

A STUDY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL'S
APPROACH TO THE LAW IN GALATIANS
CHAPTERS 2 AND 3

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CONTENTS

Chapter 1. Introduction	6
Chapter 2. The Galatian Crisis	10
2.1 Paul's concern for Galatians	10
2.2 Influences on Jewish Attitudes toward Gentiles	12
2.3 Imposed Herodian Gentile Dynasty	13
2.4 Influences at Antioch	14
2.5 Factional Jewish Antipathy toward Paul	15
2.6 Jerusalem's Opposition to Paul	16
Chapter 3. Paul and Circumcision of Gentiles	18
3.1 Circumcision	18
3.2 Evidence for Circumcision of Proselytised Gentiles	22
Chapter 4. Paul's Use of the Law	26
4.1 Paul's Attitude to the Law (Galatians 2:16)	29
4.2 Works-Righteousness	34
4.3 Faith versus Works-Righteousness	35
4.4 Qumran Evidence of Works-Righteousness	36
4.5 The Importance of Justification by Faith	39
4.6 The Curse of the Law	44
4.7 Galatians 3: The Law as a Schoolmaster	49
Chapter 5. Conclusions	53
Bibliography	55

ABSTRACT

The need for this research grew out of the challenges faced by the writer in his involvement with Christian and Jewish perceptions of Paul and the impassioned response his writing on the law seemed to evoke.

This paper investigates Galatians chapters 2 and 3 in an attempt to derive a slightly different reading of Paul's treatment of the law to that which permeates traditional Christian and Jewish theology. It briefly assesses historical sensitivities that may well have provoked the defense of Jewish identity discernable in covenantal nomism, the very issues Paul was attempting to address for Gentile covenant membership in light of Christ. Confined to this challenge, he commits to expositing the law's purpose, drawing conclusions on works-righteousness, faith and the inevitable outcome for Christian Gentile conformity to Jewish covenantal obligations.

The paper assesses claims that Qumran had a works-righteousness policy representative of a universal Jewish system of works-righteousness, the significance of faith through the lens of Habakkuk 2:4, and Paul's attempt at expounding the law as the means of a 'schoolmaster' until the advent of Christ.

The discussion confines the Galatian argument to that which was originally contended, the insistence on Gentile conformity to Jewish covenantal nomism and not the commonly held Pauline affront to Jewish law in an attempt to correct universal Jewish apostasy. This assists in helping to relieve Paul of the persona of him rejecting every element of his national heritage visible in his 'alleged' polemic against the law.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Following World War 2 and the deplorable plague of Nazi anti-Semitism, Christian theologians began to critically examine New Testament exegesis and theology considered by many scholars to be conducive to coaching similar anti-Jewish attitudes. The main focus of this revision, and therefore considered to be most influential in promoting anti-Jewish bias, were the writings of the Apostle Paul.¹

Underpinning the traditional view of Paul's antipathy to and departure from first-century Judaism is the antagonistic conclusions attributed to him. Fuelled by dissatisfaction with the legalistic practice of Jewish law, Paul is observed as converting from foundational Pharisaic dogmas to Christianity. As a result, he is commonly held as preaching against Judaism and Torah asserting that it was no longer the path to salvation for both Jew and Gentile. The resulting 'alleged' polemic against the law resulted in his abrogation of salvation by works-righteousness, provoking him to navigate a course from Judaism, a religion of particularism to Christian universalism. In so doing, he broke with the Jewish framework and principles of what he had commonly adhered to throughout his Pharisaic tutelage, preferring grace in light of Messiah's (Christ's) arrival.²

This characteristic Reformation view of Paul is summarised by German historian Adolph Harnack as delivering the Christian religion from Judaism with a Gospel which abolishes a religion of the law.³

The Apostle Paul is characterised by Jewish scholars and Rabbis as the epitome of evil against the Jewish people, their divine election and an enemy of the Torah of God.

¹ Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide, The Theological Roots to Anti-Semitism*, (New York: Seabury 1974), p. 95-107. Ruether concluded that the roots of Christian anti-Semitism have their origins in the writings of Paul and the New Testament. Like Ruether, James Parkes in his Ph.D. thesis on anti-Semitism concluded that it was *the total responsibility of the Christian Church for turning a normal xenophobia into the unique disease of anti-Semitism*. R. Everett, *Christianity without anti-Semitism: James Parkes and the Jewish Christian Encounter*, (Pergamon Press, 1993), p. 25.

² John J. Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 21-22.

³ Risto Santala, *Paul, the Man and the Teacher in Light of Jewish Sources* (Jerusalem: Karen Ahvah Meshihit, 1995), p. 78. Santala quotes Professor Gottlieb Klein from his book *Den Forsta Kristna Katekesen*. Gottlieb holds Harnack responsible for exaggerating Paul's agenda and therefore makes him a good example of one who makes hasty conclusions concerning areas poor in study. See also Gager, p. 21.

Seen by many as the patriarch of anti-Semitism he is frequently viewed as *Pharisaism's greatest enemy*,⁴ *a bitter and violent enemy of the Law*,⁵ a man calling for the *dissolution of Judaism*.⁶

Presenting a unique form of *Jew-hatred*,⁷ Paul is painted by Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks as creating a movement that *would become the primary source of anti-Semitism in history*.⁸

Chaim Lieberman, in appraising the controversial work of Jewish author Sholem Asch, lays much of the responsibility for modern and historical Jewish sufferings firmly at the feet of Paul. Terming him an enemy of Israel and Torah, he proclaims him to be a *falsifier of Judaism*. This aggressive fervour is clearly exemplified in Paul's alleged connection with Christian complicity with anti-Semitism. Lieberman states:

When in evil times Christians drag forth our Scrolls of the Law, dishonour them, rend them and burn them, it is owing to Paul, who taught them that the Torah is the quintessence of sin, its apotheosis.⁹

Even Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, writing in 1993, appears to concur with Lieberman, commenting that Paul was:

the architect of a Christian theology which deemed that the covenant between God and his people was now broken... Pauline theology demonstrates to the full how remote from and catastrophic to Judaism is the doctrine of a second choice, a new election... No doctrine has cost more Jewish lives.¹⁰

This powerful assortment of religious attitudes is just the proverbial 'tip of the iceberg' with many more references to support Jewish vitriolic caricatures of Paul and his theology available. These insights have one common root – they all have their origins founded on biblical interpretation (or misinterpretation), whether Christian perceptions

⁴ Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, (2nd ed), (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), I, 221.

⁵ Abba Hillel Silver, *Where Judaism Differed: An Inquiry into the Distinctiveness of Judaism* (New York: Macmillan, 1956), p. 113.

⁶ Paul Goodman, *History of the Jews*, revised by Israel Cohen (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1951), p.38.

⁷ Kaufmann Kohler, 'Saul of Tarsus', *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, XI, 85. "Anti-Semitism within Christianity originated with Paul." Ralf Biermann, 'The False Apostle Paul', *The Jewish Times*. 27 April: 2004.

⁸ Jonathan Sacks, *One People? Tradition, Modernity, and Jewish Unity* (London: Littman Library, 1993), p. 206-207.

⁹ Chaim Lieberman, *The Christianity of Sholem Asch: An Appraisal from the Jewish Viewpoint* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), p. 87-88.

¹⁰ Sacks, p. 206-207.

created by historical exegesis or Jewish acuties fuelled by this interpretation made visible by the attitudes of some Christian groups.

Hans Hübner in comparing Paul's attitude to the Law in Galatians and Romans states:

Anyone reading Galatians up to and including 5:12...would be unlikely on his own to imagine that the same author would also write the Law is holy and the commandment is holy just and good (Romans 7:12).¹¹

And Gager comments:

The claim that Paul preached against the law and Israel stands as the central feature in the traditional view of Paul.¹²

This historical and abstruse reading of Pauline theology gives licence to the perception of Paul as an antinomian being responsible for advocating Christian polemic against the law.

The notion of Paul recoiling from any and every aspect of Jewish law is dependent on his portrayal being an accurate and fair representation of his theology and motive. If any evidence can be presented to the contrary, then uncertainty and doubt concerning Paul's alleged intent and culpability enter the theological debate thus motivating scholarly investigation. The importance of possible outcomes could not be overstated.

My thesis is that an appraisal of Paul's treatment of the law in Galatians, purported to be his most vehement polemic against the law, uncovers an alternative reading of his antagonism toward the law which otherwise translates to him rejecting Torah, his heritage, and Jewish identity. This work seeks to briefly examine the extant cultural and religious milieu in which Paul operated showing that immediate history mitigated a protective approach to covenantal nomism, the sectarian practice of Proselyte circumcision and, in some cases, a natural aversion and suspicion of Gentiles. It examines Paul's use of the law in chapters 2 and 3, its purpose in guiding and invoking chastisement (curses) on covenant keeping Israel, while confining his argument to confronting factional contention concerning the compulsion of Gentile Christian circumcision and covenantal practices without insinuating the allegation that all Judaism was committed to a works-righteousness philosophy. While promoting and

¹¹ Hans Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1984), p. 36.

¹² Gager, p. 27.

distinguishing faith and justification from ‘works of the law’, Paul commands its re-contextualisation as it pertains to the advent of Christ.

As Gager comments regarding the discipline of confining Paul’s argument:

...what changed was not his [Paul’s] view of the law as such, or of the law in relation to Israel, but only as it concerned Gentiles.¹³

Many exegetical approaches to Galatians have lacked this discipline and, as a result, the traditional polemical view of his treatment of the law has been overstated, over-realised and eisegetically expounded. As a consequence, I hope to approach the exegesis of these few chapters with the same attitude of N. T. Wright:

The basic task of exegesis is to address, as a whole and in parts, the historical questions: What was the author saying to the readers; and why? These questions ultimately demand an answer at the broadest level...?¹⁴

This approach contributes to relieving Galatians, purported to be Paul’s most vitriolic assault on Torah, of its hostile reputation, permitting an alternative portrait of Paul’s motive to develop. It is important to note that this research limits Paul’s argument to Galatians and makes no attempt to use the work completed here to support and uphold conclusions in support of Paul’s treatment of the law elsewhere.

¹³ Gager, p. 27.

¹⁴ N. T. Wright, 'The Letter to the Galatians: Exegesis and Theology', *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology*, J. B. Green and M. Turner, eds, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 207.

CHAPTER 2

THE GALATIAN CRISIS

2.1 Paul's concern for the Galatians

Samuel Sandmel remarks:

The angry tone of Galatians emerges not because Judaism...had infected a church of Paul's own creation, but because Christian Judaising had infected it...the bitter controversies reflected in his Epistles are not with Jews but with [Christian] Judaisers.¹⁵

The passion and urgency with which Paul composes Galatians implies that the issues relating to the incident at Antioch were not only recent, but the threats of their re-occurrence in Galatia were either current or imminent (3:1). The immediacy in which he raises his concerns and the sequence in which he writes testifies to this fact. Paul's great concern for Galatian Christians manifests itself a mere eight verses into the first chapter. His palpable anxiety is demonstrated through his urgent counsel, warning of the existence of another gospel (1:8-9), one unlike that which Paul received from God (1:11-12) thereby threatening their liberty in Christ (2:2).

As a prelude to introducing his assessment of the law, the real threat to the fledgling church, Paul uses an incident in Jerusalem and Antioch to support his cause. Reflecting on his visit with Titus to Jerusalem for the purpose of disclosing the Gospel he was preaching to the nations (2:2), the adjunct of Gentile nomistic observance and circumcision naturally arose. Within this context Paul wrote: *But not even Titus, the one with me, a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised* (2:3). A predicament as Paul states, was promoted by *false brothers* whose motivation was *to enslave* Gentile believers in Jesus (2:4).

Citing a related problem occurring in Antioch, he raises an exemplar in support of his protest. Peter, having no issues in uniting and participating in fellowship meals with Gentile believers, had a change of heart when subjected to duress from Jerusalem's emissaries.¹⁶ Once unified with his Gentile brothers in Christ he now withdrew and separated himself, *fearing those of the circumcision* (2:12). It was this that Paul opposed to his face, finding fault (kataginōskō) with his behaviour and, by implication,

¹⁵ Samuel Sandmel, *The Genius of Paul. A Study in History*, (New York: Schocken, 1970), p. 112.

¹⁶ For a brief summary concerning the agitator's identity: Stephen Anthony Cummins, *Paul and the Crucified Christ in Antioch; Maccabean Martyrdom and Galatians 1 and 2*, (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 96; n.5.6.

his reasoning (2:11) and poor example which led other Jews, such as Barnabas, astray (2:13). Reprimanding Peter for his hypocritical behaviour, Paul laments him and Barnabas, stating, *they did not walk uprightly with the truth of the gospel* (2:14). Addressing Peter before all those present, Paul questions in 2:14, *If you, being a Jew, live as a Gentile, and not as the Jews, why do you compel the nations (Gentiles) to Judaize* (MKJV: live as Jews)? The issue was serious! The inference was that Jerusalem's believers in Christ were apparently advocating Gentile circumcision to further qualify New Covenant membership and, presumably, since those Gentile believers in Antioch were not circumcised, they required their separation.¹⁷ Faith in Christ was not sufficient for a united fellowship of Jew and Gentile. The same issue arises among Galatian Christians. Utilising compelled circumcision (2:8) and Jew-Gentile division at fellowship meals (2:11-13), Paul addresses those *foolish Galatians* (3:1) who having received the Spirit were now attempting to perfect themselves in the flesh (3:3), an activity Paul calls works of the law (3:5). Since Paul does not attempt to broaden his definition of this ineffectual practice as it pertains to the law, the inference is that this same problem was prevalent in Galatia. Merging the observance of days, months, times and years (4:9-11) with circumcision (5:1-3, 6), Paul labels this attitude of heart as 'desiring to be in renewed bondage' (4:9; 5:1). Paul recognised the existence of a real threat to unity, the truth proclaimed in Christ and, by implication, the gospel which included the equality of humanity in Jesus (Galatians 3:28). Sanders comments on the magnitude of the problem:

If the churches in Galatia abandoned him [Paul] on this score, the whole of his missionary work since the Antioch incident would be put in jeopardy...¹⁸

This specific issue of covenantal markers is Paul's first attempt at dealing with Jewish self-understanding and covenantal law (what Sanders calls covenantal nomism).¹⁹

¹⁷ Dunn agrees that the issue in Galatians was not dietary laws but circumcision. There is also good reason to view table practices as covenant obligation concerns like that of circumcision. Although Paul highlights secondary issues relating to the observance of days, months, and times of the year (4:10), these may or may not have been promoted by 'Judaizers'. James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law Studies in Mark and Galatians*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), p. 258. However, the issue regarding Peter's withdrawal from Gentile Christians over dietary issues may have had its roots in the failure to circumcise Gentiles rendering them excluded from the covenant and therefore excluded from fellowship meals.

¹⁸ Dunn, p. 259.

¹⁹ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, (London: SCM, 1977), p. 75, 420, 544.

CHAPTER 2

ESTABLISHING THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF PAUL

2.2 Influences on Jewish Attitudes toward Gentiles

Hellenisation

The apartheid management of Gentiles, especially in temple practice, is not surprising given repeated Gentile occupation of Jerusalem, the outlawing of Jewish customs and instalment of puppet kings by unsympathetic regimes. Torah commands concerning the exclusion of particular nations were rigorously upheld and extended.²⁰

The enhancement of Hellenisation, a type of cultural syncretism, aided by the establishment of thirty military and commercial cities²¹ enticed the upper class to a superior Greek way of life. This process permeated the upper echelons of conquered states, where Hellenisation had its greatest influence.²² Jewish tradition and culture was eroded and a hybrid society was promoted. The proposed changes were so thorough and calamitous for the Jews that Gowen comments:

Never before had the changes been so radical, and maybe this was the first time the implications of cultural change for one's religion were clearly recognised by very many of those involved in it.²³

Greek custom allowed for lay worshippers once purified, whether foreign or native, to enter temples within the Greek world. The temple in Jerusalem had no such liberality. A permanent prohibition on foreigners was enforced and no means of purification would qualify their entry. This separation of Jew and non-Jew was a source of agitation for Antiochus IV (1 Maccabees 1:44-50) which also fuelled contention between Jewish inhabitants of differing opinions on assimilation.²⁴

²⁰ The exclusion of foreigners may well have been an extension of Deuteronomy 23:3, Ammonites and Moabites were forbidden to enter the congregation of Jehovah. Deuteronomy 12:29-30; 23:3.

²¹ Donald Gowen, *Bridge Between the Testaments: A Reappraisal of Judaism from the Exile to the Birth of Christianity*, (Pennsylvania: Pickwick Press, 1980), p. 69.

²² Gowen, p. 71.

²³ Gowen, p. 72.

²⁴ Albert Baumgarten, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation*, (New York: Brill, 1997), p. 82.

Nostalgic, religious Jews preserving their heritage clashed with ‘nominal’ adherents wishing to relinquish control to their oppressors. These internal Jewish struggles provoked by Hellenisation triggered further fragmentation within the community and between Jews and their autocrats. These partitions sparked violence as well as pedagogic reforms championed by leaders of their respective party. Foreign imposition would have left a lasting legacy on religious attitudes toward Gentiles. Though scholars often treat the subsequent Roman occupation and control of Palestine in 63 BCE as a significant seminal moment watershed in Jewish history, the reality, claims Schwartz, is that little changed from the first century BCE (neither did pious attitudes toward Gentiles). Schwartz comments:

...little changed for the first 140 years of Roman rule. The Romans were more interventionist than their Hellenistic predecessors and interfered with the Jewish ruling classes, but allowed the Jews to remain a more or less autonomous nation with Jerusalem temple and Torah central to Jewish life. This changed only in the later first century CE.²⁵

2.3 Imposed Herodian Dynasty

The imposed puppet dynasty of Herod further frustrated Jewish attitudes toward foreigners. Herod, a Gentile Roman Senate established sovereign, was a judaised Idumaeon who considered himself to be king of the Jews. Not being of priestly descent and lacking political influence held by this position, he enacted policies reflecting the concerns of non-Judaeon Jews and Jews of the diaspora. No doubt, this created tension between indigenous Judeans (protectorates and hub of Jewish tradition) and those of the diaspora. Reforming the high priesthood, Herod abandoned family accession to this office, making it a sovereign appointment, a legacy in existence until 70 CE. He therefore regained political influence in this leading position and, as a consequence, was able to exert greater control in both affairs of religion and state.²⁶ The religious sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees, unlike their clerical positions held within the state during the first century BCE, received no role in state affairs, but were relegated to the margins

²⁵ Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 BCE TO 640 CE*. (Princeton University Press: 2001), p. 43.

²⁶ Schwartz, p 44-46. During Herod's reign, five of the seven appointed high priests were non-Judean. They included a Babylonian, a Galilean and several from Egypt. The two who were indigenous Judeans included Aristobulus, Herod's brother-in-law. Schwartz believes this high priest recruitment from the diaspora suggests the desire to elicit closer relations with the diaspora. Perhaps motives include financial and political support owing to large Jewish populations still among the nations. Paul, also a diaspora Jew, may have aroused natural suspicion by the Judean elite.

of Jewish hierarchy, existing as *small organisations competing for the patronage of the royal women and high priests while vying with each other for a voice in temple affairs.*²⁷ This imposed system of regulation that was unsympathetic to Levitical law governing the priesthood and temple cult struck at the heart of religious Jewish life. No doubt, this, together with a Gentile puppet king (dynasty) of non-Davidic descent, assisted in conditioning Judaism's guardians to view with distaste any Gentile imposition on the integrity of Jewish tradition and centrality of Torah. Since Herod also favoured those among the diaspora for election to High Priest with faithfully committed Judean Jew candidates overlooked, Jerusalem's religious elite would certainly have been conditioned to view diaspora Jews with suspicion, of which Paul was one. It therefore follows that centuries of conditioning had resulted in colouring the attitude of Jerusalem's elite toward Gentiles and diaspora Jews especially when foreign rule was judged to be detrimental to religious values.

Intertestamental and Roman literature attest to unsympathetic attitudes toward Gentiles. Jubilees 15:16; 22:16 comments on Gentile lifestyle being abominable while Tacitus writes on Jewish hatred and enmity toward non-Jews being evident in their exclusion during Jewish fellowship meals (Tacitus 5:5).

2.4 Influences at Antioch

By the first century AD Antioch was the third most important city in the Roman Empire and a key commercial, administrative and political centre. This diverse population contained a considerable sized Jewish community.

At the time of writing Galatians chapter 2 there were mounting pressures as Caligula attempted to defile the temple (AD 40),²⁸ no doubt raising historical memories of Antiochus and associated religious persecution that were an affront to Jewish national identity.²⁹ This affront to Jewish religious culture and identity can only serve to bolster nomistic practices that uphold Jewish calling and identity.

²⁷ Schwartz, p. 46.

²⁸ Josephus; Ant. 18:272-274.

²⁹ During Greek tyranny under Antiochus, many preferred death rather than defile the holy covenant, adhering to dietary law, while those practising circumcision were executed (1 Maccabees 1:60-63). Similarities with Antiochan defilement of the temple would have instilled the same fears of being stripped of covenantal obligations, thus impacting their identity and relationship with God. Paul's focus on circumcision and dietary law would have elicited a protective reflex, one that would result in a predictable volatile response.

Apart from Caligula's temple edict, there is also Malalas' report (AD 40) that recorded Gentile mobs attacking Antiochene Jews, killing many and burning synagogues. This act of barbarism, especially when Jews were granted equal rights from the time of city founder Seleucus I Nicator, was bound to precipitate Jewish reactions of self-preservation. Roman incursions into the piety of temple affairs and Gentile attacks on Jews would have significantly escalated Jewish mistrust of their Gentile neighbours. Place Paul and Jew-Gentile unity in the midst of this environment of mistrust, hurt and suspicion and it would be surprising if Paul had not experienced Jewish anti-Gentile disposition.³⁰

Before Paul opened his mouth, put pen to paper, or attempted New Covenant exposition, his association with Gentiles and the re-working of Jewish customs and traditions made him a focus for imminent religious activism. Opposition was to be expected! His New Covenant perspective, Gentile inclusion and universal gospel was always going to be controversial, especially among the guardians of the faith in Jerusalem.

2.5 Factional Jewish Antipathy toward Paul

Central to understanding the climate into which Paul's theological argument was established is Jerusalem's suspicion of Gentiles and their perceived endeavours at devaluing the Jewish customary ordinances and law. Any strategy perceived to be set against Judaism's banners of Jewish identity and religious practice was bound to invite opposition.

Centuries of fighting to preserve nomistic protocols from foreign interlopers had left guardians of Judaism with a strong sense of nationalistic identity tied to covenantal markers. These sentinels of Jewish distinctiveness were to be safeguarded at any cost. It is with this strong Jewish nomistic conscience that Paul had to contend.

Within this first century Jewish cultural and religious interplay where various sectarian traditions existed, Seth Schwartz identifies core allegiances of Jewish identity. Summarising first century Palestinian Jewish identity as intertwined with God, Torah and Temple, he makes a conjectured reply to a hypothetical inquiry concerning core first century ideals: *We Jews don't worship the pagan gods...we rest every seventh*

³⁰ Cummins, p. 139-42.

*day...we abstain from certain foods.*³¹ These labels of religious observance epitomise the sacred and cultural identity of Palestinian Jewry, an illustration not too distant from modern self-assessments based on Israeli surveys.³² It stands to reason therefore that any first century contemporary Jew challenging these ideals would be opposed in the strongest terms. This is precisely what Paul is alleged to have done, resulting in a predictable hostile response that would set the tone for the rest of his ministry.

2.6 Jerusalem's Opposition to Paul

During Paul's visit to Jerusalem, Luke writes of the inhabitant's response:

And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs (Acts 21:21, MKJV).

This illustrates that circumcision as a covenantal obligation was greatly valued and protected by Asian Jews.³³ As James Dunn illustrates concerning the minimal commitment to God's covenant grace:

If an unbaptised Christian is for most of us a contradiction in terms, even more so was a Jew who did not practise the works of the law, circumcision, table regulations and Sabbath.³⁴

Paul's association with Gentiles led to Jerusalem's mistrust and their indictment of him for 'allegedly' preaching against the circumcision of Jews and the Mosaic ordinances.³⁵

³¹ Schwartz, p. 50.

³² Raphael Cohen-Almagor, 'Avoiding the Destruction of the Third Temple', *Jewish Studies*. Manchester University, (3 October, 2013). Recent Israeli surveys on the importance of Jewish customs in daily life. Bar Mitzvah 90%, celebration of biblical feasts 84%. Covenant observance is still considered highly important in Israeli Jewish society.

³³ The origin of these pilgrim Jews to Jerusalem is significant in that their accusations of Paul concerning Gentiles, circumcision and the Mosaic Law, are the issues with which Paul contends in Galatians (Asia Minor). The spread of hostility (based on alleged offences) from Asia to Jerusalem, or vice versa, demonstrates the pervading difficulties which Paul faced when attending Jerusalem to share his 'Gospel to the Gentiles' with the central council (Galatians 2:1-2).

³⁴ Protestant baptism as a sacrament does not make a follower of Christ a Christian (New Covenant member), but circumcision does qualify covenant membership for the Jew illustrating the significance of covenant law.

³⁵ Paul's experience in Jerusalem at the hands of his own people (Acts 21-22) is indicative of two pre-existent issues: 1) Many religious Jews viewed him as opposing the law, the temple cult, and betraying his own people; and, 2) Paul was integrating with Gentiles and teaching them they could be included into God's family without regard to the Mosaic Law. These two emotionally charged disputes remained problematic for both unbelieving Jews and some Christian Jews. When Paul is arrested and finally allowed to testify to his people from the barrack steps, the crowds listened intently. It was only when he mentions his witness to the Gentiles that the crowds incite his murder. Luke writes, *And he (Jesus) said*

This demonstrates that Paul was already being ostracised from the central position among his compatriots (Pharisaic instruction and membership), relegating him to the fringes of his community.

The main problem for many of his contemporaries, his New Covenant commission to Gentile communities, was evident in their rage at his declaration of his mission to the Gentiles. Whether their position was due to an oversight of Israel's commission to the nations (Genesis 12) or due to centuries of classical conditioning through Gentile persecution and imposed rule remains unanswerable. The fact that the Damascus Road experience led Paul to an expansionist philosophy concerning the Kingdom of God and Gentile inclusion in light of the New Covenant in Christ was bound to precipitate conflict with Jerusalem's elite. Combine this with the allegation that he was teaching the rejection of covenant nomism and the resulting antipathy was greatly predictable. It is within this religious and political milieu that Paul advanced his gospel of Christ. The tone of disquiet had been set and much of his message would have to compete with his alleged rejection of Judaism's nomistic observance and temple traditions. Rumour and inaccuracy fuelled opinions of Jerusalem's Jews which then spread through festival pilgrims infecting perceptions of Paul without considering his theological thinking.

unto me (Paul), Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live (Acts 22:21-22). The implication is that religious Jews, already possessing an innate disdain for Gentiles, a natural affront that most certainly continued in Jewish religious life, may well have been incorporated and propagated into Jewish Christian attitudes.

CHAPTER 3

PAUL AND CIRCUMCISION OF GENTILES

Paul's presence at the Jerusalem Synod on Gentile mission (2:2) was more a conference discussion on gospel propagation among Gentiles than a Jerusalem church council.³⁶ Paul identifies an anomalous incident in what should have been a dialogue within a normal course of events. A Jewish faction who were, in his opinion, false brothers (pseudadelphos), were surreptitiously smuggled (pareisaktos) into the proceedings (2:4). The immediacy and candour of his comment bears witness to the peculiarity of this occurrence, the legacy of which is demonstrated in Gentiles motivated to be circumcised (2:3; 5:3; 6:13).

Paul's language intimates that these 'false brothers' are not representative of the Jerusalem church council, but subversives propagating faith in Christ and circumcision.³⁷ This being the case, their religious opinion amounts to no more than a factional seditious involvement, a theological acumen clad with deceptive authority that was somehow adopted as spiritually relevant. It was an observation requiring preservation in the pursuance of an accurate exegesis.

Hübner believes it highly probable that Paul's initiation of the discussion concerning circumcision in relation to the Abrahamic Covenant was raised by believing Gentiles, possibly in response to religious agitators.³⁸ The majority consensus is that these envoys from James centred on a call for circumcision (Galatians 5:2-12; 6:12-13) and Torah observance (Galatians 4:21; 5:3; cf. 4:10; 6:13).³⁹

3.1 Circumcision

Speaking on Judaism's circumcision of Gentile believers, Paul uses the halakha of circumcision to counter this argument. Calling it a yoke of bondage and profiting nothing for those in Christ, Paul states: *For I testify again to every man that is*

³⁶ Hübner, p. 20.

³⁷ Hübner, p. 21. Based on Paul's own admission, Hübner believes that the 'extra-synodal opposition' as far as Paul was concerned, were reactionaries appealing to a past age doctrine of salvation. Failing to recognise the New Covenant era, they suppressed freedom and promoted the Abrahamic practice of circumcision among believing Gentiles (Genesis 17).

³⁸ Hübner, p. 16.

³⁹ John M. G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: Paul's Ethics in Galatians*, (UK: Regent College Publishing, 2005), p. 45-72.

circumcised, that he is a debtor to do all the law (Galatians 5:3). His negative reference to circumcision in light of Christ seems to solidify Paul's understanding that freedom in Christ means circumcision is no longer necessary for membership into God's covenant community.⁴⁰ However, it is impossible to isolate his rhetoric from the context and impose on Paul a diatribe calling for a ban on circumcision and therefore his poor view of the law.

His polemic in Galatians 5:2-3 with the circumcised obligated to keep the whole law and Christ profiting nothing applies to those whom, having entrusted themselves to the work of God in forgiving sin and circumcising the heart, now attach merit to circumcision of the foreskin as though adding to the work of Christ. A Gentile in such a position is returning to bondage described in previous verses, placing their trust in the inferior tokens of the flesh that were linked to nomistic obligations as opposed to the freedom from sin purchased through atoning sacrifice of Christ. Like 1 Corinthians 8-10 and Romans 14f where Paul does not reject halakha of dietary law but calls for forbearance and acceptance with those who keep them, Paul is not abrogating circumcision, but arguing for its inferiority when compared with the work of God in the Spirit. Circumcision achieves nothing when compared on the same meritorious scale as the one-off monumental work of Christ. The two are totally incomparable!

Paul, in fear of this privileged position being hijacked by Judaisers who suggest circumcision adds to the New Covenant (which itself promotes circumcision to a higher divine work of the heart), attempts to use biblical texts to clarify the position. By allegorising and contrasting Isaac and Ishmael, he appeals to Torah in support of his argument concerning Torah.⁴¹ Surely everyone could see the outcome of the flesh in contrast to that of promise (Abraham and Hagar's child Ishmael compared with Abraham and Sarah's child)? The former had no place within the election promises of God while the latter became the vehicle through whom the promised blessings to the

⁴⁰ Paul contrasts the free and the enslaved with an allegory from the sons of Abraham: Ishmael the son of a slave-woman and Isaac the son of the free is an argument of the superiority of the promise and those born of the Spirit (in Christ) over those born of the flesh and the will of man (alluding to Sinai). Therefore, those in bondage (5:3) are those returning to an inferior position (circumcision) as though it somehow adds to what has already been attained in Christ. Paul's argument is not that circumcision is unlawful or has been disqualified. But adopting circumcision as a covenant marker for Torah adherence (native Israelite or Gentile allying themselves with Yahweh, Exodus 12:44, 48 and Leviticus 12:3), it has a value second place to the consummation of the New Covenant sealed by the work of the Spirit in fulfilment of divine activity of the circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:36).

⁴¹ Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, (London: SCM Press, 1977), p. 19.

nations would be perfected. Seeking to add merit through circumcision is akin to Abraham attempting to bring about the promised blessing through Ishmael. It is impossible! The two are diametrically opposed just as circumcision and the New Covenant are when their excellence is compared side by side.

Far from abrogating circumcision, Paul is shielding covenantal renewal and the supremacy of this reality accomplished in the Christ event. His argument is not for the abolition of national nomistic markers but for a correct appraisal of their salvation value for Gentiles alongside the Christ event and the imputation of righteousness through faith.

For Paul, the importance of being the son of Abraham was understood to be of religious significance, but not according to the command of circumcision (Genesis 17). Rather than enlisting this text to support his cause, Paul appeals to Genesis 15 to establish Gentile believers as sons of Abraham (without being circumcised). Since Abraham was declared righteous through faith (3:6), so do those calling on God through faith in Jesus Christ (3:7-9). Here Paul reasons: since righteousness came by faith (Genesis 15) and all the nations will be blessed in Abraham (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; cf. Galatians 3:8), then the means of blessing cannot be through the command of circumcision (law; Genesis 17) which postdates faith engendering an imputed righteousness exemplified by Abraham (Genesis 15). How can God change the rules, impute righteousness as a promise (Galatians 3:17), then make it attainable through circumcision (law)? To insist on righteousness imputed by the act of circumcision amounts to righteousness by works of the law, thus contradicting the means by which Abraham was declared righteous. Paul makes this distinction visible in Galatians 3:9-10, those of faith are blessed and those of the law are cursed (Deuteronomy 27:26).

It is easy to see the appeal of Genesis 17 as a universal command for the people of God (Jew and Gentile) to be circumcised,⁴² especially when the gospel was initially and universally proclaimed by Jews among the Gentiles (recognised by the Jerusalem Synod, Galatians 2).

⁴² Genesis 17:9-12 includes other people groups external to the immediate family of Abraham, a consideration that could be validated by circumcision being extended to people not of Abraham's blood line. *And a son of eight days shall be circumcised among you, every male child in your generations; he that is born in the house, or bought with silver of any stranger who is not of your seed* (Genesis 17:11-12). Admission to Israel's faith community before Christ was by circumcision (Genesis 17:12; Exodus 12:48).

Circumcision as a national marker identifying the unique calling to possess and convey to the world the revelations of God was a responsibility not bestowed upon any other nation. Rolston affirms that this national awareness yields a *strong racial consciousness and a narrow national exclusiveness*.⁴³ This conditioned and indoctrinated awareness, expressed and conserved through covenant nomism, has not only preserved a national commission and identity, but has been responsible for the impetus that has carried Israel into the Messianic age. As significant as this was, the coercion of Gentiles to be circumcised is incongruous with any purpose in covenant established in Christ.

In Paul's vigorous defence to the compelling (anagkazō)⁴⁴ of Gentiles to be circumcised (6:12), he states:

We Jews by nature, and not sinners of the nations, knowing that a man is not justified by works of the law, but through faith *in* Jesus Christ; even we believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith in Christ, and not by works of the law. For all flesh will not be justified by works of law (Galatians 2:15-16; 3:15, MKJV).

His position is clear, the law does not justify anyone, a theological position shared by other Jews, presumably Peter and Barnabas, but could include those from Jerusalem. Rather, justification is imputed through objective faith in Christ, for *the just* (dikaios: righteous) *shall live by faith* (2:16: 3:11). This allusion to Habakkuk 2:4 also utilised by Paul in Romans 1:17 emphasises his salvation focus, faith in Christ *who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world according to the will of God and our Father* (1:4).

Paul's vehement rebuttal, reading like an oratory masterpiece adjunct with Abrahamic examples of divine promise versus law (3:6-18; 4:21-31) reads like a diatribe, pitching attainment of justification by works against that of faith in Christ. It is this defensive position that has been read as Paul's rejection of Torah. Paul's position is clear:

...in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any strength, but faith working through love (5:6).

⁴³ Holmes Rolston, *The Social Message of the Apostle Paul: The James Sprunt Lectures, 1942* (Richmond: John Knox, 1942), p. 126-127.

⁴⁴ The same verb is used to designate the duress Peter applied to Gentile believers to live as Jews (Galatians 2:14).

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision *has* any strength, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation (6:15).

3.2 Evidence for Circumcision of Proselytised Gentiles

The prominence and significance of circumcision is attested to biblically and historically. This covenant practice central to Jewish identity was not only a covenant obligation, but can be demonstrated as part of Gentile conversion to Judaism. This relatively unquestioned observance cemented in Jewish tradition would not only be expected of Gentiles, but like any age-old custom wishing to be changed, would have been resisted at the highest level. Paul's revision of Gentile circumcision (Galatians 2) is one such convention likely to be misread or opposed.

One of the most compelling statements concerning circumcision as binding for covenant membership is that stated in Jubilees dated between 167 and 104 BCE.⁴⁵ Establishing the divine authorship of Torah before the creation of the world inscribed on tablets of stone in heaven (15:25), the author leaves no room for ambiguity:

And every one that is born, the flesh of whose foreskin is not circumcised on the eighth day, belongs not to the children of the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham, but to the children of destruction; ... (he is destined) to be destroyed and slain from the earth, ... for he has broken the covenant of the Lord our God.⁴⁶

Expositing Genesis 17, Jubilees affirms the significance of circumcision. With an instructional heritage (though sectarian) of this nature, it is not too difficult to imagine the influence that such insight might have on first century attitudes. Especially when Paul argues for the law given after Abraham and becoming the children of Abraham is through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:7; 4:28) rather than through circumcision.

A New Testament text in support of Jewish proselytism of Gentiles (albeit limited to Pharisaic enthusiasm) is Matthew 23:15 in which Jesus pronounced:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you compass sea and the dry *land* to make one proselyte, and

⁴⁵ Jonathan A. Goldstein, The Date of the Book of Jubilees, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, Vol. 50, (1983), p. 63, (Published by: American Academy for Jewish Research).

⁴⁶ R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 15, 26.

when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.⁴⁷

Research into the practice of Jewish mission among the Gentiles, though well documented, is often disputed. Martin Goodman claims that because of Jewish tolerance toward pagan lifestyles, mission and proselytisation of Gentiles was largely absent during the intertestamental period. This equity and acceptance of Gentile lifestyles lacked the motivation required for mission.⁴⁸ However, Shayne Cohen, despite being in agreement with Goodman's position, does concede that factional missionary tendencies did exist.⁴⁹ Roman and Jewish literature testifies to this fact and indicates that a motivation, albeit in a limited sense, was prevalent during this period.⁵⁰ Given that a normative Judaism was absent in the first century,⁵¹ such evidence indicates that more than one view and attitude was in existence. Therefore, one could imagine diverse attitudes affecting mission motivation to instigate correction of Gentile lifestyles through proselytisation.

Included in this literature is the testimony from the Hebrew Bible which gives additional potential incentives for Jewish conversion of the nations. References in support of God's eschatological intent in gaining Gentile followers fortifies Jewish incentives to convert Gentiles, especially if the era was considered terminal to God's redemptive strategy.⁵² To state that mission is not part of God's agenda is also to deny Isaiah 66:18-21 which states that Yahweh personally sends those who escape to the

⁴⁷ Approaches to this text include Jewish proselytism of non-Jews, God-fearers becoming full converts and Pharisees compelling *other Jews* to follow Pharisaic halakha.

⁴⁸ Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire*. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), p. 51. Goodman believes after AD 100, the destruction of Jerusalem and the failure to rebuild the temple increased hostile attitudes toward Gentiles. This precipitated a change of feeling toward Gentiles that was otherwise tolerant and inconsistent with proselytisation of Gentiles.

⁴⁹ Shayne J. D. Cohen, 'Conversion to Judaism in Historical Perspective: From Biblical Israel to Post-biblical Judaism', *Conservative Judaism* 36, no. 4 (1983), p. 31-45.

⁵⁰ Jubilees 15:16; 22: 16 comments on Gentile lifestyle being abominable. Tacitus writes that Jews feel hate and enmity to non-Jews and sit apart at meals (Tacitus 5:5).

⁵¹ Geza Vermes, *The Resurrection*, (England: Penguin Books, 2008), p. 54-55. Vermes illustrates the existence of variegated factional theological stances. In context, this fragmentation of community exemplifies the extant division in tradition and biblical values, validating a broad theological thinking at that time.

⁵² An end time Gentile conversion is acknowledged in the Hebrew Scriptures. God is revealed to the nations as the true Lord (Isaiah 2:2-3; 40:5; 51:4-5). Gentiles are to look to Him (Psalm 50:1, Isaiah 45:20-22). Gentiles travel to Jerusalem (Zechariah 8:21-23; 14:16; Isaiah 60:11; Psalm 47:10) to worship at the temple (Isaiah 45:20-24) and participate in the feast of Messiah on the mountain of the Lord (25:6-8). See also Baruch 2:72, 1 Enoch 10:21.

nations... *to those who have not heard of his fame or seen his glory to declare his glory among the nations* (v.19). The result is a Gentile return to Yahweh with the children of Israel as an offering. Clearly, a mission strategy!

Despite the suggestion that incentives for proselytisation was in evidence during the late intertestamental period, the emphasis must remain on the practice following Gentile adoption of Judaism. Was it customary to adopt Jewish nomistic customs following acceptance of Judaism in the first century?

Josephus reports the case of the Adiabene Royal family converting to Judaism.

Following conversion, the observance of Jewish customs is attested to by Josephus (Ant. 20.17-96). Helana and Izates (circa AD 30), having converted to Judaism, subsequently comply with Jewish law and customs. Izates, having concern for possible civil unrest and the threat of repercussions, finally submits to circumcision through the persuasive power of a Galilean teacher named Eleazer (Ant. 35, 38, 43-46).⁵³ The example of Gentile worship of the God of the Hebrews authenticated through the act of circumcision does not terminate there. Monobazus and his relatives, observing the king's pious worship of God, and having won the admiration of all men, were eager to adopt the practices of the Jews (20.75) and were promptly circumcised.

The evidence presented is not to argue that active proselytisation of Gentiles occurred but that following the devotion to the God of Israel they committed themselves to Jewish customs and circumcision. It appears that a tradition of nomistic conformity existed during a time contemporary with the Apostle Paul. By implication, such practice could traverse Jewish sectarian traditions and be promoted in a New Covenant context. The rapid growth in the Christ movement would easily lend itself to a difficulty in disseminating instruction for the purpose of contextualising this monumental moment in God's redemptive plan. It is not surprising that some Jews believing in Christ would have insisted on circumcision, especially when priests were among those early believers (Acts 6:7) yielding a variegated assortment of religious views ready to influence the fledgling church through Jerusalem. After all, Paul himself

⁵³ Lawrence H. Schiffman, 'Conversion of the Royal House of Adiabene in Josephus and Rabbinic Sources' L. Feldman and G. Hata, eds, in *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), p. 302-303. Schiffman points out that in Ant. 20.35, Izates is presented as a God-fearer until 20.38 when he desires to become a full proselyte by circumcision. However, other scholars such as Goodman contend that the initiative for conversion came from the proselytes. Martin Goodman, p. 84.

seems to imply that as a Pharisee (Acts 23:6; 26:5; Philippians 3:5) he too promoted the circumcision of Gentile proselytes: *And I, brothers, if I yet (eti: still) proclaim circumcision* [before or after his Damascus Road experience], *why am I still persecuted* (Galatians 5:11a). An accusation Paul does not refute! If there was no credibility to the allegation and Paul was vehemently trying to oppose the practice in light of faith in Christ, then surely an explanation would be expected to cover harmful hypocritical perceptions of him.⁵⁴ Yet none were forthcoming.

These few references alone suggest that there was cultural and biblical motivation to convert Gentiles but, more importantly, that conversion, whether actively sought or not, did result in Gentile conformity to Jewish law where circumcision was encouraged. It is not beyond the imagination to conceive of some Jews adopting such practices when Gentiles believed in Christ. After all, it was a Jewish gospel originating in the Jewish law (in the widest sense, Moses and the Prophets, Luke 24:27) proclaimed by Jewish believers, albeit to a global audience.

⁵⁴ There is scriptural evidence that supports Paul's infrequent circumcision of Gentiles. Timothy of mixed Jew-Gentile parenthood was circumcised before he accompanied Paul on his missionary journey (Acts 16:1-5). This act was motivated by his interaction with particular Jews in certain cities. Though this was far from proclaiming circumcision (Galatians 5:11), it could explain why he finds it necessary to raise the issue. Alternatively, it may refer to his 'pre-conversion' days.

CHAPTER 4

PAUL'S USE OF THE LAW

Law (*nomos*) occurs 33 times in Galatians and 74 times in Romans out of a total possible of 119, indicating that Paul's major petition concerning the law occurs in these two epistles.⁵⁵ During the 19th century, scholars formulated a principle to explain Paul's use of *nomos* to determine the corpus of biblical text (Mosaic Law or law in general) to which he was referring. The absence of a definite article, according to Joseph Lightfoot, specified the law in general.⁵⁶ However, Brice Martin, quoting Grafe, perceived:

...that the equation of the two forms is seen in the usage of *hypo nomos* (Galatians 3:23) and *ho nomos* (Galatians 3:24), and in Romans 3:23-27 where what the Jew breaks is *nomos* (verses 23 & 25) and what the uncircumcised person keeps is *ho nomos* (verses 26-27).⁵⁷

The conclusion, since Gentiles were without Torah, is that the use of the definite article to articulate and imply a particular textual use of law is flawed. Determining what corpus Paul was referring to in his theology remains troublesome and largely dependent on contextual deduction. Despite this, Paul continued to have a high view of the law labelling it holy, just, good and spiritual (Romans 7:12, 14), the problem not being the law but humanity's inability to adhere to it (Romans 7:14). However, Paul never defines what he means by *nomos*, giving the impression that the readers know what he is talking about.

In critiquing Paul's deleterious synopsis of the law, Räisänen quotes Cranfield who believes that it was the misuse of Torah that Paul opposed. This extended form of Torah, despite there being no Greek word-group in Paul's day corresponding to our legalism, amounted to a 'legalistic code requiring meritorious deeds'. Cranfield urges caution:

In view of this, we should always, we think, reckon with the possibility that Pauline statements which at first sight seem to disparage the law, were really directed not against

⁵⁵ Frank Thielman, *Paul and the Law, a Contextual Approach*, (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1994), p. 166-7.

⁵⁶ Joseph B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1857), p. 118.

⁵⁷ Brice L. Martin, *Christ and the Law in Paul*, (Leiden, New York: E. J. Brill, 1989), p. 21-22.

the law itself but that misunderstanding and misuse of it for which we now have a convenient terminology.⁵⁸

This explanation became identified with the modern blanket Christian term of legalism.⁵⁹ This, Räisänen contends, is Cranfield's attempt at eliminating the difficulty of Paul's inconsistency. Distilling Cranfield's thesis into a single statement, he pens: *Cranfield's eloquent bit of special pleading*⁶⁰ and Paul puts forward *artificial and conflicting theories about the law*.⁶¹ A conclusion repudiated by James Dunn as *speculative emendation of the text as disagreeable to good exegesis*.⁶²

Räisänen observes that Paul is no different from many of his contemporaries in using all of the Hebrew Bible texts (Torah, Prophets and the Writings) as *nomos*, doing so without clear distinction. Paul's *nomos* is, therefore, an authoritative Sinai tradition, separating Jews from the rest of humanity. However, his less than complimentary view on Paul's scholasticism almost becomes antinomian, evidenced in his description of Paul's theology. For him, Paul never distinguishes between written and oral Torah, is doctrinally lax, inconsistent with the popular view of him being *the thinker in early Christianity* merely misleading.⁶³ Martin, however, makes a notable distinction between Paul's use of moral and ceremonial law, when he remarks that the moral law is valid for the believer:

...Paul never cites a ritual law which is valid although he does cite moral law. He indicates...the moral law need(s) to be kept but gives no such indication for...the ceremonial law.⁶⁴

Dunn is correct in erring on the side of caution when prejudging Paul's competence as a theologian and exegete. The social situation in which Paul expounds the law and its purpose is multifaceted and include the law's communal function according cultural, religious and social variance. Combined with the threat of assimilation and the resulting practices, beliefs and characteristics that communities adopted to preserve identity, the attempt at formulating a uniform cohesive Pauline approach to the law is

⁵⁸ Charles E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Vol. 1*, (London: T & T Clark Ltd, 2004), p. 853.

⁵⁹ Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1983), p. 42-43.

⁶⁰ Räisänen, p. 43.

⁶¹ Räisänen, p. 65, 154. Inconsistency evident in Galatians 3:10, cf. 3:12. The person who lives under the law is cursed and yet the person who lives by the law shall live by it.

⁶² Dunn, p. 215.

⁶³ Räisänen, p.16, 82, 200, 228.

⁶⁴ Martin, p. 147.

unlikely.⁶⁵ In the wake of enforced Hellenisation⁶⁶ and religious persecution (1 Maccabees 1:60-63)⁶⁷ circumcision and dietary laws became clear boundaries of Jewish identity, markers that some fought to preserve. *Observances widely regarded as characteristically and distinctively Jewish*, writes Dunn.⁶⁸ It should, therefore, be of no surprise that Paul encountered opposition over these very practices (Galatians 2:1-14).

The tangled web of opinions concerning Paul's attitude to the law includes, 1) pure contradiction, 2) changes through progression and development of ideas, and 3) his statements were adapted to suit recipients and circumstances. The first leaves no room for the complexities, questions and situations that Paul experienced. The latter two are more realistic and take account of the variegated conditions into which Paul spoke, the permutations of which are incalculable.

Paul confirms his high regard for the law throughout his letters. His observance highlights his continued membership of the Jewish community. He comments on his own and the circumcision of others (Philippians 3:5; Galatians 2:3), him being subject to Synagogue judiciary, *five times from the Jews I received forty stripes minus one* (2 Corinthians 11:24), his participation in the Nazarite vow (Acts 21:26), and his intention to commemorate the biblical feasts (Pentecost, 1 Corinthians 16:8).⁶⁹ Paul's support for *nomos* is visible elsewhere in his writings. For instance, in 1 Corinthians 9:8-9, Paul affirming Torah, refers to Deuteronomy 25:4 with the question, *does not the law say* to support his reasoning concerning the spiritual and moral principle of a living wage from the gospel:

Do I say these things according to man? Or does not the
Law say the same also? For it is written in the Law of
Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox threshing grain."
Does God take care for oxen?

⁶⁵ Dunn, p. 216.

⁶⁶ Shayne J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), p. 30.

⁶⁷ Women and families of those practising circumcision were put to death. Some preferred death rather than defile the holy covenant. Maccabees affirm the importance of these identity markers as nationally and religiously significant. There is no doubt that forced conformity to Hellenised ideals was seen by many as an attempt at stripping Jews of their covenantal obligations and, hence, the uniqueness of their identity, calling and relationship with God.

⁶⁸ Dunn, p. 191. Dunn supports his statement using Greco-Roman literature of the period: Petronius, Plutarch, Tacitus and Juvenal. It naturally translates to a self-identity enforced by covenantal nomism clearly discernable among the nations. Dietary covenantal markers are esteemed and visible in Daniel 1:8-16; Tobit 1:10-13; Judith 10:5; 12:1-20.

⁶⁹ Peter J. Thomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1990), p. 260.

And he continues with this qualifying statement:

Even so, the Lord ordained those announcing the gospel to
live from the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14, MKJV).

Leaning on Isaiah 28:11-12, Paul again refers constructively to the law by proclaiming *in the law it is written*. He then proceeds to buttress his argument concerning speaking in tongues, thus imparting value to law.

Paul cannot claim the abrogation of the law and yet use it to sustain contemporary divine principles. Would this not amount to hypocrisy?

4.1 Paul's Attitude to the Law (Galatians 2:16)

Modern interpretations include Baur who views the dispute between Paul and Peter as two opposing principles of Jewish and Pauline Christianity coming into direct conflict: *Peter, the Jewish-Christian party upholding the observance of the particular laws of the Jewish community and Paul, the exponent of a universal Law-free Gospel...*⁷⁰ Freedom from the law betrays many of his positive references to the law which presents a very different image.

Davies contends that Paul treats the law in Galatians with an impersonal, clinical detachment compared to his sensitive appraisal in Romans, concluding any monolithic reading of Paul's response to the law was improbable.⁷¹ Guenther Bornkamm, however, is not so sure. Like so many scholars reading this as Paul's thesis on justification by faith (Galatians and Philippians), he views Paul's comments as the antithesis to the Judaiser's heresies.⁷² Paul's treatment of the law does vary but so do the context, recipient and challenges he was addressing. Any valid exegesis requires an accurate survey of these thought provoking matters.

The Antioch confrontation instigated by the questionable demands of Jewish emissaries from James in Jerusalem (2:12) not only triggered Peter's withdrawal from fellowship meals, but also influenced other Jews including Barnabas to do the same (2:13).⁷³

Martin Luther's influential view of the event coloured by papal veneration of saints and

⁷⁰ John Riches, *Galatians Through the Centuries*, (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2013), p. 112.

⁷¹ W. D. Davies, *Jewish and Pauline Studies* (UK: SPCK 1984), p. 107.

⁷² Guenther Bornkamm, 'The Letter to the Romans as Paul's Last Will and Testament' in K. P. Donfried, ed, *The Romans Debate*, revised edition, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1991) p. 25.

⁷³ Cummins, p. 2. Cummins documents the various early church theological positions incorrectly supported by the various readings of the Antioch controversy.

sale of indulgences makes Paul's argument of faith versus works-righteousness central to the controversy.⁷⁴ A legacy intact to this day. Cummins states:

His [Luther's] estimation of the event has governed its interpretation and that of Pauline theology as a whole from his own time to the present day.⁷⁵

Jewish Christians were making their protests heard concerning Jewish-Gentile fellowship in breach of Jewish separation laws.⁷⁶ Addressing internal dispute and division, Paul confronts Peter:

...If you, being a Jew, live as a Gentile, and not as the Jews, why do you compel *the* Gentiles to live as Jews? We Jews by nature, and not sinners of the nations, knowing that a man is not justified by works of the Law, but through faith *in* Jesus Christ; even we believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the Law. For all flesh will not be justified by works of law (Galatians 2:14b-16).

What was Paul addressing in this calamitous event when stating that *no man is justified by works of the law*? Traditional interpretation suggests Paul is arguing against Judaism's concept of salvation by 'doing works of the law'.⁷⁷ Ernst Käsemann, a student of Bultmann, affirms this same spirit, promoting a reading of the law commensurate with salvation:

The obedience of faith abrogates the law as a mediator of salvation, sees through the perversion of understanding it as a principle of achievement.⁷⁸

Paul equates Peter's separation from Gentile brothers as 'forcing' Gentiles to follow Jewish customs (NIV, 2:14). This, presumably, implicates Peter in allowing for fellowship with his non-Jewish brothers providing they agreed to follow Jewish customs. It is this which Paul opposes, claiming that *we who are Jews by nature...know*

⁷⁴ J. Riches, p. 69. *Lutheran readings of Paul, it is argued, have tended to project on to the Judaism of Paul's day the theological characteristics of the Catholic piety against which Luther battled, 'works-righteousness'.*

⁷⁵ Cummins, p. 4. Luther views Peter's actions as so serious that if it were not for Paul's rebuke he was worthy of being removed from office. John Riches, *Galatians Through the Centuries*, (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2013), p. 108.

⁷⁶ Possibly purity and dietary laws (expressions of covenant loyalty). Leaders in Jerusalem had previously agreed that Gentiles needn't be circumcised to enter the New Covenant of Messiah (Galatians 2:1-10; cf. Acts 15:1-2).

⁷⁷ See NIV Study Bible footnote.

⁷⁸ Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1980), p. 94.

that a man is not justified by works of the law (MKJV, 2:15-16). The implication is that Paul reads Peter's behaviour as an attempt at forcing Gentiles to conform to Jewish law amounting to justification by works. Paul argues: *We Jews [Paul, Peter and Barnabas] by nature, ...knowing that a man is not justified by works of the Law, but through faith in Jesus Christ; even we believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the Law. For all flesh will not be justified by works of Law* (2:15-16).

The argument is not therefore against a Jewish works-righteousness policy, but with a form of national nomism promoted by Jerusalem's emissaries and enacted by Peter, the conformity to which amounts to justification by works.

Dunn illuminates the situation further and adds to the significance of Paul's response to Peter. His second and third reference to justification in verse 16, *so we (Israel) also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ* are future tense, indicating justification by faith in Jesus Christ (being future) is a natural progression for Israel who are already in covenant relationship with God. Paul's concept of justification by faith is therefore at one with his fellow Jews and integral to the Mosaic Covenant purpose,⁷⁹ the concept being originally Jewish not Christian. Paul then cannot be opposing Jewish believers in propagating a false gospel of works to attain righteousness but rather a misunderstanding of covenant obligation in light of Christ's coming. Dunn states:

Paul's appeal is not to Christians who happen to be Jews, but to Jews whose Christian faith is an extension of their Jewish faith in a graciously electing and sustaining God.⁸⁰

The issue refers to dietary laws, purity laws, circumcision and later issues of special day and feast observance (Galatians 4:10; 5:2), as Dunn legitimately categorises them under the banner of 'works of the law'.⁸¹ As Jewish identity markers (covenantal badges) for a sanctified people, Dunn clarifies them as fundamental observances in keeping with

⁷⁹ Dunn, p.190.

⁸⁰ Dunn, p.191.

⁸¹ Pamela Eisenbaum, *Is Paul the Father of Misogyny and Antisemitism?* Crosscurrents, Vol. 5, no. 4, p. 140. With regards to circumcision and its practice, Paul states to the Gentile Galatians, *Christ will be of no advantage to you* (Galatians 5:2). Considered by many as giving licence to its abandonment, Eisenbaum makes the point that Paul is speaking of Gentile admission to the covenant people of God as Gentiles and Paul's apparent rejection of circumcision is out of respect for Gentiles, not out of disrespect for Jews.

covenant obedience.⁸² They are viewed as the proper commitment to God's grace, the minimal participation in covenantal relationship. Sanders terms this as 'covenantal nomism'⁸³ and Paul terms it as 'good works'.

Concurring with Lohmeyer, Dunn believes these 'religious modes of existence' or 'deeds of the law' equating to New Testament 'works of the law'⁸⁴ were evident at Qumran. Observable in a member's commitment and dedication to a community, an adherent complied with nomistic customs to preserve the sect's uniqueness among the nations.⁸⁵ This being the case then, both Paul and Qumran shared insights into the value of national markers to preserve identity, perhaps motivated through a shared tradition based on traumatic historical events (Greek/Roman).

This equivalence is seen in Paul's descriptive use of the law as being a schoolmaster to bring Jews or those Gentiles in covenantal relationship with God to Christ (3:24-25). Prior to Messiah's advent then, Sanders qualifies the extension of grace to those who accept covenantal obligation in response to being the elected people of God (Israel). Dunn believes this is what Paul opposes and not the Lutheran concept of self-meritorious righteousness, which had been superimposed on Galatians with a misrepresentation of Paul's attitude to Torah.

Faith in Messiah stands diametrically opposed to covenantal observance for the purpose of justification (something never intended). Faith in Jesus now becomes the primary identity marker with previous covenantal observances becoming superfluous.⁸⁶

According to Ephesians 2:13-15, barriers that caused enmity (sanctifying observance that made Israel distinct) were broken down (luō: loosed), allowing Gentiles to come

⁸² 1 Maccabees 1:62-63 and Daniel 1:8-16. Covenant obedient Jews face death rather than consume defiled food.

⁸³ Sanders, p. 422. Affirmed by Neusner, Sanders terms the phrase 'covenantal nomism' as the means of describing Israel's relationship to the Mosaic Law: God has elected Israel and provided a law that requires obedience. God rewards obedience and punishes disobedience, promises to maintain the election, provide atonement in the law for maintenance and re-establishment of relationship. God's mercy belongs to this group for which salvation is provided by mercy rather than merit.

⁸⁴ Dunn, p. 220.

⁸⁵ Florentino García Martínez, Wilfred G. E. Watson (Translator), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated, The Qumran Texts in English (Second Edition)*, (Netherlands: E. J. Brill and Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), p. 9, 136.

1QS5:20-21, 23; 6:18. *And when someone enters the covenant to behave in compliance with all these decrees, enrolling in the assembly of holiness, they shall test (21) their spirits in the Community (discriminating) between a man and his fellow, in respect of his insight and of his deeds in law...*

4QFlorilegium (4Q174 [4QF10r]) 4QFlor. 1:1-7: *Speaking of segregation from the nations typified in the eschatological temple and those excluded from it: This (refers to) the house into which shall never enter 4 [...] the Ammonite, or the Moabite, or the Bastard, or the foreigner, or the proselyte...*

⁸⁶ Dunn, p. 196.

near and be made one new man with Israel through faith in Christ. The extension of grace to the nations now finds its eschatological conclusion as the primacy of Abraham's faith (reinstated in Christ) apart from covenantal observance which were deliberately nationalistic,⁸⁷ (the reinstatement of which devalues the Christ event in favour of nomism).

The accusation, therefore, that Paul failed to understand contemporary Judaism is perhaps no more than Sanders' conjecture: that Paul's alleged reproach of 'works of the law' is equated by modern scholarship as 'doing the law' thus equal to its prohibition. Could it be that works of the law are covenantal practices apart from moral obligation? Dunn comments:

What Jewish scholars rejected as Paul's misunderstanding of Judaism is in itself a misunderstanding of Paul, based on standard Protestant misreading of Paul through Reformation spectacles.⁸⁸

In conclusion, Dunn agrees with Stendahl in believing that Paul's response and internal struggle with Peter was an attempt at reconciling Jew and Gentile in the covenant purposes of God in Christ. Far from denouncing Torah, Paul was stressing this significant historical event that changed forever covenant relationship in a uniting action, not a dividing one.

In Chapter 3, Paul sums up the Galatian error as trying to attain their goal by human effort when they had already received it by faith (3:1-3). Speaking of *us* and *them*, Paul continues his argument: *Christ has redeemed us [Jews] from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles [them] through Jesus Christ...* (13-14). Referring to the Mosaic law, a person is accursed of God for sins worthy of death (Deuteronomy 21:23). Clearly, his reference is to rebellion worthy of death (כרת, cut off), a wilful abstinence from circumcision is one such offense (Deuteronomy 17:14) and is well placed for Paul's argument for covenantal obligation of circumcision and covenant inclusion. It was Jews who offended Paul's theology and separated themselves from the Gentiles (2:13). It would make no sense for Paul to say

⁸⁷ Admission to Israel's faith community before Christ was by circumcision (Genesis 17:12; Exodus 12:48).

⁸⁸ Dunn, p. 201.

Christ has redeemed *us* (Jew and Gentile) from the curse of the law so that *you* (Gentiles) could receive the blessing of Abraham.

In concluding, it would be fair to ask the question whether these Jewish believers teach a pre-meditated nomistic heresy to the Gentiles or was this a misapplication and clash of Mosaic and New Covenants? As disciples attempted to decipher the shape of a New Covenant people of God in light of a long shadow of Jewish law, exegetical endeavours were bound to produce diverse outcomes. After all, Jesus himself responds with astonishment that Nicodemus, a ruler (*archōn*, chief ruler) and a teacher of Israel, was ignorant of the New Covenant requirements of being *born again* into the Kingdom of God (John 3:3-8). If Nicodemus was ill-informed and Peter himself required direct revelation concerning New Covenant Gentile purity (Acts 10:15; cf. 10:28) then boundless is the potential confusion for Jews entering the age of covenant renewal (Jeremiah 31; Ezekiel 36) and the effort required to rework covenantal obligation in light of Christ.

4.2 Works-Righteousness

The perception of Paul's rejection of the law and hence Judaism is based on the notion that he was a well-informed religious Jew whose remonstrations addressed contemporary Judaism rather than elements of it. This modern interpretation promoted by Reformation thinking has been largely responsible for pitching Paul's message of imputed righteousness by faith against an alleged collective first century Jewish communication of works-righteousness.⁸⁹

The practical problem of the inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God conjures what Räsänen calls Paul's Polemic against the 'works of the law' evident elsewhere (Galatians 2-3; Romans 3-4; 9-10), also noting that where this issue of Gentile inclusion is absent in Paul's writings, no polemic exists either.⁹⁰ This fact is seldom developed. Moore comments that:

⁸⁹ William D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, (Mifflintown, PA: Sigler Press, 1998), (p. xliii). Modern perception of Paul and the law include Bultmann who believed the law made life intolerable for Jews, Käsemann who believed Paul nullified the law in favour of faith⁸⁹ and Davies who argues Paul's emphasis was 'Jesus Christ' not issues of 'faith versus works of law for righteousness'.

⁹⁰ Räsänen, p. 176, 187.

[Paul] was, in fact, not writing to convince Jews but to keep his Gentile converts from being convinced by Jewish propagandists, who insisted that faith in Christ was not sufficient to salvation apart from observance of the law.⁹¹

The aim of righteousness, therefore, is not disputed with those whom Paul contends in Galatians, but the correct means to attain it was. As Räsänen correctly assesses:

What [E. P.] Sanders regards as an *incorrect* formulation of the issue, seems to me a quite *correct* statement: 'Paul agreed on the goal, righteousness, but saw that it should be received by grace through faith, not achieved by works.'⁹²

This admission is of crucial importance as it delimits Paul's argument to Jews propagating a particular nomistic obligation for Gentile inclusion into the people of God. This, he contends, has no equivalent merit with faith in Christ.

Paul contrasts justification through faith in Christ with justification by works of the law, presumed to be an argument of imputation of righteousness through faith versus the Jewish religious dogma of self-meritorious acts. This theological stance, which gained greater standing during the Lutheran Reformation, stands within Christian tradition to this day.

4.3 Faith versus Works-Righteousness

Martin Luther in opposition to Roman Catholic indulgences, a righteousness and divine favour by rite, correctly sets works-righteousness in opposition to faith. Liberating Catholic tradition from the shackles of righteousness by self-meritorious works he appears to read Paul's first century experiences as a shadow of his own. Despite fifteen centuries of separation and a culture and historicity unrelated to his own, Luther viewed Paul's Jewish compatriots as mishandling faith while fixating on works-righteousness. He states:

We are justified neither by the righteousness of the law nor by our own righteousness but solely by faith in Christ.⁹³

The righteousness of the law which they [the Jews] think they are producing is in fact nothing but idolatry and blasphemy against God.⁹⁴

⁹¹ George F. Moore, *Judaism in the first centuries of the Christian Era. The age of the Tannaim*. Volume III, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers' edition, 1997), p. 151.

⁹² Räsänen, p. 187.

⁹³ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 26, ed. J. Pelikan, (St Louis, Concordia, 1963-1964), p. 222.

⁹⁴ Luther, p. 254.

And John Calvin comments:

It hence follows, that the wicked abuse of the law was justly reprehended in the Jews, who absurdly made an obstacle of that which was to be their help: nay, it appears that they had shamefully mutilated the law of God; for they rejected its soul, and seized on the dead body of the letter.⁹⁵

Though rightly concluding righteousness by faith, he appears to impute to all Jewry a universal condemnation of an alleged Jewish policy of works-righteousness. Comments and conclusions like this have fuelled the perception of a common Jewish self-meritorious righteousness, especially when applied to Paul's most vitriolic treatment of the law in Galatians, possibly stimulating some modern misconstructions of what Paul was really addressing.⁹⁶

4.4 Qumran Evidence of Works-Righteousness

Scholars like Martin Abegg affirm that Qumran Halachic letter 4QMMT supports the existence of sectarian Jewish belief in works-righteousness, the error Paul is alleged to oppose. Despite its fragmented state and significant reading difficulty, Abegg believes it to be a reference to works of righteousness.⁹⁷ Asserting that nowhere else in Hebrew literature does the reference 'works of the law' (התורה מעשי) appear, he declares 4QMMT's reference as a boundary marker discriminating between the pure and impure. Believing Paul and the Qumran author to be at a 'virtual theological face off', he views 4QMMT as endorsing righteousness of the law as opposed to Paul's counter argument of righteousness by faith (Galatians 3:6).⁹⁸ Abegg comments:

Looking at Galatians and Romans in the light of 4QMMT, it seems clear that Paul, using the same terminology, is rebutting the theology of documents such as MMT. I do not mean to suggest that Paul knew of MMT or of the

⁹⁵ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, trans. from the original Latin by the Rev. John Owen (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1849). Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Available at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom38.xiv.i.html>. [Accessed 30 November 2013].

⁹⁶ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 27, ed. J. Pelikan, (St Louis, Concordia 1963-1964), p. 13. Luther's turmoil of inner conscience is here described as unquenched by adherence to monastic rule. His tower experience appears distant from Paul's Galatian experience fifteen centuries earlier. Monastic tradition under Catholic direction is not Torah. What may be similar, however, is 'alleged' merit imputed through 'covenant markers' for Jews and allegiance to monastic orders for Luther.

⁹⁷ Martin Abegg, Paul, 'Works of the Law' and MMT, *Biblical Archaeological Review*, (November-December, 1994), p. 53. In short, ma-ase ha-torah [deeds of the law in 4QMMT] is equivalent to what we know in English from Paul's letters as 'works of the law' [ἔργων νόμου].'

⁹⁸ Martin G. Abegg Jr, "4QMMT 37 C 27, 31 and Works Righteousness", *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Vol. 6, No. 2, July 1999, p. 139-147.

zealous members of the Qumran community, but simply that Paul was reacting to the kind of theology espoused by MMT...⁹⁹

When examining 4QMMT the text exemplifies David as one who practised such works and was saved from his troubles. 4QMMT reads:

Remember the kings of Israel and understand their works that each of them who (24) feared [the To]rah was saved from troubles, and to those who were seekers of the Law, (25) their iniquities were [par]doned. Remember David, that he was a man of piety and that (26) he was also saved from many troubles and pardoned. We have also written to you (sing.) concerning (27) some of the observances of the Law (miqsat ma'ase ha-Torah), which we think are beneficial to you and your people. For [we have noticed] that (28) *prudence and knowledge of the Law are with you. Understand all these (matters) and ask Him to straighten (29) your counsel and put you far away from thoughts of evil and the counsel of Belial.* (30) Consequently, you will rejoice at the end of time when you discover that some of our sayings are true. (31) *And it will be reckoned for you as righteousness when you perform what is right and good before Him,* for your own good (32) and for that of Israel.¹⁰⁰

What Abegg reads as a dogma of 'works-righteousness' can be equally read as correcting a devotee's sinful path. Seeking the counsel of the law, the command redirects evil thoughts requiring the recognition of a sinful condition and repentance (verses 28-29), yielding a faithful return and observance of the Word of God (*to perform it*) resulting in forgiveness (verse 31). To focus on '*perform it*' as the means of attaining righteousness is to ignore the context at the possible expense of an alternative reading. Though 'works of the law' in 4QMMT are being emphasised in the text, so is recognition of sinful thoughts (28), repentance and the return to devoted application of the law (29-31), all prerequisites of contrition. This appears to be a deviation from what Paul addresses in Galatians: Circumcision to qualify covenant membership, unity dependent on purity and a righteousness promoted through actions (covenantal nomism). 4QMMT speaks equally of repentance and pardon from troubles and evil thoughts (for David, adultery and murder) and a return to obedience of the law. Surely there cannot be equality in meaning when the circumstances of the two texts requiring accurate

⁹⁹ Abegg, *Biblical Archaeological Review*, p. 53-55.

¹⁰⁰ Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Revised Edition, e-copy*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 275.

exegesis are disparate. However, if this is still held as an example of a Jewish works-righteousness philosophy which Paul opposed, it contributes nothing more than it being an example of sectarian conviction rather than it being representative of a monolithic Jewish theology.

Commenting on this text, N. T. Wright states:

It is stating the obvious to say that this looks like precisely the sort of thing that Paul was opposing in his doctrine of justification by faith apart from ‘works of the law’.¹⁰¹

Das, however, argues that the proximity of column 27, (where the strongest reference to ‘works of the law’ is found) to those of 23 to 26 makes the contextualised exegesis a reference to the general behaviour of Israel’s kings, King David, in particular. David’s good deeds, therefore, a reference to ‘works of the Law’, are an allusion to Torah rather than covenant markers such as circumcision, diet and feasts.¹⁰² He correctly applies restraining caution when attempting to make direct links between the works of the law that Paul spoke of and those represented by 4QMMT. For additional reasons Wright agrees. He states:

Since there is no evidence that either 4QMMT or its recipients represented a branch of second-Temple Judaism which Paul knew at first hand, we cannot assume without more ado, as some scholars seem to, that, just because this text speaks of justification by works of the law, it must mean the same thing as Paul means when he speaks of the same thing (e.g. when he describes his own past in Philippians 3:2–11)...¹⁰³

Wright’s caution is justified in the face of such little evidence, especially when most scholars date 4QMMT between the early Hasmonean period and 5 BCE¹⁰⁴ (that is, between 50 and 200 years before Paul’s writing). Combining the uniqueness of this composition, the poor preservation of the text, and the ambiguity over context, any conclusion qualifying this as evidence for a Jewish system of works-righteousness appears weak.

¹⁰¹ N. T. Wright, 4QMMT and Paul: Justification, ‘Works,’ and Eschatology, *History and Exegesis: New Testament Essays in Honour of Dr. E. Earle Ellis for his 80th Birthday*, Aang-Won (Aaron) Son, ed., (New York and London: T & T Clark, 2006), p. 107.

¹⁰² Mark D. Given, ed, *Paul Unbound*, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), p. 99-116 (p. 106).

¹⁰³ Wright, *4QMMT*, p. 110-111.

¹⁰⁴ Hanne Von Weissenberg, *4QMMT, Revealing the Text the Function and the Meaning of the Epilogue 4QMMT*, (Netherlands: Brill, 2009), p. 15.

To postulate a contrary thesis based on this evidence promotes untrustworthy judgments concerning Paul's alleged intent that are prone to error. The resulting allegation that 4QMMT supports the argument that a Jewish first century work-righteousness policy existed, fuels and sustains the perception that Paul was a factional protagonist fighting to liberate Judaism from universal doctrinal error. Is this a fair judgment of first century Judaism and Paul's motive in writing to the Galatians?

4.5 The Importance of Justification by Faith

James Dunn comments on the Pauline theme of justification by faith as being covenant language distinguishing Jews from Gentiles belonging to Jews by nature. He states that Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11 are:

probably the first time in the letters of Paul that this major theme of justification is sounded.¹⁰⁵

As with Romans 1:17 Paul asserts the means of justification, *But that no one is justified by the Law in the sight of God is clear, for, "The just shall live by faith"* (Galatians 3:11). Comparing 'works of the law' alongside 'faith' to attain justification draws an unmistakable conclusion, faith in Christ is uniquely placed and nothing else can add to it.

Larry Richards comments on Paul's use of Habakkuk 2:4, the misreading of which, he asserts, has contributed, in some cases, to merit being attributed to a person's actions (trust independent of God).

Richards believes that after centuries teaching the importance of faith in light of the Reformation, Martin Luther's posthumous influence on Christian understanding of what Paul meant by faith as opposed to works has caused some serious misunderstanding. He states:

The Reformation inaugurated by Luther made an enormous impact on Christianity and his own understanding of Paul, evidenced in great measure by his commentary on Romans, has had an immense influence on Western Christianity, including the Catholic Church from which he came. It is his remarkable impact, however, that has led, in part, to a serious misunderstanding of the apostle Paul's

¹⁰⁵ Dunn, p. 188, 190-191.

major teaching on πίστις (the noun meaning “faith” and “faithfulness”).¹⁰⁶

Richards sees much of Luther’s interpretation of faith, the antithesis of works of the law, as affecting many modern New Testament translations.

Appealing to their translations of Romans 1:16-17 (Galatians 3:11), Richards questions the meaning of ‘The righteous man shall live by faith’ which emphasises righteousness attained through faith apart from the law.

Centuries removed from the writings of Paul, rabbinic discussion reflecting Paul’s rationale concerning the heart of the law appears to imitate this same reasoning, obedience summed up in one word, ‘faith’. In a sequence of reducible commandments, the Babylonian Talmud distils Torah to a single command. Starting with 613 commandments given to Moses, the list contracts through the insight of David (11 principles: Psalm 15), Micah (3 principles: Micah 6:8) and Isaiah (2 principles: Isaiah 56:1) to read a single principle of Habakkuk 2:4:

But it is Habakkuk who came and based them
[commandments] all on one [principle], as it is said, But
the righteous shall live by his faith.¹⁰⁷

The implication, albeit from later texts, is that evidence for a tradition of core ‘mitzvot’ external to Pauline theology exists in rabbinic tradition. It further demonstrates that faith is intrinsically central to righteousness. The question is, what did Paul mean by faith?

Richards believes Paul’s statement concerning Habakkuk 2:4 has been read unconsciously in light of the Reformation to denote a faith independent of the faithfulness of God, effectively [shifting] *the emphasis of Paul’s gospel definition, probably unknowingly, from God’s or Christ’s faithfulness to a believer’s faith.*¹⁰⁸ This

¹⁰⁶ W. Larry Richards, *Martin Luther’s Legacy on English Translations of Paul, Romans 1:16-17*. Available at

<http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CC0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.andrews.edu%2F~larryr%2FHome%2520Page%2FLutherLegacy3-7-2007.pdf&ei=CgJ5Uqn2AbLY7AbfnICgAQ&usg=AFQjCNGOnrZfoD75rww81pi37hTIAIwlHQ>, p. 1. [Accessed 21 October 2013].

¹⁰⁷ Babylonian Talmud, Nezikin: Mas. Makkoth, 23b, 24a, p. 102-106. Available at Halackha.com. Laws relating to the Jewish courts.

<http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CC0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fhalakhah.com%2Fpdf%2Fnezikin%2FMakkoth.pdf&ei=IDOeUpilEISM7AbquoGA&usg=AFQjCNGf1tf7G4g6gKUZ9PC-coHbq3iHWw>. [Accessed 13 February 2014].

¹⁰⁸ Richards, p. 1.

misreading may be understood to infer that righteousness is self-accessible making Paul's concept of faith solely person-dependent, alleged works-righteousness. The importance of a person being declared righteous on the basis of faith, though correct, is alleged to have strayed in meaning, and *contributed to numerous inaccuracies in English translations of Romans and Galatians*,¹⁰⁹ initiating many Jewish scholars to denounce the Christian act of faith as synonymous with a system of merit. The Jewish Encyclopaedia in systemising Paul's teaching on faith into six succinct themes states:

He [Paul] substituted for the natural, childlike faith of man in God as the ever-present Helper in all trouble, such as the Old Testament represents it everywhere, to a blind, artificial faith prescribed and imposed from without and which is accounted as a meritorious act.¹¹⁰

It is within this Lutheran understanding that Richards persuasively seeks to re-evaluate and restore God's faithfulness as a prelude to 'faith'¹¹¹ as seen in Romans 1 and Galatians 3:11. This clarifies the objectivity of the faithfulness of God toward humanity which in turn qualifies man's trust in God; an alternative, claims Richards, is unconsciously missed by Luther.

Luther's nuance focus in promoting a belief divorced from Paul's broad definition of faith has birthed a belief disassociated from God's foremost faithfulness.

Quoting Stendahl's thesis that Paul was not writing Romans or Galatians in order to quench a tortured conscience,¹¹² Richards relieves the text of the alleged Pauline introspective motive and explains Paul's objective in using Habakkuk 2:4 as validating the truth that Gentile faith in Christ is sufficient without them first having to become Jews. This restores the faithfulness of God in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11 as the primary significance, a prelude to the trust of the believer.

Further bolstering his argument, Richards demonstrates the parallels of Isaiah 11:5, Psalm 143:1 and Romans 1:16-17 (Galatians 3:11). God's righteousness, synonymous with his faithfulness, is preserved across the Testaments and utilised by Paul in his letter

¹⁰⁹ Richards, p. 5.

¹¹⁰ Joseph Jacobs, 'His System of Faith', *Jewish Encyclopaedia.com. The unedited full-text of the 1906 Jewish Encyclopaedia*. Available at <http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13232-saul-of-tarsus>. [Accessed 14 November 2013].

¹¹¹ Pistis can be translated 'faithfulness', a translation influenced by the Old Testament emphasising the faithfulness of God.

¹¹² Krister Stendahl, 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West', *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 56, No. 3, July 1963, p. 210.

to the Romans¹¹³ further augmenting the principle, ‘salvation begins and ends with God’. James Dunn concurs:

Almost certainly, then, his [Paul] concept of righteousness both noun and verb...the sort of usage we find particularly in the Psalms and Second Isaiah, where God’s righteousness is precisely God’s covenant faithfulness, his saving power and love for his people Israel.¹¹⁴

Richards’ argument is a fine adjustment that many Christians would not contend with, but unchallenged, it leaves a shadow that fosters confusion and unjustified criticism of Paul.

However, with ‘faith’ also being rendered to mean ‘faithfulness’ the Masoretic text and Septuagint¹¹⁵ versions of Habakkuk 2:4 both include personal pronouns in designating the objective of faithfulness. The Received Text designates the righteous man as a faithful covenant member while the Septuagint qualifies righteousness as a divine act of God’s faithfulness. Hermann Strack intimates that Paul’s removal of the pronouns to expand and tease out as much of the meaning as possible was a Pharisaic practice, one that introduces a new legitimate meaning rather than confining it.¹¹⁶

We may assume, therefore, that due to Paul’s Pharisaic heritage and starting with manuscripts in context,¹¹⁷ his exegetical methodology reflected extant Jewish Christian systems towards Scripture.¹¹⁸

Hillel’s Pharisaic primary method of interpretation ‘Qal va-Chomer’ (light to heavy) is a process of expanding the text to incorporate broader meaning. It is not surprising then, knowing both Masoretic and Septuagint readings, Paul legitimately combines them both, incorporating the adherent’s faith alongside the faithfulness of God.¹¹⁹ Sontala states concerning the first century Jewish reasoning of ‘middot’ (measures) in which a problem is weighed:

¹¹³ *Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins* (Isaiah 11:5, NRS) and *Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness; answer me in your righteousness* (Psalm 143:1, NRS), cf. Romans 1:17, *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.*

¹¹⁴ Dunn, p. 190.

¹¹⁵ Masoretic: ‘The righteous one shall live by his faith/faithfulness/trust’. LXX: ‘The righteous one shall live by my faithfulness’.

¹¹⁶ Hermann L. Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud*, (Stokie, Illinois USA: Varda Books, 2004).

¹¹⁷ C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, (London: Nisbet, 1952), p. 23.

¹¹⁸ R. N. Longenecker, *Paul, Apostle of Liberty*, (Harper & Row, New York, 1964), p. 21-65.

¹¹⁹ The same principle is evident in the teachings of Jesus. ‘If the birds of the air are valuable, how much more are the people of God?’ (Matthew 6:26).

The Western theologian should not complain that Paul lacks a logical approach [in approaching viewpoints of Scripture]. He basically followed the instructions of the school founded by Hillel.¹²⁰

The importance of this last point cannot be overemphasised. Paul's use of the Old Testament texts reflects this rabbinical concept of expanding and even reshaping, sometimes to merely make use of the language when there is no rational connection by Western methods of reasoning.

Richards concludes:

Let Paul be a mid-first century pastor in his world, not in the world of the reformers or the modern western world... Paul wanted to say that being a child of Abraham does not depend on genealogical records or in possessing the Law, because the good news is good news even before a person ever becomes involved.¹²¹

I concur with Richards. The Protestant focus on the faith of the individual to attain righteousness, according to Paul, is both valid and essential for righteousness. However, the precedent and qualifying work to validate this faith is the faithfulness of God. For, as Paul says, 'If some did not believe, will not their unbelief nullify the faith of God?'

Rereading Galatians 3:11 in light of Habakkuk 2:4,

That no man is justified [made righteous] by the law [covenantal nomism] in the sight of God; it is evident: For the just shall live by [his faithfulness equivalent to God's righteousness or faithfulness and qualifying a person's faith] (see footnote 115).

This small but sometimes less emphasised nuanced truth has, in some cases, yielded a salvation model independent of God's pre-emptive faithfulness that somehow miscommunicates what Paul really wanted to say. Divorced from God's faithfulness, this central theological point can often lead to confusion, even among Protestant Christians. Belief in isolation and as a central fulcrum for qualifying salvation can somehow promote a perception of self-meritorious righteousness. Paul's use of Habakkuk to bolster his argument against work-righteousness, *But that no one is justified by the Law in the sight of God is clear, for, "The just shall live by faith"*, is not a hypocritical statement since Paul is arguing principally from God's faithfulness to

¹²⁰ Santala, p. 140.

¹²¹ Richards, p. 21.

qualify a person's trust. Paul, therefore, is not an apostate, capitulating to an exegesis of faith foreign to Jewish tradition, but employing exegetical tradition of the day as a means of expressing God's saving grace.

4.6 The Curse of the Law

Galatians 3:10-14 stands proud as one of the least understood or misquoted texts within Paul's literary corpus. N. T. Wright believes it to be *one of the most complicated and controverted passages in Paul*¹²² and Longenecker comments:

If a survey were taken among professional students of Paul asking them to identify and rank the most difficult passages in the Pauline corpus, one might well expect Galatians 3:10-14 to appear among the most frequently and highly ranked passages.¹²³

Various approaches to *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law* have been proposed. Riches illustrates that Augustine saw it as an argument for law (governing the carnal), versus the superiority of Christ, (governing the spiritual), the release of *people from the demands of the ceremonial law and fear of its punishments, (e.g. in plucking grain on the Sabbath)*. While Lightfoot had a more universal perspective of Christ's redeeming act as abolishing the law for Israel, making *we, of, that we might receive the promise* (3:14), referring to believing Jews and Gentiles who were no longer required to observe it. Dunn, however, reasons from a less traditional viewpoint, that Paul meant that those being redeemed from the curse were those outside the covenant, (Jews who had a works-righteousness philosophy and Gentiles who were never subject to the covenant to begin with).¹²⁴

Räsänen examining 3:13 and citing Galatians 4:5-6; 5:1 concludes that Paul understood that Gentiles were under the curse of the law, claiming this to be evidence that Paul had a double concept of the law.¹²⁵ He comments:

Paul's statement in 3:13 [*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law*] would seem to be a specific application of

¹²² N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), p. 137.

¹²³ Bruce W. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham's God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), p. 134.

¹²⁴ Riches, p. 172, 184-185.

¹²⁵ Räsänen, p. 59.

this general Christian soteriology: the death on behalf of us is interpreted as bearing the curse on behalf of us.¹²⁶

Räisänen's assumption that Paul is here dealing with universal Christian soteriology (Jew and Gentile) negates the premise suggested in 3:1-3 that, having begun in the Spirit through faith, Galatian Gentiles were now trying to perfect themselves through works of the flesh (3:3). This accusation built on the themes of Galatians 2 (Gentile circumcision 2:2-6 and Peter's sectarianism amounting to, *compelling the nations to Judaize*, 2:14), equates to what Paul says is 'attaining righteousness through the law' (2:21). Clearly, Paul is contending with a unique situation. Those Galatians subscribing to this nomistic position, Paul contends, are of the works of the law and under its curse (3:10a).

The connection implies that Gentile nomistic observance (post-faith) equates to placing themselves under the law. For Räisänen, Paul's initial argument contending with Gentiles who seek to place themselves under the law through covenantal nomism appears to have faded. As a consequence, Paul is read as addressing salvation by faith, the antithesis of alleged Jewish dogma of 'works-righteousness'.

He further illustrates his conviction that Paul in Galatians was advocating the total dissolution of the whole law by stating that the law no longer demands obedience from the Christian (as though Gentiles were expected to keep what they did not have).¹²⁷

Räisänen states:

...the law is for the Christian a thing of the past. It cannot require anything of him anymore. This is clear from the context of Galatians 3:13 where those 'under curse' (verse 10) are identical with those who 'rely on works of the law'.¹²⁸

Such interpretations have fuelled a 'flurry' of exposition of 3:10-14 as current scholarship discerns a 'traditional reading that does not quite work'.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Räisänen, p. 19-20.

¹²⁷ 1 Corinthians 9:20-21. Paul distinguishes between Jews being under the law and Gentiles who are not. Romans 2:14 states Gentiles are without the law, yet Romans 3:9 places both Jew and Gentile under sin (a principle instigated and perpetuated from the Fall [Genesis 3], prior to the law).

¹²⁸ Heikki Räisänen, p. 59.

¹²⁹ N. T. Wright, 'The Letter to the Galatians: Exegesis and Theology', *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology*, J. B. Green and M. Turner, ed, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 205-236.

The Deuteronomic context from which Paul quotes has nothing to say about works-righteousness but witnesses to curses pronounced on disobedience (Deuteronomy 27). Then, why do scholars like Räisänen appear to suggest Paul was arguing against works-righteousness as a universal Jewish philosophy being imposed on Gentiles? Major pressures that Gentiles were being subjected to appear to have been overlooked. The correct perspective is key for an accurate interpretation. James Dunn is pessimistic of a valid exegesis of ‘works of the law’ when he comments:

But sooner or later (usually sooner) the perspective slips and the assumption begins to dominate the exegesis that by ‘works of the law’ Paul means the attempt to win God’s favour by human achievement...¹³⁰

Paul’s argument in chapter 3 flows naturally from imposed covenantal nomism on Gentiles (2), which equates to human effort in light of Christ (3:1-3), to the natural conclusion that such adherents place themselves under the law’s curse (Galatians 3:10).

This summary curse pronounced in agreement with all Israel’s *Amen* is aimed at those who failed to approve and obey the law and are therefore identified as covenant breakers (cf. Deuteronomy 27:26), a point Dunn would argue as those who were outside of the covenant. Perhaps this could include Gentiles who were placing themselves under the law through covenantal observances as an addendum to objective faith, rather than being outside of the covenant from the beginning?

The tone of Paul’s writing is one of concern, not accusation. Paul is not focusing on Gentile believers in them keeping the whole law, but whilst quoting the Torah correctly, he raises the inevitability that a Gentile insisting that observance of covenantal law (in adding to the work of Christ) renders them obedient to the whole law. The conclusion is clear, the breaking of one law will necessitate the invocation of the prescribed curse.

Paul does not say the law is a curse but quotes the law correctly, citing Deuteronomy 27:26, *Cursed is he who does not confirm all the words of this Law, to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen* (see note 132). The law is not subject to selective obedience but requires total commitment, for Moses declares a curse on any covenant member failing to observe a single command. The use of this text often presupposes the impossibility of anyone fulfilling the law is, according to Dunn, *hardly self-evident and*

¹³⁰ Dunn, p. 219.

*has to be read into the argument.*¹³¹ Timothy Gombis, however, is not convinced and claims that Paul's reference to the Septuagint, *Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them* (3:10) makes Paul's inclusion of 'all' evidence of his strict interpretation of the law's demands.¹³² Similarly, speaking of the Pharisee's (Paul's heritage) approach to the law, Rudolf Bultmann comments:

To take them [regulations] seriously meant making life an intolerable burden. It was almost impossible to *know* the rules, let alone put them into practice.¹³³

Räsänen fails to associate 3:13 with the premise in chapter 2 and the question of Gentile circumcision and Jewish withdrawal from Gentile Christians over dietary issues. Cummins' observation concerning the overwhelming emphasis on the apologetic value of chapter 2 influencing exegetical focus, writes:

...apologetic interest has often been at the expense of the exegesis of Galatians 2:11 and its context.¹³⁴

The context appears to have broadened with Paul apparently addressing an extant universal Jewish philosophy of self-justification.

John Gager's comment concerning the influence of this exegetical expansion of subject and context is insightful:

Quickly, the post-Pauline churches lost sight of the law as an issue within the Jesus-movement and so turned the discussion in Galatians, Romans, and elsewhere into an external, anti-Jewish polemic.¹³⁵

There is no reason to think Räsänen's thesis on the 'curse of the law' as a 'works righteousness' philosophy drifts to include the entire Torah (law), as though a Jewish 'works righteousness' policy existed beyond covenantal markers.

¹³¹ Dunn, p. 226.

¹³² Timothy G. Gombis, 'The "Transgressor" and the "Curse of the Law": The Logic of Paul's Argument in Galatians 2-3', *New Testament Studies*, Vol. 53, issue 01, (Cambridge University Press: 2007), p. 81-93. Concerning the curse of the law (3:10) Paul appears to have added *all* (pas), though it is present in the Samaritan Pentateuch. Riches also demonstrates *everyone* (pas), also seen as added by Paul, is present in the slightly later dated Peshitta. Riches, p. 184. Paul's inclusion suggests evidence of legitimacy.

¹³³ Rudolph Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting*, (London: Thames and Hudson 1956), p. 66.

¹³⁴ Cummins, p. 5.

¹³⁵ Gager, p. 38.

By disarming the law's power to condemn through Christ, Paul releases any hypothetical necessity of 'covenantal obligation' for salvation (if it were possible). Referring to the Mosaic ordinances, Paul makes a startling proclamation. *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law* thus qualifying the remaining blessing (3:13; cf. Deuteronomy 21:23), and simultaneously rendering the nations eligible for the same blessing of God through Abraham, an unconditional promise predating the law and given to the first person circumcised and justified by faith (3:14; Genesis 12:3).¹³⁶

The obstacle to the blessing which Paul calls the 'curse of the law' was removed through Christ in a substitutionary act bringing liberation from the law's prescriptive condemnation. So any obligation that involves keeping the whole law through insisting that works of the law (circumcision, dietary observance) are imperative for salvation (if that were possible) have been removed. Remove the curse of the law, and the rest of the command which yields condemnation are disbanded and covenantal nomism has no validity for justification (if that were possible).

Dunn claims Räisänen made a fatal error in his exegesis. He failed to make a connection between 3:13 and 3:14¹³⁷ (curses and blessing). I argue that disarming the law's universal power to condemn through one Christ event, liberates all New Covenant members from the sentence of death, therefore no covenantal obligation has anything to add to salvation (not that it ever did). Paul was not arguing here for abolition of the law *per se* but the recognition of its purpose as a schoolmaster (*paidagōgos*, 3:24) for Israel (Gentile proselytes to Judaism included). Now that Messiah has come, the law (covenantal nomism) has done its job. It may still now serve as a national marker (circumcision, dietary and purity laws),¹³⁸ but with faith in Messiah now manifest, it has no use for Gentiles and, consequently, relinquishes its mandate to the superior event. Paul states, *But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster* (strict guardian), Galatians 3:25. Therefore, such obligations need not become the means of

¹³⁶ Stendahl, *Paul*, p. 19-23. Stendahl summarises Paul's argument concerning the promise (given to Abraham and realised in Christ) as superior to the law. The law was added for transgressions sake, it was given with a time limit and compared to the promise which came directly, the law was given through a mediator.

¹³⁷ Dunn, p. 235, note 57.

¹³⁸ Paul implies national identity markers are still relevant since a future national salvation experience is expected (Romans 11:26). Paul supports his position using prophetic texts (Romans 11:26; cf. Isaiah 59:20).

fellowship schisms for Jew and Gentile, male or female, slave or free, for all are now one in Christ, and heirs according to the promise of Abraham (3:25-28).¹³⁹

Paul's antagonism could be rewritten as re-contextualising the law in light of the goal of the law, the coming of Jesus. Imposing covenantal obligation on believing Gentiles serves no purpose, especially when promoted as a necessary addendum to faith in Christ.

Combine this with Paul's contradiction that the whole law can be fulfilled through loving your neighbour (5:14) with a notion of Paul using Deuteronomy as an argument to establish the impossibility of fulfilling the law, and the proposed argument of Paul opposing a Jewish self-achieving system tends to collapse.

4.7 Galatians 3: The Law as a Schoolmaster

In Paul's concluding purpose of the law he presents it as the means of confinement, preservation and guidance until Christ comes. Krister Stendahl observes that since Augustine these verses have been read to mean the absolute opposite of what Paul said. Summarising the common western interpretation of *our tutor to Christ* (3:24), he states that to be a Christian the person has to be tutored by the law to recognise the need of a saviour. This position can be understood as the Gentile coming under the law (as a tutor) and its prescribed curses to qualify direction to salvation in Christ.¹⁴⁰ But is this what Paul means when describing the law as a schoolmaster to bring us (Jew and Gentile) to Christ?

Contrasting two permissible English translations of Galatians 3:24, Stendahl clarifies a logical reading of Paul as we (Jews) kept by the law.¹⁴¹ The versions include:

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith (KJV).

and

the law was our custodian until Christ came (RSV).

The common evaluation of *us* in verse 24 is that the law's purpose is for both Jew and Gentile to be convicted of sin, so preparing the way for faith in Christ. So when Christ

¹³⁹ Eisenbaum, p. 139. Unity in diversity, whereby distinctions before God within the church community are irrelevant.

¹⁴⁰ Stendahl, *Paul*, p. 22.

¹⁴¹ Stendahl, *Paul*, p. 18.

has come, the law's only purpose is to convict and is otherwise terminated thus supporting Paul's demotion of Torah.

Stendahl accurately renders verse 24 (*paidagōgos*) as 'slave' or 'strict custodian'. The purpose of a guardian effecting the role of protector for a child en-route to school, portrayed in Greek and Roman literature as an ambulant babysitter, teaching outward manners and preserving children from sin.¹⁴² This fencing about of covenant keeping Jews by Mosaic ordinances is not unique to Paul's theology, the Letter of Aristeas (second century BCE) 139, 142 demonstrates the concept clearly.¹⁴³

Now our Lawgiver [Moses] being a wise man and specially endowed by God to understand all things, took a comprehensive view of each particular detail, and fenced us round with impregnable ramparts and walls of iron, that we might not mingle at all with any of the other nations, but remain pure in body and soul, free from all vain imaginations, worshiping the one Almighty God above the whole (139)...their main consideration is the sovereignty of God. Therefore lest we should be corrupted by any abomination, or our lives be perverted by evil communications, he hedged us round on all sides by rules of purity, affecting alike what we eat, or drink, or touch, or hear, or see (142-143A).¹⁴⁴

Clearly the Mosaic Law was viewed by some intertestamental Jews as a conserving covenant instructing focus on God while maintaining a national purity among the nations, a purpose not too dissimilar from Paul's custodian.

Unto Christ (*eis Christos*) the object of the custodian's role in verse 24 translated *until Christ came* allows for the text to read, *the law was our custodian until Christ came*. The verse context of whether Gentiles could join the Church without being circumcised according to the law (Galatians 2:3; 5:11; 6:2) is answered by Paul: *the law confined us (Jews) as though keeping Israel from molestation and deviation until the coming of Christ so that which was intended from the beginning (justification by faith), could be consummated* (my reading). This reading is supported by the previous verses where the

¹⁴² Stendahl, *Paul*, p. 21.

¹⁴³ Jacob Neusner, *Judaism, Evidence of the Mishnah*, (USA: University of Chicago, 1981), p. 61-75. Neusner qualifies these boundaries as fences of protective enclosures.

¹⁴⁴ R. H. Charles, ed, *Letter to Aristeas*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913). Available at <http://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/aristeas.htm>. [Accessed 3 February 2014].

law's purpose was to confine (keep, 3:23) Israel (Paul included) until the intended time of faith is revealed (meaning objective faith in the person Messiah/Christ).¹⁴⁵

This confinement of law is articulated by Sanders as a method for maintaining and regulating Israel's covenant relationship, with righteousness meaning 'the correct conduct prescribed by the law'.¹⁴⁶ Obedience to the law, therefore, was the means of demonstrating faith in God, thus maintaining covenant relationship, not the means to attaining it. Sanders calls this 'covenantal nomism', salvation by grace, with the outward expression of faith visible in accepting covenantal obligation. I believe Sanders' concept is Israel's response to God's election and covenant peculiarity as they accept the terms of relationship, *all that Jehovah has said, we will do* (Exodus 24:7), the rejection of which disqualified covenant membership.

Stendahl proposes that Paul's aim in Galatians 3 is to demonstrate that Gentiles do not have to go under the law (covenantal nomism) to be guarded and guided to Christ, as this was the law's purpose for Israel. Instead, the nations may come straight to Christ for justification without being under the law's direction.

Once the law as a fence (guardian) had been realised, then Jews receive the goal of justification through faith in Messiah (verse 25) and are no longer under the guardian (covenantal nomism) as a chaperon to Christ. Paul's self-reference (to include Jews) changes in verse 26, to become *you* (to include Gentiles) as they too become sons of God through the same faith in Christ but apart from the law. Paul migrates from Israel to all (Jew and Gentile) the equality of whom through the same faith (with and without the law) he clarifies and validates through verse 28, *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*. Paul, commenting on equality as sons of God, escapes any confusion with national Israel's unique calling, identity and superiority illustrated through their national covenantal law.

Charles Cosgrove states:

¹⁴⁵ (Galatians 3:22-23: The verb 'shut up' (sugkleiō) is translated elsewhere as 'enclosed' KJV, like a net around a fish (Luke 5:6) and 'consigned' (Romans 11) ESV. The law, therefore, keeps Israel in place for future faith in Christ.

¹⁴⁶ Dunn, p. 186. Dunn quoting Sanders.

If Gentiles become Jews or Jews become Gentiles in an effort to express the end of distinctions, they would simply be reinstating the valorisation of these differences.¹⁴⁷

For Paul, the law's purpose is clear. Like the detail of the letter of Aristeas, it served as a fence, confinement and guide. It is this covenant nomism that Paul esteems correctly, classifying it as a guardian for a good and holy purpose. There is no reason to read into Paul's argument any other aspect to the law than that which he addresses: Gentile entry to the people of God, their circumcision and observance of dietary obligations. Paul does not attempt to address current Jewish adherence to the law, its value or conformity, but he does classify the law's purpose as it pertains to Gentiles.

¹⁴⁷ Charles H. Cosgrove, 'Paul and Ethnicity: A Selective History of Interpretation' in *Paul Unbound*, Paul D. Given, ed, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2010), p. 79.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The allegation that Paul in Galatians opposes a broad or even monolithic Jewish heretical concept of justification is to exceed what it written. To view his alleged polemic of the law through this lens is to ignore a context that is unique to his time. Squeezed between the classical conditioning of the need to preserve national identity and the coming of Christ, Paul found himself expositing the law as it relates to Gentiles becoming New Covenant members of the family of God.

Evidence suggests that not only was the Jewish state far from unified in its theological positions but that centuries of Gentile oppression and forced assimilation had left a lasting legacy for the need to preserve and express God's unique calling and national identity through covenantal law (nomism).

What had been normal for some communities to see Gentiles becoming covenant members through faith, outwardly expressed in circumcision, observance of feasts and dietary law, were now faced with the immensity of a new age inaugurated through Christ. It is within this new era, foretold through Genesis 12 and invested through the principal faith of Abraham (Genesis 15), that Paul and his compatriots wrestled in order to extricate a meaning for the law alongside the superior event of Messiah. Despite these mitigating factors, the application of the law in such circumstances still amounted to usurping the gospel of Paul rendering *nomos* superior to the Christ event. Paul's response, akin to extinguishing sparks as a safeguard against flames, is judged to be wholly justified.

Gentile covenantal conformity (evidenced in extant Jewish and Gentile literature) was now judged to be superfluous in Christ. The inception of an objective faith rendered circumcision of Gentiles meaningless as imputed righteousness claimed superiority of the covenantal signs (though nomism and faith were never two means of attaining righteousness). The insistence of covenantal conformity, as some Jews were espousing, was viewed by Paul as turning back to a divine pattern of law intended to preserve and lead the Jewish nation to their Messiah. His arrival now required the re-contextualisation of covenant law.

The law serving to deliver a unique people to this objective had fulfilled its purpose, so to insist on Gentile conformity amounted to withdrawing to pre-advent days where covenant law acted as a guardian, preserver and guide. Nomos, therefore, was the outward expression of covenantal relationship, the agreement to observe the precepts of God which invoked the prescribed blessings and curses. The insistence on Gentile Christians to live as Jews (nomism) was to surrender the primacy of faith in Christ to covenantal obligation, rendering the adherent subject to the curses from which Christ had redeemed them. Paul, therefore, was not arguing against a universal Jewish agenda of works-righteousness but demonstrating what life would amount to when taking up this stance and retreating to covenantal nomism. Gentiles retreating to this position were judged by Paul as returning to the law's curse from which Christ had redeemed the Jews.

By confining the Galatian issue to factional Jewish Christians whom Paul saw as sacrificing faith in Christ to the inferior purpose of the law amounting to works-righteousness releases Paul from the traditional view of him opposing and contending a universal Jewish works-righteousness philosophy.

Many exegetical approaches to Galatians have lacked this discipline resulting in Paul's polemic against the law, his people and works-righteousness being upheld. In some cases, especially here in Galatians, I believe Paul's management of the law has been over-realised and eisegetically expounded.

The conclusions made within this brief work pertain to Galatians. To test the thesis as it relates to other texts within the Pauline corpus requires further investigation. Work for another day!

CHAPTER 6

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