore they cannot hope to gain entry into the people of God by means of the law. Since justification is clearly possible (Rom 3:24, 28; 5:1, 9; 8:30; 10:10; Gal 2:16; 3:8, 24) and since no one can “do” the law, it follows that justification cannot come from the law; there must be some other means for justification.

The next set of scholars I examined in this chapter was the group that argued against the law as entry requirement because of its tendency to cause social distinction among the Christ-believers. Scholars such as Dunn, Wright, Boyarin, and Barclay suggest that when Paul spoke negatively about the law he had a specific set of laws in mind, namely, circumcision, food and Sabbath laws. These laws tended to emphasize the difference between Jew and Gentile most clearly and therefore led to a great deal of social distinction. The bottom line for Paul is that faith is the way for all believers, both Jew and Gentile, to enter into the people of God. Therefore, there should be no distinction made between any Christ-believers; “there is no longer Jew or Greek” (Gal 3:28) after all.

The final scholar I examined in this chapter was Watson. Like Dunn, Wright and the other proponents of the “social distinction” argument, Watson also suggests that the social aspect of Paul’s argument must be taken into account. For Watson though, Paul’s negative view of the law is much more cut and dry. He argues that Paul was trying to separate his new found communities from the Jewish community out of which they arose. Because he was trying to establish a “sectarian community” he could no longer identify with the characteristic practices and theologies of the Jewish community. Consequently, the law cannot be an entry requirement for the Christ-believers because it was the characteristic entry requirement for the Jewish people.

While Paul made many negative statements about the law, his positive statements cannot be ignored. Therefore, chapter three of this project explored the scholarly responses to the other side of the paradox, namely, how Paul could say that believers fulfill the law (Gal 5:14; Rom 8:4; 13:8-10). Three groups emerged from this chapter: one which argued that the law can be “fulfilled” by all believers in the same way, another which argued that the law is “fulfilled” differently for Jews than for Gentiles, and the third which argued that since the purpose of the law is “fulfilled” by the Spirit, that the law itself is no longer binding on believers.

The first argument which I addressed was that made by Cranfield. Unlike most of the other authors in this chapter, Cranfield’s argument did not show up in chapter two of this project. That is because Cranfield presents the closest we have to a completely “pro-law” position. He suggests, like many Reformed theologians before him, that when viewed properly, law and gospel go hand in hand. Paul was not against the law

as law per se, but against a specific misunderstanding of what the law intended to do. Cranfield suggests that if one viewed the law apart from Christ, one misunderstood the law's intention, which was to point to Christ. Paul, therefore, only spoke negatively about the law when referring to this misunderstanding of the law. Aside from this misunderstanding or misuse of the law, Paul took no issue with the law.

While Sanders argues that law has no role in "getting in" he does suggest that it maintains some validity in "staying in." What he means here is that Paul speaks positively of the law in its role in defining who is already "in" the group. Like many of the other scholars who follow, Sanders suggests that the Spirit enables the believer to fulfill the law and therefore living in line with the law is a consequence of already being justified.

The next group of scholars argue that while the law is not sufficient for entry into the people of God, those justified believers still fulfill a "reduced law." Scholars such as Barclay, Betz, Dunn and Schreiner argue that the reduced law which Paul suggests can be fulfilled is the law of love. By loving the neighbour, Christ-believers fulfill the essence of the law and this is what Paul is referring to by the "entire law" or "whole law." The individual prescriptions of the law are not what matters but the innate ability to produce the righteousness which the law aims at. According to most of these authors, this ability comes from the "law written on the heart" and therefore Christ-believers are able to fulfill the law without keeping every individual prescription found therein.

While believers may be thought to have the ability to fulfill the law, that does not take away the importance of ethics in Paul's writings. Most of the above authors suggest that this is the case and that Paul thought some further instruction in how one actually exercised love was important. We find the strongest evidence for the continued role of ethics in Thielman's argument. Thielman suggests that in the eschatological age, not only will the law be written on the heart, but obedience to the law will be important. Believers will be enabled to live by the ethical demands of the Old Testament, keeping in line with common Jewish eschatological expectations. While this was the stance of Thielman's earlier work, in his later work he suggests that the law which believers are enabled to fulfill in the eschatological age is not the law of Moses but the law of Christ. Again, ethics are important, but only those which pertain to Jesus' teachings.

The next group of scholars whom I addressed in this chapter were those who saw a differing role for the law in the lives of Jewish versus Gentiles believers. Schweitzer, Bockmuehl, Tomson, and Nanos all argued for one reason or another that Paul thought it necessary for Jews to continue to live as Jews (live by the law) and for Gentiles to continue to live as Gentiles (not by the law). Based on Paul's statements to remain in

the calling in which you are called (1 Cor 7:17-18; 20), these authors did not see an issue with Jews living lives of law practice while Gentiles did not. It is not that Gentiles did not have to live moral lives - this of course was a given and was aided by things such as the Noachide laws - but that they were not expected to "do" the whole law.

Next, I addressed two scholars who argue that the Spirit enables what the law pointed at and therefore replaces that very law. As we saw in the second chapter, Westerholm suggests that no one can "do" the law and therefore no one can be justified by that law. Instead believers are now justified by faith and therefore they have "died to the law," been "freed" from the law, are not "under the law," etc. Consequently, when Paul speaks positively about the believer's ability to "fulfill" the law he means that by the Spirit believers are enabled to live in accordance with what the law points to but could never achieve. The law is no longer binding but the Spirit is.

Similar to Sanders, Fee suggests that Paul speaks of law in relation to how justified people live, not in how they become justified. In Fee's argument the Spirit is central. The Spirit is what enables believers to live by love and therefore fulfill the law. What is different for Fee is that the law of love which the Spirit enables becomes a new covenant, a new law, and a new form of slavery for Christ-believers. While believers are freed from the power of the flesh, they are at the same time freed to loving action and therefore to the slavery of love. The Spirit has replaced Torah, then, by fulfilling its aim.

Finally, in an appendix to the chapter, I presented Räisänen's approach to the issue of Paul and the law. Unlike the other scholars who attempt to find coherency in Paul's statements, Räisänen suggests that incoherency is the name of the game for Paul. Paul is led to make incoherent statements about the law, because while he has clearly broken with the law, he cannot admit to himself or others that this break has in fact occurred and therefore engages in 'rationalizations' of his view of the law.

Overall, it is clear that there are many different approaches to the apparent paradox of the law in Paul's letters. Whether it is a matter of soteriology versus behaviour, "doing" versus "fulfilling," individual versus social, Jew versus Greek, all of the scholars examined in this project generally try to come to terms with how Paul can say seemingly conflicting things about the same topic. The only author who makes no real attempt at coherency is Räisänen, who practically shrugs off Paul's treatment of law as just another example of his confused and conflicted nature.

### **Critical Analysis**

In projects such as these, it is important to not sit back and just blindly accept what has come before you. In order for scholarship to

advance, a healthy dose of critical insight is important. That being said, there are few scholars with whom I agree wholeheartedly on the issue of the paradox of the law. While most make impressive arguments one way or another, I find most lacking a full engagement with the material at hand. While I do not agree with Westerholm's portrait of a Lutheran Paul, his seems to be the most comprehensive analysis of the issue at hand. He addresses all of the arguments made and critically engages them before adding his own argument. His knowledge of the Pauline epistles is evident in every page and one is hard pressed to find fault with his logic. One issue I do find in his argument is how he addresses Christian behaviour. He states that "Paul never speaks of the law's fulfillment in prescribing Christian conduct, but only while describing its results."<sup>4</sup> Instead, according to Westerholm, when Paul prescribes Christian behaviour he uses different language, Spirit language.<sup>5</sup> While love, joy, peace, etc. are seen as fruit of the already given Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), and therefore as a result of it, this does not mean that it is not in line with what the law prescribes. Paul stresses moral behaviour in his letters (Rom 2:6-11); he stresses the importance of faith being made effective through love (Gal 5:6); he stresses positive relational behaviour (Rom 12:9-13, 18, 20; 13:8-10; 14:15, 19, 21; 15:2; Gal 5:13-14; 6:1-2, 9-10); he stresses what negative behaviour to avoid (Rom 13:13; Gal 5:15, 19-21, 26). When one examines these passages it seems clear, to me at least, that they are in line with the prescriptions of the old covenant. Consequently, I do not see how Westerholm thinks it is such a cut and dry issue, i.e. that Paul speaks of Christian behaviour not in relation to law but only to Spirit.

Many scholars suggest that the communal aspect of the discussion is most important (Dunn, Wright, Watson). While Paul certainly had an interest in how people lived together in these new found communities, this was not his sole concern. He clearly emphasizes the importance of individual salvation by faith. While the communal aspect became important in life after salvation, the "getting in" process is highly individual. Furthermore, Watson does not even address the positive side of Paul's presentation of the law. He can easily find arguments in favour of separation from the Jewish community in Paul's negative statements about the law, but since he cannot maintain his argument when addressing Paul's positive statements, he merely leaves these out. If one's argument cannot be supported by both sides of the paradox, one does not have a sufficient argument.

One cannot help but be impressed by Gordon D Fee's work, *God's Empowering Presence*. Its magnitude alone is something to marvel at. In general I think that Fee's emphasis on the Spirit is well thought out and

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<sup>4</sup> Westerholm, "On Fulfilling the Whole Law," 237.

<sup>5</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 434-435.

thoroughly presented. I agree with Fee, in that I think the Spirit plays a much bigger role in Paul's thought, especially on law, than most would give it. The problem with Fee is that he sees the Spirit as abrogating the law rather than enabling it. He suggests that the law is made obsolete by the work of the Spirit and yet he stresses the importance of ethical behaviour. Does not the law play an important role in defining ethical behaviour? The Spirit and the law work hand in hand after Christ. The law defines what moral/good behaviour is and the Spirit enables the believer to actually live it out. You cannot have one without the other, and Fee's problem is that he thinks you can.

I think the arguments made by Schweitzer, Bockmuehl, and Tomson have some validity to them but they tend to take their arguments beyond what Paul actually says. It is true, Paul may have had slightly different messages for Jews than for Gentiles, he does after all clearly address the two different groups at different times (Rom 2:17-24; 7:1; 11:13-32). The problem is that the main message that one gets from Paul's letters is that *all*, both Jew and Gentile, have died to the law (Gal 2:19) and *none* are under the law (Rom 6:14, 15; 1 Cor 9:20). Also, Paul speaks of there being neither Jew nor Greek (Gal 3:28) and of certain days and foods as a matter of indifference, seemingly for both Jew and Gentile (Rom 14). It is not clear therefore that Paul had fundamentally different messages for Jewish versus Gentile Christ-believers in order to support this argument.

Räsänen's argument that Paul was a confused thinker is too easy. It allows for the advocate of this argument to pretty much shrug off any issue in Paul's thought and therefore never really deal with the complex yet interesting arguments that the apostle makes. Furthermore, just because we, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, may find it difficult to understand Paul's way of thinking about, or presenting his arguments, does not mean that he was confused. Instead, we are the confused ones. As Räsänen suggests, "he (Paul) is, however, first and foremost a missionary, a man of practical religion who develops a line of thought to make a practical point, to influence the conduct of his readers."<sup>6</sup> Paul is addressing different communities about different issues and therefore it seems logical that he would present different arguments at different times. This does not mean that Paul was confused, or incoherent, only that the surface argument changed depending on the community he was addressing. The essence of Paul's argument remained the same, even if the practical outworking of that argument changed. This does not make Paul a confused thinker, but a man of the moment.

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<sup>6</sup> Räsänen, *Paul and the Law*, 267.

### **Prospective Future Avenues of Study**

There is an abundance of scholarly research on Paul and the law. When one enters any given university library one can expect to find shelves and shelves of books on the topic. Therefore, how does one suggest future avenues of study for such a richly researched subject? I can only suggest questions which I found it difficult to find answers for, or topics which are, in my opinion, not sufficiently addressed.

As I said above, I find that most scholars address this paradox as a secondary issue. They acknowledge that it exists but only discuss it as it suits their larger argument about Paul and the law. Seeing as these conflicting statements about the law are found in most of Paul's letters, this paradox seems to be more of a central aspect of Paul's discussion of law than most acknowledge. I personally would find a scholarly work on this very paradox useful. It would be a useful resource for the student of Paul, to have a book which engages in critical biblical study of the relevant passages in this topic, and the scholarly reactions to them. Sanders' *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, is the closest I could find to setting up his work according to Paul's paradoxical treatment of the law, but more, and most importantly, more recent, works such as this would be useful.

Second, as I have stated before, Paul was a letter writer. In my research I was often left wondering, how Paul's medium of communication affects his argument. Most of the leading scholars in Pauline research pretty much ignored this question. Therefore, research which explores Paul's presentation of law as a *result* of his method of communication could be interesting and particularly helpful.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, seeing as Paul wrote letters to different audiences, these audiences need to be given more attention in Pauline research.<sup>8</sup> Most commentators will address the audience which Paul writes to, but those authors writing manuscripts on Paul and the law tend to take these audiences for granted. The student who then reads their works is often left confused as to who exactly Paul is speaking to in any given context and might wonder how this might change Paul's argument. If Paul is writing to Gentiles, would his argument look different than if he had a strictly Jewish community in mind? Was Paul even concerned with Jewish believers? If his message was primarily for Gentiles, how does this affect its application? I.e. Are his letters universally applicable or not?

In general the research on Paul, especially on his treatment of law, is vast and rich. The student never lacks in interesting monographs to read and be inspired by. That said, I often wonder if we, as scholars, will ever run out of things to say about any given topic. I suppose that I feel

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<sup>7</sup> Jervis does address the format of the letter in her work, *The Purpose of Romans*.

<sup>8</sup> Das' new book, *Solving the Romans Debate*, does make a concerted effort to address the actual audience of Romans.

lucky that Paul left us with such confusing and conflicting statements about the law so as to sufficiently secure the continued research of this interesting topic.

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