

THE ABOLITION AND FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW
IN PAUL

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1. Introduction

“Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.”¹ This aphorism seems to be fitting for the author of another article on Paul’s understanding of the law. Indeed, the recent spate of articles and monographs on the Pauline view of the law, and the wide diversity of opinion reflected therein, only increase the difficulty for the modern interpreter.² Nevertheless, the complexity of and controversy over the issue should not prevent one from trying to puzzle out Paul’s theology of law. To leave it as an unresolved question mark is to resign oneself to uncertainty on an issue that is central for understanding Pauline theology. In this article an attempt will be made to clarify how Paul can speak both of the abolition and also of the fulfillment of the law. Certain texts in Paul suggest that since the coming of Christ the law is now abolished (Gal. 3.15-4.7; Rom. 6.14; 7.1-6; 10.4; 2 Cor. 3.4-18; cf. also Gal. 2.18; Rom. 14.14, 20). On the other hand, Paul also speaks positively about fulfilling the law (Gal. 5.14; 1 Cor. 7.19; Rom. 2.25ff; 3.31; 8.4; 13.8-10). Can these diverse statements on the abolition and fulfillment of the law legitimately be formulated into a coherent unity? And if a unified and coherent formulation is possible, what is the most credible unifying exposition? We shall begin with a survey and brief critique of the various interpretive options, and then attempt to defend an old interpretation.

2. Survey of Interpretation

Paul’s Teaching as Contradictory

It is not surprising that many different theories have been suggested

on the abolition and fulfillment of the law in Paul. Recently, the theory that his teaching was simply contradictory has been brilliantly defended by H. Räisänen.³ This is not the place for a detailed response to Räisänen, but J. D. G. Dunn is correct in saying that any hypothesis which contends that Paul was contradictory must only be accepted as a “last resort.”⁴ Whether or not one sees *contradictions* in Paul on this issue that cannot be harmonized, or *paradoxes* which although they appear to be contradictory are ultimately harmonious, is often a matter of perspective. Many scholars who have studied Paul have come to a conclusion that opposes Räisänen’s view, namely, that Paul was a consistent theologian and thinker. Thus, it appears that the benefit of the doubt should be given to Paul on this question. No one doubts that Paul’s statements on the law are difficult, but one should be extremely careful about concluding that they are incoherent.

Not only is Räisänen’s starting point unlikely, but the texts where he sees insoluble tensions can be explained in a more satisfying way. We shall limit ourselves to two examples which relate to the issue of the abolition and fulfillment of the law. In 1 Cor. 7.19 Paul says ἡ περιτομή οὐδὲν ἐστὶν καὶ ἡ ἀκροβυστία οὐδὲν ἐστὶν, ἀλλὰ τήρησις ἐντολῶν θεοῦ (“circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God”). Räisänen argues that the statement is in tension with Paul’s parallel statements in Gal. 5.6 and 6.15.⁵ Indeed, the assertion smacks of Paul’s “conservative” and “almost “legalistic” stance in 1 Corinthians. Räisänen concludes that 1 Cor. 7.19 is “very much Jewish” and “very little specifically Christian.”⁶ Räisänen is entirely right to point out the difference between 1 Cor. 7.19 and Gal. 5.6 and 6.15, and he is also right to suggest that the different emphasis is due to the particular situation to which Paul is responding. However, his contention that this statement is closer to being Jewish than Christian is completely misleading. It would have been unthinkable for most Jews, including those of the diaspora, to exclude circumcision from the divine commandments. Instead, C. K. Barrett is correct when he says that this is one of the most radical statements that Paul makes about the law, for he now speaks of obeying God’s commandments without including circumcision among them!⁸ It is instructive to note that Paul in one verse displays the very tension on the law which Räisänen labels as contradictory. He speaks negatively of circumcision and excludes it from the commandments of God, and yet he speaks positively of obeying the commandments. It is highly

improbable that Paul would be unaware of this tension, especially when it occurs in a single verse. The same point could be made regarding Gal. 5.14.⁹ It is unlikely that when Paul speaks of fulfilling the law through love of neighbor that he has forgotten his emphasis on liberation from law in the rest of the letter. In particular, it is improbable that Paul would have regarded the statement in Gal. 5.3, which threatens those who desire to obey the whole law, as in conflict with his statement in Gal. 5.14, especially since the statements are separated by only a few verses.¹⁰

The Developmental View

Several other scholars have also seen contradictions or tensions in Paul's statements on the law, but they can be distinguished from the previous position because the contradictions are not discernible *in the same letter*. Rather, the contradictions or tensions are detected between various letters, and thus a theory of development for the Pauline understanding of law is suggested. Those who espouse such a position invariably see the mature Pauline statement in Romans.¹¹

Appealing to the development of Paul's thought on the law is not an acceptable solution for at least three reasons.¹² 1. A suitable period for significant evolution in Paul's thinking about the law is lacking, this is even the case if one subscribes to an early date for Galatians,¹³ but it is especially the case if Galatians was written later.¹⁴ One should not forget that Paul had been involved in missionary work a number of years before any of his letters were written, and thus he had probably already hammered out the essence of his theology. 2. Räisänen is correct in pointing out that the developmental view does not really solve the problem, for problematical statements on the law are found *within* the same letters.¹⁵ 3. Finally, while there are noticeable differences between, say, Galatians and Romans, these should not be ascribed to a development in Paul. The varied nature of the response is explicable on the basis of the specific occasion which Paul was addressing. Paul's statements on the law in Galatians are more negative than in Romans because of the Judaizing opposition which was such a severe threat to the Galatian churches.¹⁶

A Critique of Legalism

Others claim that Paul's negative statements on the law refer to his

critique of *legalism*, while the law as it expresses the will of God is still binding and authoritative.¹⁷ This interpretation has received its major impetus from the magisterial commentary on Romans by C.E.B. Cranfield.¹⁸ Despite the reservations of some scholars, it is probable that Paul does wage a polemic against legalism in Galatians and Romans.¹⁹ Nevertheless, to limit Paul's critique of the law to legalism is not a *comprehensive* answer, even though legalism was a major problem that Paul faced.²⁰ A brief analysis of Gal. 3.15ff. indicates that Paul believed, in some sense, in the abolition of the Mosaic law. This does not imply that the Mosaic law was inherently legalistic, even though the Judaizers were distorting it and using it in a legalism way. Paul's point is that God intended the Mosaic covenant to be in force for only a certain period of salvation history. Two lines of evidence converge to support such a salvation-historical view.

Firstly, the chronological argument that Paul uses in Gal. 3.15ff: where he demonstrates the priority of the Abrahamic covenant over the Mosaic covenant, proves that he is not exclusively referring to *legalism*. He is also referring to the Sinai covenant. It was not legalism which was handed down on Mount Sinai, but the Mosaic law. Paul is employing a salvation-historical argument in Galatians 3 which indicates the priority of the Abrahamic covenant over the Mosaic covenant. Now that Messiah has arrived the Mosaic covenant is no longer in force (3.19). The temporal argument is underlined in 3.23-25. We were guarded under the law until faith came (πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἐλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν ὑπὸ νόμον ἐφρουρούμεθα ("before faith came, we were held in custody under the law," v. 23). The faith (τὴν πίστιν) Paul has in view must be specific faith in Jesus as Messiah. Abraham, after all, had faith in God during the OT era (Gal. 3.6f:), and so, presumably, did many others.

What Paul is referring to here is the faith which was revealed later in salvation history (εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι ("to the faith which is about to be revealed," v. 23), i.e. faith in Jesus as the Christ. The parallel between w. 24 and 25 demonstrates that Paul had this particular faith in Christ in mind, for he clearly uses the word faith (τῆς πίστεως) in v. 25 as a synonym for Χριστόν ("Christ") in v. 24. Verse 24 says that the law functioned as our παιδαγωγός²¹ . . . εἰς Χριστόν ("pedagogue until Christ"). The preposition εἰς should be translated temporally ("until") since the parallel statement in v. 25 employs the temporal idea of no longer (οὐκέτι) being under the child attendant. What Paul says here about the παιδαγωγός ("pedagogue") clearly applies

to the Mosaic law. Now that Christ has come believers are no longer under the law. Obviously, the Judaizers were still living under the Mosaic law. Thus, Paul's point is not that it is impossible to live under the Mosaic law, for that is precisely what the Judaizers were doing. His point is a salvation-historical one. Now that the new era has arrived in Christ one *should* not live under the Mosaic law.

Secondly, Paul's use of the word νόμος ("law") in Gal. 3.15ff also shows that his critique is not exclusively against legalism. The word νόμος ("law") in 3.17 must refer to the Mosaic law, and not just legalism because Paul says the law was instituted 430 years after the Abrahamic covenant. This law which came 430 years after the covenant with Abraham is, of course, the law of Moses. νόμος ("law") in 3.19 must also mean the Mosaic law, for Paul is certainly not asking in that verse: why then legalism? And in 3.21 the word νόμος ("law") again must refer to the Mosaic law since Paul says that the law is not contrary to promises of God, but he would never say this about legalism. Legalism is contrary to the promises of God. In conclusion, νόμος ("law") in Gal. 3.15ff clearly refers to the Mosaic law, and therefore Paul's statements here relate to the law as a whole and not exclusively to legalism. When this second argument about the meaning of νόμος ("law") is combined with the first argument, i.e. that Paul is limiting the law to a certain period of salvation history, then, the conclusion seems to follow that Paul thought that the Mosaic law was abrogated in some sense. This view is further supported by 2 Cor. 3.4ff.; Rom. 6.14; 7.1-6; 10.4.²³

A New Torah

If the above point is granted, then Paul did teach the cessation of the Mosaic Torah. Can we locate his reason for doing so? Some scholars assert that within Rabbinic Judaism there existed the idea that when the Messianic Age arrived, the old Torah would cease.²⁴ Others emphasize the point that Paul viewed Jesus as the mediator of a new Torah.²⁵ But against the view of a cessation of the law in the Messianic age is the fact that nowhere does the Rabbinic literature clearly teach such a cessation. It merely indicates that a few rather peripheral commandments may be changed, and that a fuller and more accurate understanding of Torah will be realized.²⁶

It is also unlikely that Paul saw the sayings and example of Jesus as a new law, the Torah of Christ. This is not to deny that the words of

Jesus were authoritative for Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 7.10f.; 9.14). What is being questioned is that the words of Jesus constituted a new Torah which replaced the old Torah. The first argument against this is the fact that Paul appeals so seldom to the Jesus traditions; this is particularly evident when one compares Paul's citations of the Old Testament with his citations of the words of Jesus. That Paul cites the OT very often is clear, but the indisputable quotations from the words of Jesus are in comparison remarkably few. Thus, it seems unlikely that the words of Jesus constituted a new law for Paul. Secondly, the "law of Christ" in Gal. 6.2 does not refer to the teaching of Jesus.²⁷ Indeed, Paul nowhere in the letter appeals to the words of Jesus, and if the words of Jesus were a new law, then the letter to the Galatians would seem to be precisely the place where Paul would make this clear, for he could have said the Sinai Torah is abolished, but the words of Jesus are a new law for the Christian. In the same way, the "law of Christ" in 1 Cor. 9.21 does not refer back clearly to the citations from Jesus in 1 Cor. 7.10 and 9.14²⁸

Similar to the preceding view is the suggestion that Paul believed in the abolition of the *Sinai-Torah*, while upholding the continuing validity of the *Zion Torah*.²⁹ The Achilles' heel of this theory is that there is no evidence in the OT that the new covenant (Jer. 31.31ff) would contain a *different* law from the old one.³⁰ Nor is it clear that the law proceeding from Zion (Isa. 2.1ff.; Mic. 4.1ff) was understood as a new Torah, which cancels the Mosaic Torah. Thus, M. Kalusche's judgment that the Zion Torah is a "*Phantom*" is correct.³¹ It also cannot be demonstrated that when Paul speaks of fulfilling the law or of the "law of Christ" that he has the *Zion Torah* in mind. For example, in Rom. 13.8-10 the commandments that Paul says are fulfilled through love are found in the *Mosaic law*, and there is no indication that these commandments somehow belong to a Zion Torah which is to be distinguished from the Sinai Torah.³²

The Abolition of Torah

Alternatively, some scholars who stress the abolition of Torah in Paul contend that the positive statements on fulfilling Torah in Paul do not indicate that external commandments are still binding for the Christians.³³ They emphasize instead that the believer naturally fulfills God's will by the power of the Spirit, and that "law" is for Paul counterproductive to authentic Christian experience. Probably the

best defense of this view is found in an article by S. Westerholm, who presents the following arguments:³⁴ 1. When Paul says Christians are not under law (Rom. 6.14; 1 Cor. 9.20, etc.), he means that Christians are not under any obligation or constraint to do or observe what the law commands. 2. That Paul thought the law did not have to be obeyed is clear from his attitude toward food laws (Rom. 14.14, 20; cf. Leviticus 11; Deut. 14.3-21), and his stance toward observing festival days and the Sabbath (Rom. 14.5; Gal. 4.10). 3. Even though the phrase “everything is lawful” in 1 Cor. 6.12 and 10.23 is not a full description of Pauline ethics, Paul’s qualifying explanation shows that he avoids speaking of any obligation upon the Christian to do what the law demands. 4. The Christian cannot concretely discover God’s will in the law, but must discover it by giving himself to God (Rom. 12.1-2; Phil. 1.9f.), by testing what is excellent, and by the renewal of the mind. 5. Paul does speak of fulfilling the law, but the point here is not that one is bound to fulfill the concrete demands of the law; rather, such obedience is the natural result of life in the Spirit. Furthermore, Paul usually distinguishes between “doing” the law and “fulfilling” it; the latter more indirect way of expressing obedience is preferable for Paul.

The preceding points relate to Paul’s attitude toward the OT law, but Westerholm proceeds to draw wider implications for NT ethics as a whole. He argues that externally binding commands of any sort are not compatible with Pauline ethics. External commands, according to Romans 5-7, provoke sin. Thus, for Paul there is no “ready formula for the discovery of the will of God.”³⁵ He does concede that there are “concrete instructions,” but such instructions must be distinguished from “statutory formulation.”³⁶

Before we examine the more specific issue of Westerholm’s analysis of the role of the law in Pauline ethics, a few comments should be made about his conclusions regarding Pauline ethics as a whole. Although Westerholm rightly stresses the role of the Spirit, and the importance of the believer’s testing and proving the will of God, he wrongly downplays the place of external commandments in Pauline ethics. I. Both W. Schrage and T.J. Deidun have demonstrated conclusively that concrete external commandments are still binding for Paul,³⁷ for the Pauline parenthesis shows that he is not content with simply saying that God wants a person to be committed fully to him. Instead, Paul demands that this obedience be expressed concretely.

1 Thess. 4.1-8 shows that Paul can speak specifically of appropriate and inappropriate sexual ethics for believers. 1 Thess. 4.6 and 4.8 also make it very clear that Paul did not think his exhortations were a matter of his own opinion since the one resisting his directions was rejecting God and would experience the vengeance of the Lord.

2. Westerholm is certainly right that Paul did not have a casuistic ethic, i.e. a specific answer for every situation. Paul did think Christians had a renewed mind which would enable them to perceive the most appropriate response to each situation. Nevertheless, just because Paul did not legislate for *every* situation, it does not follow that he had no moral norms or external commands for *any* situation. For instance, apparently the Corinthian community did not feel led by the Spirit to discipline the incestuous brother in 1 Corinthians 5. Nevertheless, Paul makes it very clear that the behavior of the individual and the community's response to the individual are wrong. This seems to be a clear case of imposing an external command on believers. Paul's instructions on divorce and remarriage (1 Cor. 7.10ff) also make it clear that he did not shrink from giving external commands. 3. Finally, there is no evidence in Paul that the Spirit apart from the external word provides the norm from within for the Christian.³⁸ Rather, there is no necessary polarity between life in the Spirit and external demands. The Spirit and the Word work in harmony for Paul (Gal. 3.2; Rom.10.16-17).³⁹ In 1 Cor. 6.18-19 Paul commands the Corinthians to flee πορνεία, but in the same context he speaks of the presence of the Spirit.

Thus, Westerholm's generalizing conclusions on Pauline ethics are unconvincing. But are his particular statements on the relationship of the Mosaic law to ethics more accurate? Although this issue is more difficult, his arguments are not conclusive here either. 1. What Paul means when he says Christians are not under law (1 Cor. 9.21; Rom. 6.14; Gal. 3.23; cf. 3.25; 4.3-5) will be explained shortly, but he does not mean that all OT commands are unbinding and matters of *adiaphora*. The commandments cited from the decalogue in Rom 13.9 illustrate that these commandments are still externally binding for the Christian. To be sure, they cannot be fulfilled apart from love, but love cannot be manifested apart from the commandments either (cf. Gal. 5.14), i.e. no one can claim to be practicing love and be involved in adultery at the same time. In 1 Cor. 14.34 Paul supports his restriction on the women at Corinth by appealing to the OT.⁴⁰

Clearly, he sees the OT as possessing an external and binding authority in this particular situation.

2. Westerholm rightly cites texts which show that Paul was indifferent about some OT laws (cf. Rom.14.14, 20; Gal. 4.9-10), and concludes that the OT law is not authoritative for Paul. Nevertheless, all his citations prove is that *some* of the OT law was not binding for Paul. I shall return to this point below. 3. The phrase πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν (“all things are lawful for me”) in 1 Cor. 6.12 and 10.23 seems to indicate that Paul’s stance toward the law was lax, but the precise phrase is probably a citation of the opponents’ argument.⁴¹ What is more pertinent, moreover, is the context of that statement. Paul is not baldly agreeing that “all things are lawful”; rather, he is speaking of *adiaphora*.⁴² Paul certainly does not think that “all things are lawful” because in this very context he forbids πορνεία (“sexual immorality”). 4. Westerholm’s distinction between “doing” and “fulfilling” the law is tenuous. If Paul is speaking of Christian obedience in Rom. 2.25-29,⁴³ then he uses the verbs πράσσειν (“to do”), φυλάσσειν (“to guard”), and τελεῖν (“to keep”) to describe that obedience. 5. Lastly, while the claim that believers naturally fulfill the claims of the law by the Spirit has an element of truth, it is not sufficiently nuanced. For if Paul thought that believers would naturally obey the entire law by the Spirit, then why did he give any commands at all? Paul must have believed that concrete parenesis, and yes even binding and obligatory statements (1 Cor. 7.10ff) were necessary for Christians. And that they were even necessary for Christians who were progressing well in the faith is indicated by 1 Thess. 4.1-8. Thus one should not conclude that parenesis is only intended for weaker Christians.

3. *Liberation from the Law in Paul*

But if the Sinai covenant has been abolished, as was argued above *contra* Cranfield, then how can the above criticisms of Westerholm stand? Here it is crucial to make a very important distinction. When Paul says that Christians are no longer under law (Gal. 3.23-25; 4.4S, 21; 1 Cor. 9.20; Rom. 6.14-15), that they are released from the law through the death of Christ (Rom. 7.1-6), that the law was an interim period in salvation history (Gal. 3.15ff), that the Mosaic διακονία is impermanent and has come to an end (2 Cor. 3.7ff; cf. Rom.10.4) he means that the Mosaic law in terms of the Mosaic *covenant* has

ceased.⁴⁴ He does not intend to rule out authoritative ethical commands from the Mosaic law. On the contrary, as we have seen, he appeals authoritatively to it. Thus, Paul is making a salvation-historical point. The Mosaic *covenant* was intended by God to be in force for a certain period of salvation history (Gal. 3.15ff; 2 Cor. 3.7ff), but it was always subsidiary to the covenant with Abraham, for the promise to bless all people would only become a reality through the promise to Abraham and the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3.8, 16; cf. Gen. 12.3; 18.18-19; 22.18; 26.4; 28.14).

What does it mean, though, to say that the Mosaic *covenant* is abolished, and yet the ethical commands from the same law are binding? The insights of the “new perspective” on Paul⁴⁵ should be included at this point. It has already been noted that Paul contended that Gentile Christians did *not* have to obey the entire OT law, but what is remarkable is that the laws which Paul specifically excludes, as Sanders and Dunn have pointed out, focus on circumcision (Gal. 2.3ff.; 5.2ff.; 6.15; 1 Cor. 7.19; Rom. 2.25-29; 4.9-12; Phil. 3.3), food laws (Gal. 2.11ff.; Romans 14-15; 1 Corinthians 8-10), and the observance of certain days (Gal. 4.10; Rom. 14.5f.; cf. Col. 2.16f.).⁴⁶ Now it is precisely these practices that separated Jews from Gentiles in the Greco-Roman world. It is well known that these particular practices were the object of scorn and curiosity in the Greco-Roman world, and that they distinguished the Jews from the Gentiles.⁴⁷ For Paul the *Mosaic covenant* was of such a character that it separated Jews and Gentiles. The promise to bless all nations which was contained in the OT was to be fulfilled in and through the Abrahamic covenant, not through the Mosaic covenant. Of course, for Paul this did not mean that the Mosaic covenant was evil; instead, the Mosaic covenant had only a temporary role in salvation history.

To sum up: Paul spoke against particular ritual practices in the Mosaic covenant which separated the Jews from the Gentiles because it was these practices which uniquely characterized that covenant, and uniquely characterized the Jews.⁴⁸ Now that Christ the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3.16) had arrived and had taken upon himself the curse of the law (Gal. 3.13) the Mosaic covenant was no longer in force for those who had believed in Christ. The new era had dawned, and the blessings of the new age were now available to *all* nations.

But if the above explanation is correct, then why does Paul speak of the condemnation of the law, of sin being provoked by the law, of sin increasing because of the law, and of the believer dying to the law through the death of Christ (Gal. 2.15ff; 3.10-13,19, 22; Rom. 5.20; 7.1-25; 1 Cor. 15.56; 2 Cor. 3.7ff:)? These texts seem to imply that the dissolution of the law is necessary because through the law sin is provided with a bridgehead and even increases in its power. This would also suggest that the problem with the Mosaic law was not only cultural and ethnic, i.e. that it created a distinction between Jews and Gentiles, but the law also had an intrinsic problem, namely that because of sin it ended up producing more unrighteousness. Therefore, one could infer, as Westerholm seems to, that the law as a whole must be abolished in order to counter sin. Furthermore, Paul's statement about the law producing transgressions in Gal. 3.19 must refer to more than just transgressions in the ritual sphere, but it must also include transgressions in the moral sphere as well (cf. Rom. 5.20; 7.7ff). And this would suggest that it is improper to limit the dissolution of the Mosaic covenant to the particular ritual practices which distinguish Jews from Gentiles. It would seem to prove that the *whole* law is abolished now that Christ has come (see Gal. 3.15-17; 4.1-7), not just the ritual aspect of the Mosaic law.

The above objections can be satisfactorily answered. Doubtless Paul sees a close relationship between the law and sin, but he never sees a problem with the law per se (Rom 7.12, 14; Gal. 3.21). The problem is with the flesh or with sin which use the law to produce sin (Rom. 7.8,11,14,17-18, 24). Thus, when Paul speaks of release from the law (Rom. 7.6) he is not implying that all external law is counterproductive for Christians. The point is that the person in the flesh *cannot* obey the law of God (Rom. 7.14-25; 8.5-8). The problem is not with the law, but with sin and the flesh. So the necessity of freedom from the law which Paul speaks of must be carefully explained. Believers need freedom from the law in *this sense* because they cannot obey it, because they are in slavery to sin. However, in the new age the power of the Spirit makes obedience to the law possible (Rom. 8.4). Thus, when Paul relates sin and the law to each other, he has the moral demands of the law in mind, and he does argue that the person who is in the flesh *cannot* obey the law and therefore is condemned (Gal. 3.10-13), but his solution is not to do away with all external commands. He asserts that Christians by the power of the Spirit can now fulfill what the law demands.⁴⁹

Thus, Paul had at least two things in mind when he spoke of the dissolution of the Mosaic covenant. The nature of that covenant was such that it divided Jews from Gentiles, and thus the covenant was intrinsically nationalistic. With the arrival of Christ the time of particularism was over and now the universal blessing promised to Abraham was available for all nations. But Paul conjoins with this another thought, namely, the idea that those under the law are under a curse (Gal. 3.1x13), that to be under the law is to be under sin (Gal. 3.21-25; Rom. 6.14-15; 7.1-6), and that the commandments of the law even provoke one to sin (Rom. 7.7ff.), and that the power of sin is found in the law (1 Cor. 15.56). Paul is still using a salvation-historical argument here, for in his mind obedience to the law was simply impossible for those who did not have the Spirit, who were dominated by the flesh (Rom. 8.5-8). But Paul strains to make it clear in Rom. 7.7ff. that he sees no intrinsic problem with the content of the law. The commandment is still from God; the problem is the lack of power *to do* what God has commanded.

Thus, Paul can speak of being liberated from the law in two senses. 1. It can signify liberation from the Mosaic covenant which contains rites that are particularly Jewish and therefore leads to a separation between Jews and Gentiles. 2. It can also signify liberation from the power of sin which uses the law as a bridgehead. But now that the age of the Spirit has arrived and Christ has broken the power of sin by his death, the age of slavery to sin has ended. Paul does not carefully distinguish these two notions of liberation from the Mosaic law because they were inextricably intertwined in the era before the descent of the Spirit, the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, and the death and resurrection of Christ. Before the new age arrived the Mosaic covenant erected barriers between Jews and Gentiles by requiring Gentiles to be circumcised, to observe certain days, and to keep the food laws. But it was also true that before the advent of the Spirit those living in the old age and in the flesh could not keep the law. Nevertheless, liberation from the dominion of the law in the second sense does not mean that the external commands of the law are irrelevant for the believer. Instead, it means that believers now by the power of the Spirit are enabled to obey the law (Rom. 8.4) which formerly they could not obey.⁵⁰

A qualification should be added here. Paul is speaking about what is largely or generally true in the old era and the new era.⁵¹ The

example of Abraham suggests that he would not deny that the Spirit brought some to new life in the OT, nor would he deny that by faith some obeyed the law. Paul's point is that generally speaking people failed to obey the law in the OT era. Thus, the extent of obedience to the law in the new covenant is greater because the Spirit has been poured out to all nations.

What I am suggesting, of course, is that there is a distinction in Paul's mind between the ritual and moral law. The dissolution of the Mosaic covenant also implies the abolition of practices, such as circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws, which separated Jews from Gentiles. On the other hand, Paul still thinks that the universal moral norms contained in the Mosaic laws are authoritative for the church. Believer by faith in the power of the Spirit can obey the moral norms of the OT law. Thus, when Paul says believers are not under the law, he is not saying that they are liberated from all moral norms. Such a distinction between the moral and ritual law is still held by some scholars,⁵² but it is rejected by most. First, evidence that supports such a distinction will be presented, and secondly, the objections to such a distinction will be handled.

4. A Defense of the Moral Ritual Distinction in Paul

That Paul made a distinction between the moral and ritual law seems to be indicated by Rom. 13.8-10. Paul clearly did not require circumcision (2.25-29; 4.9-12), the observance of certain days (14.5f.), or the observance of food laws (14.1-23) in Romans. But he does call believers to fulfill the law through love (13.8-10; cf. Gal. 5.14). Love, furthermore, cannot be separated from the specific commandments which Paul cites from the decalogue in 13.9, namely, the prohibitions against adultery, murder, stealing, and coveting.⁵³ It is easy to see that these commandments are in a different category from circumcision, food laws, and the observance of days. The commandments cited here refer to matters which would be acknowledged universally as moral norms. It is not the case that Paul thinks these demands are normative only because they are loving; rather, there is a mutual and dialectical relationship between love and the demands cited here. No one can claim to be loving and yet at the same time be guilty of murder, adultery, stealing, and coveting. But these external commands are necessary so that one can measure, at

least to some extent, what love is. Love without specific and concrete moral explication easily becomes a plastic notion which is molded in the way each person desires. Adherence to these commands is not a sufficient indication that one is living in love, but no one can claim to be living in love and at the same time transgress these commandments. Thus, love of necessity involves the observance of these commandments, but these commandments are not a comprehensive description of what love is.⁵⁴ One can do very noble things, after all, and love may be lacking (1 Cor. 13.1-3).⁵⁵

Rom. 8.4 speaks of fulfilling the *δικαίωμα* (“ordinance”) of the law, and here Paul stresses that this is possible by the power of the Spirit. Käsemann argues, on the other hand, that Paul is not speaking of the fulfillment of the Torah in the new age, although Paul’s citation from tradition has wrongly given many interpreters this impression. Instead, according to Käsemann, christology is the focus of the passage, and it is the objective work of the Spirit and the cross which is predominant in this text.⁵⁶ The most straightforward reading of the text, however, suggests otherwise. The cross-work of Christ and the gift of the Spirit enable the believer to fulfill the “legal claim” (*δικαίωμα*, “ordinance”) of the laws Käsemann rightly sees that Paul is referring to the objective work on the cross here, but this objective work of Christ is linked directly to concrete obedience to the requirement of the law. Paul’s point in this passage is that those in the Spirit manifest the work of the Spirit in their lives. As 8.13 says, “they put to death the practices of the body by the Spirit.”

It has often been pointed out that *δικαίωμα* (“ordinance”) is singular in Rom. 8.4, indicating that Paul is referring to the law as a unity.⁵⁸ This is correct. The idea that Paul is referring exclusively to love by the singular of *δικαίωμα* (“ordinance”) has no support in the context, however,⁵⁹ for the context instead suggests that Paul is referring to the fulfillment of the same law which he describes as holy, righteous and good in Rom. 7.12. He is referring to the same law which the person in the flesh cannot obey (Rom. 7.14-25), and here Paul is not merely thinking of inability to obey the law of love. He specifically cites the inability to obey the tenth commandment (Rom. 7.7). Thus, when Paul speaks of fulfilling the *δικαίωμα* (“ordinance”) of the law in Rom. 8.4, he is referring to the fulfillment of the moral norms contained in the Mosaic law. It was the inability to fulfill these moral norms which produced frustration and despair (so Rom. 7.14-25). The singular *δικαίωμα* (“ordinance”) in 8.4 shows

that Paul is thinking of the moral norms of the law as a unity, and the context indicates that the moral norms of the law are fulfilled by the power of the Spirit, not by human effort.⁶⁰

Paul's use of δικαίωμα ("ordinance") elsewhere in Romans confirms our interpretation.⁶¹ In Rom.1.32 Paul says Gentiles know the , i.e. they know what God requires, but they delight in evil anyway. The δικαίωμα τοῦ θεοῦ ("the ordinance of God") which the Gentiles have knowledge of cannot refer to the ritual law of the OT, for Gentiles were not universally aware of the ritual requirements contained in the OT law. The preceding verses indicate that the δικαίωμα ("ordinance") of God which Paul refers to here concerns moral norms which the Gentiles disobeyed (Rom. 2.26-31).⁶²

In addition, Paul says in Rom. 2.26 that the Gentiles keep τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου "the ordinances of God"). The use of the plural of δικαίωμα ("ordinance") does not suggest the fulfillment of a different law from that described in Rom. 8.4, for as we have already pointed out the singular in 8.4 is used to show that the moral norms of the law could be fulfilled as a unity by the power of the Spirit. The singular is not used in 8.4 in order to deny the plurality of God's commandments. The plural of δικαίωμα ("ordinance") is used in 2.26 to itemize various commandments of the law which are fulfilled by Gentiles.

What is especially pertinent is that the fulfillment of the law Paul has in mind can only refer to a fulfillment of the moral norms located in the OT law, for he specifically ascribes this keeping of the law to the *uncircumcised* Gentile (Rom. 2.26-27). Obviously, then, the obedience to the law described here does not include the ritual law. Paul has limited obedience of the law here to the moral norms which are contained in that law.

This interpretation is strengthened by the context of Romans 2. Paul charges the Jews with specific violations of the law in 2.21-22, namely, stealing, adultery, and robbing temples. All of these sins relate to a violation of the moral law. Jews who possess the covenant sign of circumcision (2.25) and who possess the Torah (2.17-20), but who do not practice (πράσσει) the law (2.25) are contrasted with Gentiles who keep the law, even though they are not circumcised (2.26-27).

But if the Jews are circumcised, then what does Paul mean when he speaks of the necessity of their practicing the rest of the law in 2.25? Clearly, he means that Jews who are circumcised but fail to

observe the *moral norms* of the law are condemned (2.25-29). Gentiles, on the other hand, who do not possess the ritual law, but who obey the moral law are justified.

It is not possible to examine all the issues which arise in such an interpretation of Rom. 2.25-29 here, although this has been examined briefly in another article.⁶³ Nevertheless, a few comments are necessary here. There is no evidence that Paul is speaking hypothetically of Gentile obedience here, nor is it probable that he is referring to Gentiles who are justified apart from Christ.⁶⁵ Instead, Paul is speaking of Gentile Christians in this passage. The Gentile who is truly circumcised and who is truly a Jew (2.28-29) has been transformed by the Spirit of God. Thus the γράμμα-πνεῦμα (“letter-Spirit”) antithesis in 2.29 indicates a contrast between the old and new aeon.⁶⁷ The two other passages where Paul employs the γράμμα-πνεῦμα (“letter-Spirit”) antithesis certainly contrast the letter and the Holy Spirit (Rom. 7.6; 2 Cor. 3.6). So too, in Rom. 2.28-29 it is most probable that by πνεύματι (“Spirit”) Paul is referring to the Holy Spirit who has so transformed Gentiles that they can obey the moral norms of the OT law.

Paul’s assertion in 1 Cor. 7.19 also implies a distinction between the validity of the moral and ritual law. Paul is not calling for obedience to ritual law, for he says circumcision is nothing! But that does not mean that obedience to any of the commandments is irrelevant and unimportant. Observance of the commandments of God is still demanded. Commandments (ἐντολῶν) probably include a reference to the words of Jesus in 7.10, but that the commandments in addition refer to the moral norms contained in the OT law is also probable.⁶⁸ Paul’s use of the word supports this interpretation. In Rom. 7.8-13 ἐντολή (“commandment”) is used six times, and it most probably refers to the tenth commandment of the Decalogue.⁶⁹ In Rom. 13.9 Paul says τις ἑτέρα ἐντολή is also summed up in love, and he has just finished citing other commandments from the Mosaic law. Of course, Pauline authorship of Ephesians is disputed, but it is instructive to note that in Eph. 2.15 and 6.2 the word ἐντολή (“commandment”) is again used to refer to a commandment contained in the OT law. Paul can use the word to refer to his own authority as well (1 Cor. 14.37), but the usage of the word suggests that in 1 Cor. 7.19 the OT law, although it may not be exclusively in view, is at least included when Paul speaks of the commandments of God.⁷⁰ And the content of the verse shows that it is the moral norms of the law which Paul had in mind.

Despite the above, few scholars today believe that there is a moral-ritual distinction in Paul's view of the law. Three main objections are usually raised to such a distinction. 1. There is no evidence for such a distinction in Paul, and Paul would have made such a distinction *explicit*. Indeed, Paul's failure to cite the moral norms of the law in an authoritative manner proves that none of the law was binding for him.⁷¹ 2. There is no evidence in Judaism for such divisions in the law.⁷² 3. Such a distinction would inevitably produce a complex casuistry of trying to distinguish between moral and ritual law.⁷³

Evidence has already been presented above concerning the first objection, which suggests that there was an *implicit* distinction between the moral norms of the law and the ritual commandments contained therein. Perhaps R Gundry is correct in stating that Paul does not bother to defend this distinction because he did not think anyone would question the validity of it.⁷⁴

This first objection, that Paul does not use the law to establish binding moral norms, is developed in depth in an article by A. Lindemann.⁷⁵ Lindemann focuses upon 1 Corinthians, contending that Paul does not base his ethic upon Torah commands. For example, in 5.1-13 Paul rebukes the Corinthians for their response to the incestuous relationship, but he fails to ground his advice on the OT law. So too in 6.1-11 and 6.12-20 Paul opposes litigation and *πορνεία*, and yet he fails to use the Torah to support his case, and even renounces the Jewish model of litigation in 6.1-11. Paul's exaltation of singleness and his stance against divorce counter Gen. 2.18 and Deut. 24.1ff respectively. Furthermore, Jewish tradition viewed marriage as an obligation. The permission to eat food offered to idols in chs. 8-10 violates the OT law with respect to eating unclean foods. Paul does not base his view on women's adornment in 11.2-16 on the OT, but his argument is based on what is fitting, which is a Stoic viewpoint, not one from the OT law. 14.33b-36 can probably be dismissed as a later interpolation.

Lindemann builds an effective case against the conception that Torah is normative for Paul. Nevertheless, his analysis is not ultimately compelling. Many of Lindemann's arguments are arguments from silence—for example, since Paul does not base his view on the OT law, it cannot have been a moral norm for him. Such an interpretation would only be successful if it could be demonstrated

that Paul never uses the OT law as a moral norm, and the evidence I have presented above suggests otherwise.

In addition, the specific arguments Lindemann presents from 1 Corinthians do not prove his thesis. That Paul does not cite an OT law against incest in 1 Corinthians 5 is hardly surprising since he assumes that the Corinthians will agree with him on this point, and even Gentiles hold the same opinion (5.1). Paul's failure to abide by the Jewish model in litigation and the Jewish expectation regarding marriage is irrelevant unless one wants to argue that Paul equated Jewish tradition with the OT law. Gen. 2.18 does not *demand* marriage of all, and Paul is aware that not all are destined or gifted for singleness (1 Cor. 7.6-7). Moreover, Paul does not contradict Deut. 24.1ff in his words on divorce in 1 Corinthians 7, for the former passage does not demand divorce; instead, it permits it and regulates it when it occurs.⁷⁶ The failure to adhere to the food laws in 1 Corinthians 8-10 is not surprising, for these are clearly part of the ritual law.

That Paul does not cite the OT when he forbids πορνεία ("sexual immorality") in 1 Cor. 6.12-20 is instructive, but it would only support Lindemann's thesis if Paul never cites Torah as authoritative. Even in 1 Corinthians this is not the case. For example, Paul forbids idolatry in 1 Cor. 10.1-13 with a clear reference to the OT. Lindemann thinks that Paul's rejection of idolatry is presupposed and his real ground for his rejection of idolatry comes in 10.21, namely from participation with Christ.⁷⁷ But why does Paul presuppose idolatry is wrong? He thinks idolatry is wrong because it is forbidden in no uncertain terms in the OT law. And it is illegitimate to say that since Paul argues from a relationship with Christ in 10.21 that any argument from the OT is therefore irrelevant. Paul uses *both* arguments to support his case. In addition, Paul explicitly cites the OT law to buttress his admonition in 1 Cor. 14.34, showing he did use the OT law in ethical decisions. I have already argued that the evidence for an interpolation here is not conclusive?⁷⁸

It should also be said that Lindemann's analysis rightly shows that the moral norms of the OT law were not the most crucial element of Paul's ethical view. What was more important was the affections, i.e. the motives of the heart which manifested themselves in concrete actions (Gal. 5.14; Rom. 13.8-10). Paul's focus upon the inward motive explains why he highlights and gives pre-eminence to love. In

other words, universal moral norms from the OT law were genuinely a *part* of Pauline ethics, but they were by no means the *heart* of Pauline ethics.⁷⁹ Love is the center of Christian ethics, but it does not exclude commandments and obligations. Love without commandments can become a mystical and sentimental fog.

The second objection, that a distinction between moral and ritual law is not found in Judaism, is not compelling either. It is interesting that no distinction between various parts of the law can be found in Judaism, but is this decisive for Paul? What segment of Judaism would have agreed with his stance on circumcision? And it has been argued elsewhere that Paul departs from Judaism in his insistence that the law must be obeyed perfectly by non-believers in order to merit salvation.⁸⁰ Of course, Paul views such perfect obedience as impossible, and thus he claims that one can only be saved by believing in Christ. The tests examined above seem to indicate that Paul did make such a distinction, and so he apparently differed from Judaism on this matter.

Does such a distinction lead to hopeless and insoluble casuistry? For example, is idolatry part of the moral or ritual law? There are surely some places of overlap and difficulty, for all generalizations cover up and obscure some areas of difficulty. But we need to recall that the whole of Pauline ethics is not found in this distinction, nor is it even the heart of Pauline ethics, although it is part of Pauline ethics. On the other hand, the difficulty in broadly distinguishing between moral and ritual law is overrated. Idolatry, for example, is surely part of the moral law for Paul (1 Cor. 10.7)⁸¹ Some moral norms impinge on the cultural or ritual sphere of life, and when they do, then a moral norm applies to that particular cultural situation.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, Paul believed in the abolition of the Mosaic covenant because the new age of Messiah had arrived. The dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles was torn down. Furthermore, with the advent of the new age believers are no longer under law, which means that believers are freed from the dominion of sin, a dominion which was inevitable for the person dominated by the flesh. In the new era the ritual demands of the Mosaic covenant are no longer binding, for that would suggest that the promise has been limited to

only one nation. Nevertheless, the moral demands of the Mosaic law are not abolished for the believer; instead, they can now be fulfilled by the one who walks in the power of the Spirit.

NOTES

1. Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (1711) 3.66.
2. For a survey of recent research see D J. Moo, "Paul and the Law in the Last Ten Years," *SJT* 40 (1987): 287-307. O. Kuss ("Nomos bei Paulus," *MThZ* 17 [1966]: 177-210) has a helpful summary of older literature on Paul and the law.
3. H. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1983; reprint, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986). He sees inconsistencies in many other areas of the Pauline theology of the law as well. A J. M. Wedderburn ("Article Review: *Paul and the Law*," *SJT* 38 [1985]: 613-22) thinks Räisänen's case is convincing.
4. J. D. G. Dunn, "Works of Law and the Curse of the Law," *NTS* 31 (1985): 523-24; cf. here the comments of P. Stuhlmacher, "Paul's Understanding of the Law in the Letter to the Romans," *SEA* 80 (1985): 102-103.
5. Räisänen *Paul and the Law*, 68.
6. *Ibid.*
7. See J. Nolland, "Uncircumcised Proselytes?" *JSJ* 12 (1981): 173-94; contra N. J. McEleney, "Conversion, Circumcision and the Law," *NTS* 20 (1974): 319-41.
8. C. K Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 169; cf. G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 312-14.
9. Cf. S. Westerholm's critique of Räisänen on this verse ("On Fulfilling the Whole Law (Gal. 5.14)," *SEA* 51-52 [1986-87]: 229-37).
10. See U. Wilckens, "Zur Entwicklung des paulinischen Gesetzverständnisses," *NTS* 28 (1982): 174-75, F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 241; H. D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 274-76.
11. In Galatians, according to H. Hübner (*Law in Paul's Thought* [ET: Edinburgh; T. & T. Clark, 1984], 148-49), Paul rejects the law totally, but in Romans he rejects only the misuse and abuse of the law. J. W. Drane perceives Paul's view on the law in Galatians to be close to libertinism, while he veers dangerously close to legalism in 1 Corinthians. In 2 Corinthians,

however, Paul is on the road to a balanced statement between these two extremes, and this balanced statement finds its definitive expression in Romans (*Paul Libertine or Legalist? A Study of the Theology of the Major Pauline Epistles* [London: SPCK, 1975]). Cf. F. Hahn who maintains that for Paul the law only relates to Jews in Galatia, but in Romans Paul now sees the law relating to all, both Jews and Gentiles (“Das Gesetzesverständnis im Römer- und Galaterbrief,” *ZNW* 67 [1976]: 59-60). Wilckens (“Entwicklung”) also sees Paul as coming to a more balanced position on the law from Galatians to Romans.

12. For a critique of the notion of development in Pauline theology an older article by J. Lowe is still helpful (“An Examination of Attempts to Detect Developments in St. Paul’s Theology,” *JTS* 42 [1941]: 129-42). See also Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 7-10.

13. So Drane, *Paul*, pp.140-43.

14. So Hübner (*Law in Paul’s Thought*, 63) who, despite this, says there was at least a significant period of time between Galatians and Romans. See J. Hall, “Paul, the Lawyer on the Law,” *Journal of Law and Religion* 3 (1985): 370-76, for a critique of Hübner.

15. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 9.

16. The identity of the adversaries in Galatia continues to be debated. For a recent treatment see B. H. Brinsmead, *Galatians-Dialogical Response to Opponents* (Chico: Scholars, 1982). That the opponents were Judaizers still seems most probable. So e.g. F. F. Bruce, “Galatian Problems 3: The ‘Other’ Gospel,” *BJRL* 53 (1970-71): 253-71.

17. C. E. B. Cranfield, “St Paul and the Law,” *SJT* 17 (1964): 55, 60-66; idem, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975-1979), 853, 857-61; C. F. D. Moule, “Obligation in the Ethic of Paul,” *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox* (ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, and R. R. Niebuhr; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 391-93; C. H. Cosgrove, “The Mosaic Law Teaches Faith: A Study in Galatians 3,” *WTJ* 41 (1978-79): 146-64; D. P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 65-120, 199-204.

18. See note above.

19. R. H. Gundry (“Grace, Works and Staying Saved in Paul,” *Bib* 66 [1985]: 1-38) convincingly argues that legalism was a problem which Paul opposed.

20. Cf. Räisänen (*Paul and the Law*, 42-50) and D. J. Moo (“‘Law’, ‘Works of the Law’, and ‘Legalism in Paul,’” *WTJ* 45 [1983]: 85-88) for a critique of Cranfield’s thesis.

21. For recent study on παιδαγωγός (“pedagogue”) in Galatians 3 see R. H. Longenecker, “Pedagogical Nature of Law in Galatians 3.19-4:7,” *JETS* 25 (1982): 53-61; L. Belleville, “Structural Analysis and the Pauline Concept of Law in

Galatians 3.21-4.11,” *JSNT* 26 (1986): 53-78; D. J. Lull, “‘The Law Was Our Pedagogue’: A Study in Galatians 3.19-25,” *JBL* 105 (1986): 481-98; N. H. Young, “*Paidagogos*: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor,” *NovT* 29 (1987): 150-74.

22. On 2 Cor. 3.4ff as teaching abolition of Mosaic law, see Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 44-46; C. K Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 119-21; V. P. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1984): 207, 233-34; R. Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (ET: Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 84, 86-88. T. E. Provençe (“Who is Sufficient for These Things?” An Exegesis of 2 Corinthians ii 15-iii 18,” *NovT* 24 [1982]: 6268) says the γράμμα (“letter”) in 2 Corinthians 3 refers to the perverted law, and thus no abolition of the law per se is intended. Provençe rightly stresses that the law is good and that γράμμα to the perversion of the law. Nevertheless, as Provençe himself says elsewhere (pp. 68, 77-78) the γράμμα (“letter”) is inextricably linked with the old aeon. Obedience to the law in that age was usually lacking. Why was this so? Because one can fulfill the law only through the enablement of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the gift of the *new age*. That Paul was arguing for the end of the Mosaic era is supported by 2 Cor. 3.11, where he specifically speaks of that covenant as being abolished (καταργούμενον, “being brought to an end”) in contrast to the new covenant which is abiding (μένον, “remaining”).

23. The literature on Rom. 10.4 is immense, but if Paul clearly asserts the abolition of the Mosaic law elsewhere one does not have to decide the issue upon the basis of one verse. R. Badenas’s recent attempt (*Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10.4 in Pauline Perspective* [JSNTS 10; Sheffield: JSOT, 1985]) to prove that τέλος cannot mean “end” in Rom. 10.4 is not convincing.

24. A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (ET: reprint; New York: Seabury, 1968): 187-92; H. J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* (ET: Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 171ff.; K. Stendahl, “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 84; J. A. Fitzmyer, “Saint Paul and the Law,” in *A Companion to Paul* (ed. M. J. Taylor; New York: Alba, 1975), 74-75.

25. C. H. Dodd, “ENNOMOS XPISTOY” *Studia Paulina in honorem J. de Zwaan* (Haarlem: Bohn, 1953), 96-110; W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Paul’s Theology* (London: SPCK, 1948), 136-46; idem, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 352-66; R. N. Longenecker, *Paul, Apostle of Liberty* (reprint; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1964),

126-32,183-96; A. Feuillet, "Loi de Dieu, Loi du Christ et Loi de l'Esprit d'après Les Epîtres Pauliniennes," *NovT* 22 (1980): 45ff.

26. For a careful sifting of the evidence see W. D. Davies, *Torah in the Messianic Age* (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1952). Against the Messianic age doctrine see P. Schäfer, "Die Torah der messianischen Zeit," *ZNW* 65 (1974): 27-42; Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 77-82, 236-39; H. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 137; E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 479-80.

27. So V. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 51-55; T. J. Deidun, *New Covenant Morality in Paul* (AnBib, 89; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), 172-73; cf. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 77-82, 245-48. Contra Räisänen it is possible that Paul may have relied on Jesus traditions in Gal. 5.14; Rom. 13.8-10; 14.14. Nevertheless, the number of sayings is still not large enough for the words of Jesus to be a *new law* (so W. Schrage, *Die konkreten Einzelgebote in der paulinischen Paränese* [Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1961], 238-49).

28. Furnish rightly points out (*Theology*, 61) that Paul's major point here is simply to indicate that freedom from the law does not involve libertinism; cf. Fee, *First Corinthians*, 430, n. 44.

29. H. Gese, *Essays on Biblical Theology* (ET: Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981), 80-92; P. Stuhlmacher, "The Law as a Topic of Biblical Theology," in *Reconciliation, Law, and Righteousness: Essays in Biblical Theology* (ET: Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 110-33, esp. 114ff.; cf. O. Hofius, "Das Gesetz des Mose and das Gesetz Christi," *ZThK* 80 (1983): 262-86, esp. 282ff.

30. M. Kalusche, "Das Gesetz als Thema biblischer Theologie: Anmerkungen zu einem Entwurf Peter Stuhlmachers," *ZNW* 77 (1986): 200-201. Kalusche also points out (pp. 202-203) that evidence for the Zion Torah cannot be substantiated in Judaism or the teaching of Jesus. Cf. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 239-40, see esp., notes 56-59.

31. Kalusche, "Anmerkungen," 200.

32. J. A. Sanders ("Torah and Paul," in *God's Christ and His People: Studies in Honor of Nils Alstrup Dahl* [ed. J. Jervell and W. Meeks; Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977], 132-40) stresses that the law for Paul was primarily haggadah, i.e. the story of God's redemptive act in Christ rather than halakhah, the formulation of laws or ethical judgments for specific situations; cf. also his article on "Torah and Christ," *Int* 29 (1975): 372-90. It would be generally agreed that the redemption accomplished by Christ was central for Paul, but Sanders's thesis does not clarify sufficiently the precise role of the OT law in Pauline ethics. S. Westerholm also rightly points out ("Torah, Nomos, and Law: A Question of Meaning," SR 15

[1986]: 327-36) that the word νόμος (“law”) in Paul normally refers to the obligations and sanctions contained in the Mosaic law, and thus Sanders’s exposition of the word νόμος (“law”) in Paul is misleading in that it suggests that Paul by the word *Torah* primarily had the idea of ‘story’ in mind. B. Reicke (“Paulus über das Gesetz,” *TZ* 41 [1985]: 237-57) thinks the prophetic function of the Torah is still in force, but the convicting foundation of the Torah ceases for an individual when one turns to Christ. The above distinction is helpful, but more needs to be said on the precise role that the OT law plays in NT ethics.

33. S. R. Westerholm, “Letter and Spirit: The Foundation of Pauline Ethics,” *NTS* 30 (1984): 229-48; idem, “The Law and the ‘Just Man’ (1 Tim 1, 3-11),” *ST* 36 (1982): 79-95; idem, “Fulfilling the Whole Law,” 229-37; F. F. Bruce, “Paul and the Law of Moses,” *BJRL* 57 (1975): 259-79; Belleville, “Under Law,” 53-78, esp. 70-71.

34. Westerholm, “Letter and Spirit,” see esp.): 242ff.

35. Ibid. p. 245.

36. Ibid.

37. Schrage, *Einzelgebote*; Deidun, *New Covenant*, esp. 188-217.

38. Contra F. Lang (“Gesetz and Bund bei Paulus,” *Rechtfertigung: Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann zum 70. Geburtstag* [ed. J. Friedrich, W. Pöhlmann, & P. Stuhlmacher; Tübingen: Mohr, 1976], 317); E. Käsemann (*Commentary on Romans* [ET: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 216).

39. So Schrage, *Einzelgebote*, 90; Deidun, *New Covenant*, 208-15.

40. The text is often suspected of being an interpolation (see the recent discussion by Fee, *First Corinthians*, 699ff), but contra Fee *et al.* the evidence for an interpolation is not impressive. Such a theory should only be embraced as a last resort. The manuscript evidence overwhelmingly favors the inclusion of the verses. Fee claims (p. 700) that no one would insert the text after v. 40 because all agree that the placement of the text is logical here. But such a statement assumes what cannot, in fact, be proven. Some copyists may not have thought the text was logically placed, and they may not have understood it as well as Fee thinks they would have.

41. H. Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Hermeneia: Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 108-109; Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 144-45; C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 196; Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 251-52.

42. Schrage, *Einzelgebote*, 57-58; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 252.

43. See section 4 below for a defense of this view.

44. Cf. Moo, “Works of the Law,” 88-89.

45. To borrow J. D. G. Dunn’s term (“The New Perspective on Paul,” *BJRL* 65 [1983]: 95-122).

46. Dunn, "New Perspective," 107-10, 114-15; idem, "Works of Law," 524ff.; E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 100-03. Nevertheless, Dunn's attempt to limit "works of law" to these identity markers is not successful. For a more convincing explanation see Moo, "Works of Law," 90-99; cf. H. Räisänen's ("Galatians 2.16 and Paul's Break with Judaism," *NTS* 31 [1985]: 543-53) criticism of Dunn.

47. M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Vol. I, 1976, Vol. II, 1980) see sections 195, 258, 281, 301.

48. On this point see K. Kertelge, "Gesetz und Freiheit im Galaterbrief," *NTS* 30 (1984): 391; N. T. Wright, "The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith," *TynB* 29 (1978): 61-78; M. Barth, *Ephesians* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 290-91; C. Haufe, "Die Stellung des Paulus zum Gesetz," *TLZ* 91 (1966), 173.

49. For the view that significant ethical righteousness is now possible in Christ see B. J. Byrne, "Living out the Righteousness of God: The Contribution of Rom. 6.1-8.13 to an Understanding of Paul's Ethical Presuppositions," *CBQ* 43 (1981): 557-81; A. van Dülmen, *Die Theologie des Gesetzes bei Paulus* (SBM, 5; Stuttgart; Kathohsches Bibelwerk, 1968), 140-52, 158-68, 185-204.

50. Some scholars seem to think any emphasis on works or obedience is unPauline and even legalistic. Paul does oppose justification that is merited by works, but he does not thereby suggest that works are unimportant for the Christian. Works are the essential fruit, result, or evidence of new life. If the evidence of works is lacking, the reality of the presence of new life is called into question. For the evidential character of works "in Paul see Gundry, "Grace," 1-12, 3435; van Dülmen, *Die Theologie des Gesetses*, 172-76, 225.

51. Cf. Provence who says ("Who is Sufficient?" 68), "The dispensation of the γράμμα had a propensity toward death (iii 7). Nevertheless, there were some during that age who, motivated by the Spirit were made alive."

52. G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 510; Cranfield, "St. Paul and the Law," 49-52, 66; Gundry, "Grace," 7; C. F. D. Moule, "Obligation," 397; D. P. Fuller, "Paul and the Works of the Law," *WTJ* 38 (1975): 38-39; Haufe, "Paulus zum Gesetz," 171-78; J. Hempel, "On the Problem of the Law in the Old and New Testaments," *ATR* 34 (1952): 229-31. For the view that such a distinction was implicit in the teaching of Jesus see K. Berger, *Die Gesetzauslegung Jesu: Ihr historischer Hintergrund im Judentum und im Alten Testament (Teil I: Markus und Parallelen)* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972) pp.171ff.; R. H. Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus Teachings* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 102-104; D. Wenham,

“Jesus and the Law: An Exegesis of Matthew 5.17-20,” *Themelios* 4 (1979): 5.

53. Contra Furnish, *Theology*, 199-200; A. Lindemann, “Die biblischen Toragebote und die paulinische Ethik,” in *Studien zum Text and our Ethik des Neuen Testaments* (ed. W. Schrage; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986), 242-43, and 263, n. 108. H. Ridderbos (*Paul*, p. 282) goes to the other extreme when he says, “The law does not find its criterion in love, but just the reverse, the requirement of love is so imperative because in it lies the summary of the law.”

54. Cranfield perceptively says (“St. Paul and the Law,” 67) that we “need the particular commandments into which the law breaks down the general obligation of love, to save us from the sentimentality and self-deception to which we all are prone.” (Cf. Schrage, *Einzelgebote*, 267-71). Deidun (*New Covenant*, 171) rightly says that love cannot be limited “to the fulfillment of calculated ethical demands.” He goes on to say, “But if love goes *beyond* calculable obligation, it does not go *around*.”

55. The criterion of love is not a comprehensive explanation of Pauline ethics. Paul’s prohibitions on the basis of “nature” (φύσις) demonstrate this (Rom. 1.26-27; 1 Cor. 11.14). Natural law is not an infallible criterion for Paul, but it is a criterion he uses upon occasion. It is hardly evident how his prohibitions in Rom. 1.26-27 and 1 Cor. 11.14 are a violation of the law of love.

56. *Romans*, 215-19; cf. also L. E. Keck, “The Law and ‘The Law of Sin and Death’ (Rom 8.1-4): Reflections on the Spirit and Ethics in Paul,” in *The Divine Helmsman: Studies on God’s Control of Human Events Presented to Lou H. Silberman* (ed. J. L. Crenshaw and S. Sandmel; New York: Ktav, 1980), 51-53.

57. Cf. R. W. Thompson, “How is the Law Fulfilled in Us? An Interpretation of Rom 8.4,” *Louvain Studies* 11 (1986): 32.

58. Cf. G. Schrenk, “δικαίωμα,” *TDNT*, 2:221; Cranfield, *Romans*, 384.

59. *Contra* Thompson, “Interpretation of Rom 8.4,” 32-33.

60. Note also the passive of πληρωθῆ (“is fulfilled”) in 8.4. For a fuller discussion of the passage see Deidun, *New Covenant*, 72-75; Thompson, “Interpretation of Rom 8.4,” 33-40; Cranfield, *Romans*, 383-85.

61. The use of δικαίωμα (“ordinance”) in Rom. 5.16, 18 is unusual and is commonly attributed to rhetorical considerations. So Keck, “The Law,” 52; Cranfield, *Romans*, 287 n. 2; Käsemann, *Romans*, 154.

62. Cf. here Hofius, “Das Gesetz Christi,” 266.

63. T. R. Schreiner, “Paul and Perfect Obedience to the Law: An Evaluation of the View of E. P. Sanders,” *WTJ* 47 (1985): 268-78.

64. *Contra* C. A. Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Armstrong, 1900), 98.

65. K. R. Snodgrass, "Justification by Grace—To the Doers: An Analysis of the Place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul," *NTS* 32 (1986): 72-93.

66. So e.g., Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:151-53, 172-76. The interpretation of Rom. 2.14-15 is also included with this passage by many interpreters. I hope to examine Romans 2 in more detail in a future article.

67. On the letter-spirit contrast in Paul see B. Schneider, "Letter and Spirit," *CBQ* 15 (1953): 163-207; E. Käsemann, "Letter and Spirit," *New Testament Questions of Today* (ET: London: SCM, 1969), 260-85; P. Richardson, "Spirit and Letter: A Foundation for Hermeneutics," *EvQ* 45 (1973): SOS-18; Westerholm, "Letter and Spirit," 229-48; Provenca, "Who is Sufficient," 62-

68. Deidun, *New Covenant*, 203-07; Wilckens, "Entwicklung," 159.

69. This would be supported by those who see a reference to the giving of law to Israel in Rom. 7.7-12. So D. J. Moo, "Israel and Paul in Romans 7.7-12," *NTS* 32 (1986): 122-35; G. Schrenk, "ἐντολή," *TDNT*, 2:550-51; van Dülmen, *Die Theologie des Gesetzes*, 101-102, 109-10; E. Stauffer, "ἐγώ," *TDNT*, 2:358-62.

70. That ἐντολή almost always refers to OT commandments is argued by Schrenk ("ἐντολή," *TDNT*, 2:550-53), but contra Schrenk ἐντολή ("commandment") is surely original in 1 Cor. 14.37.

71. Bruce, "Paul and the Law," 266; van Dülmen, *Die Theologie des Gesetzes*, 130ff. Moo, "Works of Law," 84-85; D. Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1981), 696.

72. E. E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1979), 1:360-65; M. Hengel, *The Son of God* (ET: Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 67-68, n. 123; M. S. Enslin, *The Ethics of Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1957), 85; Longenecker, *Apostle of Liberty*, 144-45; Guthrie, *Theology*, 696; Käsemann, *Romans*, 215; R. J. Banks, *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 109.

73. Cf. Sanders who says (*Paul, the Law*, 101) that distinguishing between moral and ceremonial law in the case of idolatry would be extremely difficult.

4. Gundry, "Grace," 7-8,

75. Lindemann, "Toragebote," 242-65.

76. So P. C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 304-305; W. A. Heth and G. J. Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce: The Problem with the Evangelical Consensus* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 106-10.

77. Lindemann, "Die Toragebote," 256.

78. See note 40 above.

79. Cf. Schrage, *Einzelgebote* 267. However, Schrage is in agreement with some of Lindemann's arguments (pp. 237-38) although his discussion (228-36) of the role of the OT law in Pauline ethics is carefully nuanced.

80. "Paul and Perfect Obedience," 245-78; "Is Perfect Obedience to the Law Possible? A Re-examination of Galatians 3.10," *JETS* 27 (1984): 151-60.

81. The Sabbath, of course, is one of the most difficult issues. Careful scholars disagree on the Pauline and theological significance of the Sabbath. I think it is best characterized as part of the ritual law in the light of Col. 2.16-17. See W. Rordorf, *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church* (London: SCM, 1968); P. K. Jewett, *The Lord's Day: A Theological Guide to the Christian Day of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971); S. Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1977) R. T. Beckwith and W. Stott, *This is the Day: The Biblical Doctrine of the Christian Sunday in Its Jewish and Early Christian Setting* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1978); *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation* (ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982).