

Perspectives Old and New on Paul

The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics

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Chapter 18

"Justification by Faith" in Paul's Thought: The Evidence in Review

To those of us engrossed in the study of the law and justification in Paul's thought, it is a cause of fleeting mortification that the apostle dispatched a letter of five chapters with nary an allusion to our preoccupations. Disconcerted though hardly daunted, we may pause briefly to wonder why the Thessalonian Paul so little resembles his real self, but we quickly move on to writings in which he proves more obliging. Alas, it soon becomes apparent that the apostle had not yet hit his stride at the time of his Corinthian correspondence either, though a few promising signs are not to be neglected. In Galatians, Romans, and Philippians we bask, and there we are wont to end our review. Ephesians and the Pastorals, as doubtfully Pauline, are not likely to attract any attention. As for the epistle of James, if Luther has not banished it from our Bibles, its pages may nonetheless be the last to which we would turn for an illumination of Paul's thought.

Yet relevance for our themes has recently been argued for each of the above-mentioned epistles, including those presumed most irrelevant. Each merits at least a look, and a review of the argument of each will minimize the risk that we ignore the contexts in which Paul discusses justification, or impose a pattern from one letter on his writings as a whole.

i. 1 Thessalonians¹

Of the extant Pauline epistles, 1 Thessalonians was likely the first to be written,² though the significance of its anteriority is a matter of dispute. A number of themes prominent in later Pauline letters seem absent from the first.³ For some scholars this means that these notions had not yet taken shape in Paul's thinking;⁴ other scholars, however, track elusive evidence even in 1 Thessalonians of the themes that are later more conspicuous, or insist that, where nothing in the situation of the Thessalonians prompted the mention of a topic, we may conclude nothing about the maturity of Paul's thought.⁵ Aspects of the discussion will be taken up below.

Less attention has been paid to a different Thessalonian distinctive: no extant Pauline letter was written more immediately after the founding of the Christian community to which it was addressed than 1 Thessalonians. Should we be interested in the content of Paul's initial proclamation to a non-Christian audience, no other evidence approximates the value of 1 Thessalonians. Other letters are dominated by issues that arose after Paul's initial visit.⁶ In 1 Thessalonians, however, Paul's immediate worry was simply whether, in his absence, his readers were holding fast to the faith they had shown before he left them. Expressions of his concern give him ample opportunity to indicate the substance of their faith and of the proclamation that had aroused it. The fervor with which Paul reiterates these themes can be little different from that which imbued his message on its first delivery. One important issue *had* arisen after his departure; yet it, too, clearly reflects the thrust of his initial message.

At any moment,⁷ Paul had warned his listeners, an outpouring of divine

1. 2 Thessalonians adds little of importance for our theme, so the debate about its authenticity need not be entered here. In the body of the text I will provide references to 2 Thessalonians only for the sake of comparison. Brief comments will be confined to the footnotes.

2. This conviction is held by the majority of scholars, though rejected by those (e.g., Bruce, *Galatians*, 3-18, 43-56; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxi-lxxxviii) who believe the Jerusalem council described in Gal. 2 was distinct from, and preceded, that of Acts 15, and that Galatians was written between the two events.

3. Marshall provides a helpful summary of characteristic Pauline themes that are missing, and of others that are present, in the Thessalonian correspondence ("Theology," 173-83).

4. So, e.g., Donfried, with regard to the law and justification; cf. Donfried and Marshall, *Theology*, 64-65.

5. E.g., Riesner, *Period*, 394-403.

6. Romans is an obvious exception; but since Paul had *not* been to Rome, the epistle can have nothing to say of an earlier Pauline proclamation to its addressees.

7. So, at least, it seems in 1 Thessalonians. That 2 Thessalonians, in apparent contrast, insists that a number of events must precede Christ's return is for many scholars the prime reason for doubting its authenticity.

wrath would engulf an unsuspecting humanity and bring it sudden destruction (1:10; 5:3; cf. 2 Thess. 1:5-10). Human sinfulness had all but reached its limit.⁸ Gentiles for their part had paid no heed to the true and living God while serving idols; their immorality was notorious and their conduct in general befitted darkness, not light (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9; 4:4-5; 5:6-7). As for Jews, estrangement from God was signified by their no less notorious history of rejecting his messengers: the prophets of old, the Lord Jesus but recently, and now his apostolic witnesses (2:14-16). Retribution for all would be swift and inescapable (5:3).⁹ Assumed throughout is the divine demand of (what I have earlier labeled) *ordinary* "dikaïosness": human beings — Jews and Gentiles — are required to do what is right, and God will judge them by whether or not they have done it. A second assumption, operative throughout the epistle, is that nobody has; hence the imminent expectation of judgment for all.

Yet Paul had been entrusted by God to deliver to the Thessalonians a message of "good news" about "salvation" (2:4, 16; 5:9) — a salvation that, in the light of humanity's pending doom, was of a very specific sort. In Jesus, God's Son, there is rescue from the coming wrath (1:10; 5:9).¹⁰ Paul does not spell out

8. Note how 1 Thess. 2:16 suggests a "measure" of sinfulness, the "filling" of which precipitates judgment ("wrath"); cf. Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 176; Marshall, *Thessalonians*, 80. That Jews have *already* reached their "limit" and experienced the consequent wrath (note that the wrath "has overtaken" [ἐφθόσεν, aorist tense] them, 2:16) is certainly a claim easier to credit in the period immediately after 70 C.E. than in Paul's lifetime; but the aorist tense may well be proleptic (or "prophetic"; so, e.g., Malherbe, 177), or the verb itself may signify the proximity rather than the actual occurrence of the doom (cf. Marshall, 80-81). The case for the inauthenticity of 2:13-16 (or of parts thereof) is not, in my judgment, a compelling one. Cf. Bockmuehl, "Church," 1-31; Das, *Jews*, chap. 5.

9. Satan is mentioned a couple times in the letter (2:18; 3:5), not as the source of the human predicament — neither he nor any demonic forces are here said to hold humanity in bondage — but as a kind of third party bent on frustrating God's plans and human salvation. Humanity's plight, however, is the direct consequence of its estranged relationship with God. In 2 Thessalonians God himself uses the deceitfulness of Satan to effect the punishment of those who have rejected the truth (2:9-12).

10. Note that, though the message Paul had been entrusted to deliver was "good news" (2:4), it had clearly (and, given the specific nature of the good news, necessarily) been accompanied by a dire portrayal of humanity's plight. Sanders rightly notes that when Paul sums up what he preached and what his listeners were to believe, he speaks of "the action of God in Christ" rather than of the "plight of man" (*Paul Pal. Jud.*, 444). It does not, however, follow that the latter was excluded from his message. Faith leading to *salvation* was the explicit goal of Paul's preaching (Rom. 1:16; 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 1:21; 9:22; 15:2; etc.); but that such faith could ever have been roused in practice without a compelling account of that from which "salvation" is needed is hard to imagine (and certainly at odds with the evidence of 1 Thessalonians) — even though, in Paul's summaries of his message (as, indeed, in later Christian creeds), it is God's saving activity rather than a particular delineation of humanity's prior condition or peril that is the focus of faith.

Similarly, though one can conceive of Christ in many ways (Son of God, Lord, divine Wis-

precisely how Jesus, or the gospel, effects salvation. It is clear, however, that the faith of believers included the conviction that Jesus had died and risen again (4:14). The Lord's death, moreover, was "for us": the language is already traditional¹¹ but here left undeveloped. In some unspecified way the death of Christ made it possible for those who believe to be "with him" (rather than the objects of his wrath) forever (5:10).

So intensive was the Thessalonians' expectation of both promise and threat that they were taken aback when some of their number found sufficient leisure to die in the interval (4:13-18). Such perturbation is scarcely perplexing. Whether or not Paul himself possessed the exalted spirituality of interpreters for whom the ultimate triumph of God and the restoration of the corrupted cosmos are matters of far greater moment than the salvation of the (now hardly to be considered) individual sinner,¹² 1 Thessalonians indicates that he found an immediate point of contact with listeners in Thessalonica by discussing their own prospects of escaping God's wrath. Should a neophyte in the guild of Pauline scholars, or a dotard who learned the trade half a century ago, gauchely suggest today that the topic of Paul's missionary preaching was how sinners might find a gracious God, it would be difficult to base a refutation on the text of our epistle.¹³

The answer Paul obviously gave to the question he is no longer allowed to have asked is that humans facing God's wrath must respond to the "gospel of God" (2:2; or "of Christ," 3:2) by "receiving" it (1:6), recognizing it to be, not the word of human beings, but that of God (2:13). Such a response to the word of God signifies a "turning to" (the true and living) God (1:9) and "faith" in him (1:8). Faith in God is not conceived in 1 Thessalonians apart from an acceptance of the *word* of God proclaimed by the apostles: if God's word is not believed, faith in God is — by definition, we may say — not to be found.¹⁴ More specifi-

dom, etc.) that do not entail a human dilemma, it would not (and could not) occur even to an apostle to ascribe *salvation* exclusively to Christ without a sense that in some way humanity needs to be saved. An "exclusive soteriology" is by definition the one conviction that cannot be entertained prior to, and independently of, any conception of a human plight. To borrow Sanders's terms, if the solution entails *salvation*, it cannot have preceded a plight — though Paul's epistolary depictions of the human plight are in many respects undoubtedly a product of his postconversion thinking.

11. Cf. Hultgren, *Benefits*, 48-49.

12. But see the balanced comments of Sanders, *Paul Pal. Jud.*, 446.

13. Cf. Becker, *Paul*, 133, who claims that the "basic question" answered by Paul's theology in this period is this: "In view of the lostness of humanity and the imminence of final judgment, how can a person be saved? The final answer always concerns the eschatological destiny of the individual, whose disastrous prospect is overcome by the granting of a new destiny through the gospel."

14. Cf. Ljungman, *Pistis*, 89-91, 100-102.

cally (as noted above), the "word of God" that must be received included the declaration that the Lord Jesus had died "for us" and risen again, and that he is the means of God's salvation.

Those bound for salvation are thus distinguished from those doomed to wrath (cf. 5:9) by their response of faith to the gospel. The former are repeatedly identified simply as "the believing ones": the stock designation does not require that the content of their faith be spelled out (1:7; 2:10, 13; cf. 2 Thess. 1:10). In the Thessalonian correspondence a distinction is not drawn between "righteous" and "sinners" (or "the wicked"); the negative counterparts of "believers" are simply those who do not believe (or obey) the truth of the gospel (cf. 2 Thess. 1:8; 2:10, 12; 3:2). They may indeed show their hostility to it by persecuting its adherents (1 Thess. 2:14-16; cf. 2 Thess. 1:6-8).

On one level, then, (human) faith in the gospel separates those headed for salvation from those who are "perishing";¹⁵ on another level, however, it may be said that God has "appointed" the former group to obtain salvation (1 Thess. 5:9). They are the object of God's "calling" (2:12; cf. 2 Thess. 1:11; 2:13) or "election" (1 Thess. 1:4).¹⁶ The divine election took effect through the proclamation of the gospel¹⁷ and the Thessalonians' response of faith. This is clearly the point of 1:4-6, whether Paul is saying that the election meant that,¹⁸ or became obvious to the missionaries because,¹⁹ the gospel was communicated to the Thessa-

15. For the latter term, see 2 Thess. 2:10.

16. Note that Jürgen Becker labels Paul's early (Antiochian) theology "election theology" (see chap. 13, sec. iv above). The explicit reference to "your" election would seem to rule out Wesley's understanding of the subject (i.e., that God has predetermined *that* those who believe in Christ will be saved, but not *who* will so believe; cf. chap. 4 above). It does not follow, however, that Paul held the Calvinist notion that God has predetermined the acts of all human beings, from Adam's sin to the faith of believers and the unbelief of others — and thus the eternal destiny of each individual. However the texts that speak of universal salvation (see n. 125 below) are to be interpreted, they are hardly compatible with a conviction that the eternal reprobation of many human beings has been divinely predetermined. Nor does Paul ever qualify his exhortations or his warnings (e.g., not to receive the grace of God in vain, 2 Cor. 6:1!) with an indication that the obedience or disobedience of his readers simply puts into effect God's predetermined plan. (On Rom. 9–11 see my article "Romans 9–11.") In Paul's day it was common to combine belief in the notions of divine predestination *and* human free will, however incompatible these have come to be seen. Paul himself shows every sign of having done so. Cf. Sanders, *Paul Pal. Jud.*, 257–70, 446–47.

17. Note that, according to 2 Thess. 2:14, the Thessalonians had been (divinely) called "through [the proclamation of] our gospel."

18. The ὅτι introducing v. 5 is here read epexegetically: vv. 5 and 6 spell out that the "election" of v. 4 entailed the effectiveness of the gospel's proclamation and the believing response of its hearers. Cf. Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 110.

19. The ὅτι introducing v. 5 is here taken to be causal: vv. 5 and 6 spell out why the missionaries were convinced that the Thessalonian believers were the objects of God's election. Bruce,

lonians with power and received by them with joyful faith. In 2:13 Paul notes that the word of God "works effectively in you who believe": that "working" surely began (though it did not end) with the initial proclamation of the divine "word."²⁰

Yet the Thessalonian believers were "called" to more than a destiny of "salvation": they were to live a life here and now of holiness, consistent with (and made possible by) the holiness of the Spirit whom God had given them (4:7–8). Salvation from God's wrath means a place in God's kingdom, and it is important that the objects of so glorious a calling should prove "worthy" of it (2:12; cf. 2 Thess. 1:11). They are "children of light" rather than of darkness; their behavior must suit the "day" (1 Thess. 5:4–8). Paul had already given the Thessalonian believers some guidance in "how [they] ought to live and please God" (4:1); in his letter he expands upon those beginnings (4:1–5:22).

The obligations he mentions are by no means to be distinguished from their faith. Both acceptance and rejection of the truth are all-encompassing: life is lived either in the acknowledgment *and* service of the true and living God or in defiance of the truth. Those who reject the truth of the gospel act entirely in character when they do so: they are, in effect, refusing to abandon the life they have already adopted, in which neither acknowledging nor pleasing God plays a role (4:5; 5:7). Their unbelief is itself disobedience, and the disobedience shown in their actions is merely an expression of their unbelief (cf. 2 Thess. 1:8; 2:10, 12). Conversely, those who respond in faith to the gospel are thereby turning *away* from a life of disobedience *to* one oriented around service to God (1 Thess. 1:8–9). Living in a way that pleases God is a natural and, in the end, inevitable expression of such faith: Paul rejoices when he sees the Thessalonians' *faith in action* (1:3; cf. 2 Thess. 1:11). That their faith remains deficient (1 Thess. 3:10) and has room to grow (3:2; cf. 2 Thess. 1:3) does not imply that they harbor doubts of the truth of their convictions; rather, there is still — and throughout their earthly lives there will be (cf. 1 Thess. 3:12–13; 4:1, 10; 5:23) — a need to express more consistently and completely the practical implications of their faith.

More could of course be said by way of summary of 1 Thessalonians, but enough has been said to provide a basis for addressing questions crucial to our theme: Was it a *Lutheran* congregation that Paul established in Thessalonica?

Thessalonians, 13, and Marshall, *Thessalonians*, 53, note the two possibilities without indicating a preference.

20. This Pauline theme is, as we have seen, a favorite of the "Lutherans": every Christian is "begotten" "through the Word of God. The Holy Spirit reveals and preaches that Word, and by it he illumines and kindles hearts so that they grasp and accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it" (Luther, *Large Cat.*, 60). So also Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 15.6: "If [God] does not by His own inward grace sway and act upon the mind, no preaching of the truth is of any avail."

Was he himself, at the time he wrote the letter, a *Lutheran* apostle?²¹ We may take up these questions by looking at what is said both of the human plight and of salvation.

Critical to "Lutheran" doctrine is the conviction that humanity has earned God's condemnation and — it is of the essence of "Lutheranism" to underline the point — that human beings can of themselves do nothing to avert it. With a pinch of goodwill we may well conclude that the Thessalonian Paul thought no differently, though, to be sure, he was not as explicit about human impotence as he might have been.

Certainly he saw humanity's plight as desperate: divine judgment looms over wayward humankind. Here there is nothing original to Paul — or even to early Christianity.²² No pious Jew could believe that things are as they ought in a world in which the creator is widely unacknowledged, his passion for justice and compassion widely disregarded, his will defied. And though God's patience and mercy were affirmed and celebrated, it was inconceivable that in the end he would let mortals prevail or contempt for goodness and truth go unpunished.²³ Jews commonly viewed the Gentile world as headed for warranted perdition,²⁴ though they saw themselves (or at least Jews of their persuasion) as God's people, the objects of God's favor in this age and the next. Paul has clearly adopted this traditional understanding — at least as far as Gentiles are concerned.

With Jewish election and covenant theology he was of course familiar; indeed, in speaking of believers as an "assembly" (ἐκκλησία) and the object of God's "election" (ἐκλογή), he applies to them Jewish terminology for the people of God (1:1, 4).²⁵ But 1 Thessalonians gives no hint that Paul thought loyalty to the Jewish covenant provided a viable alternative to salvation offered in Christ, or even that he considered it an option sufficiently enticing to his readers to

21. I.e., did Paul himself hold the convictions and maintain the emphases that a number of modern interpreters think have been misleadingly imposed on his letters by "Lutheran" tradition? That Paul's denominational affiliation was Baptist is, of course, not in doubt.

22. The (very traditional) understanding of humanity's plight in Paul's earliest epistles itself suggests that Paul did not first devise a dilemma on the basis of Christian convictions. It is clear, however, that Christian convictions came increasingly to shape Paul's more mature anthropology.

23. The terminology is, of course, borrowed from Ps. 9:19-20 (MT 20-21). Pss. 9 and 10 invite, though they do not themselves yet attest, notions of an *eschatological* judgment. In Paul's day such a judgment was expected by most pious Jews. Cf. Reiser, *Judgment*, 19-163.

24. *Some* Jews allowed that *some* Gentiles were righteous and would meet God's approval, but the bleaker outlook is well attested; see Donaldson, *Paul*, 51-74; Sanders, *Paul Pal. Jud.*, 206-12. 1 Thessalonians does not envisage the possibility of "righteous Gentiles" who are "saved" apart from the gospel; only those whom God has "called" through the gospel are destined for salvation.

25. Cf. Thielman, *Paul*, 73.

warrant refutation.²⁶ The message conveyed to the Thessalonians pertained to a salvation but recently inaugurated for *all* who believe, not to the means by which Gentiles could enter an existing people of God.²⁷ If — as we may assume — Paul had once embraced Jewish covenant theology, his "Damascus" encounter with the risen Christ had led him to see that Jews no less than Gentiles needed a savior from the wrath to come. In this respect we may say that Paul's Christian perception of the divine solution preceded his *reconfiguration* of the traditional plight.²⁸

The depiction we find in 1 Thessalonians of the plight of humankind apart from the gospel conforms, we may fairly say, to "Lutheran" expectations. And though Paul makes no point of saying that human beings cannot extricate themselves from the condemnation they have earned, it would be absurd to

26. Still less, to judge by his letter, did Paul inform the Thessalonians that God's remedy for the sin of the world was to be found in a promise he once made to Abraham, or in a covenant he once entered with the patriarch. Paul's Galatian and Roman readers would have wondered at the emphasis, but they would probably have understood the claim that "the gospel consists primarily or essentially in the promise to Abraham that all the nations would be blessed in him," or that "the gospel itself could only be adequately understood by Paul as the outworking of the promises to Abraham" (Dunn, "Gospel," 372, 374; cf. Gager, *Origins*, 240); the Thessalonians (and, I suspect, the Corinthians; see below), bless their hearts, would have been clueless.

27. Cf. Becker, *Paul*, 138-40.

28. This is, of course, the fundamental point behind Sanders's slogan that "the solution preceded the plight." Cf. Sanders, *Paul Pal. Jud.*, 443: "Paul did not, while 'under the law,' perceive himself to have a 'plight' from which he needed salvation. If he were so zealous as to persecute the church, he may well have thought that those who were not properly Jewish would be damned, but the solution to such a plight would be simply to become properly Jewish. It appears that the conclusion that all the world — both Jew and Greek — equally stands in need of a saviour *springs from* the prior conviction that God had provided such a saviour." Also 499: "It was only the revelation of Christ as the saviour of all that convinced him that all men, both Jew and Gentile, were enslaved to sin. Before then, he must have distinguished between Jews, who were righteous (despite occasional transgressions), and 'Gentile sinners' (Gal 2:15). But once he came to the conclusion that all men were enslaved to sin and could be saved only by Christ, he could then readily relate the transgressions which he must previously have supposed were atoned for by the means provided by Judaism to the all-encompassing power of sin, and in fact use the former to prove the latter." Cf. also Donaldson, *Paul*, 144.

This seems right when it comes to the progression of *Paul's* thought (though Sanders also correctly allows that Paul's preconversion thinking remains a matter of speculation [*Law* 152-53]); it is worth remembering, however, that Paul had his predecessors. The early Jewish Christians (following, according to the synoptic Gospels, the lead of both John the Baptist and Jesus) had already declared that divine judgment awaited their compatriots should the latter not respond with faith to the gospel. Nor, of course, was it a Christian innovation to suggest that Israel's election was not to be trusted as a ticket to divine blessing; cf. Deut. 11:26-28; Amos 3:2; etc.; also M. A. Elliott, *Survivors* (see chap. 17, n. 8 above).

think he thought they could. Salvation is offered only through the "gospel of God."

But is salvation itself conceived in "Lutheran" terms?

The formula "justification by faith" does not occur. We may suspect that justification by some *other* means must be under consideration before Paul would articulate his own position so concisely as its antithesis: "we know that a person is declared righteous not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:16).²⁹ Paul would later stress the gratuity of salvation³⁰ and deny that human works play any role when God constitutes his people.³¹ Nothing in 1 Thessalonians would need to be revoked by a Paul emphatic in these convictions; yet they cannot be said to be matters of emphasis here. We may well suspect, again, that an alternative understanding of the composition of God's people must be in view — one that, in Paul's view, compromised these basic truths — before Paul would formulate his convictions in these terms.

On the other hand, if justification entails a divine initiative by which sinners meriting condemnation are reprieved and granted a place in God's kingdom, then we may fairly say that the *essence* of the concept lies at the core of Paul's message to the Thessalonians. A pronouncement of acquittal (δικαιοσύνη) at the last judgment (or in anticipation of that judgment) is not mentioned in 1 Thessalonians, but the salvific *effect* of such a pronouncement is a central theme.³²

The saved are (as we have seen) those called by God and rescued by God's Son. But salvation becomes theirs (as we have also seen) when they receive the word (or gospel) of God: they are "the believers." Should Paul ever be required to sum up the appropriate and essential human response to God's offered salvation in antithesis to some proposed alternative, we can only imagine the Paul of 1 Thessalonians responding, "by faith."³³

Yet, just as the gratuity of salvation, though assumed, is not highlighted in the letter, so the faith required of those who hear the gospel is not contrasted with a path involving the "doing" of righteous deeds (or of what the law demands). Indeed, faith itself *works* in 1 Thessalonians. Only one who has not read their writings could ever imagine such a statement to be abhorrent to the

29. Note, however, that Paul introduces the formula in Galatians as a matter of common knowledge ("we know that . . ."). That Paul is here building on Antiochian tradition is argued by Becker, *Paul*, 96, 287. Cf. also Stuhlmacher, *Doctrine*, 20-24 (and the literature he cites, 23 n. 12).

30. Rom. 3:24; 4:4-5, 16; 5:6-10, 15-21; etc. The subject is explored in Eastman, *Grace*.

31. Cf. esp. Rom. 9:9-18; 11:5-6.

32. Cf. Hübner, "Proprium," 454-58; Kim, *Perspective*, 85-99; Pfeleiderer, *Paulinism*, 1:30.

33. Cf. Hübner, *Theologie*, 51-52.

Reformers;³⁴ still, the Thessalonian Paul never does stress — what the reformers never failed to stress — that salvation is the lot of believers because their faith in what *Christ* did, *not* because of anything they might do.

Whenever Paul has been read in a distinctively "Lutheran" way, it has in response to the perception that human works were being given a place neither the apostle nor the Christian gospel can allow them. The Paul to the Thessalonians says nothing to offend his "Lutheran" readers, but neither does he articulate a distinctively "Lutheran" position. No rival to his message of faith is combated. Whether, when a rival appears, Paul responds along "Lutheran" lines must await our review of later epistles.

ii. 1 and 2 Corinthians³⁵

If 1 Thessalonians is the Pauline letter in which the fewest issues had arisen since the apostle's initial visit, then the Corinthian correspondence lies at the other extreme. Whatever the Corinthians touched turned complicated. Divisions of factions and fornication, of lawsuits and asceticism, of food offered to idols and speech intelligible to none but God preempt any reveries over the days when the church was young, its faith a story to be told. Only passing lines in these letters suggest the substance of Paul's initial proclamation.

The hints suffice to show, however, that the trip from Macedonia to Achaia had not altered Paul's message of salvation. His efforts were focused on "saving" all he could (1 Cor. 9:22; 10:33; cf. 7:16) in view of the judgment that looms for the "world" (4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10) and the condemnation that awaits the "world" "outside" the church (1 Cor. 5:13; 11:32). Its people are "the perishing" (1:18; 2 Cor. 2:15; and that on two counts: "unrighteous" to begin with (thus, in effect, failing the test of *ordinary* "dikaioisness," and thereby meriting their perdition; see 1 Cor. 6:1, 9-10; and cf. 2 Cor. 6:14), they remained "unbelieving" at a time when the gospel was being preached (thus, in effect, failing to avail themselves of *extraordinary* "dikaioisness"; see 1 Cor. 6:6; 7:12-15; 10:27; 14:22; 2 Cor. 4:4; 6:14). Conversely, "those who are being saved" (1 Cor. 1:18), though themselves once "unrighteous" (6:9-11), are now "the believers" (1:21; 2 Cor. 6:15). The object of Paul's faith was the apostolic kerygma (1 Cor. 1:21; 2:4-5; 15:1-2, 11, 14): "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; he was buried, and he was raised again

34. Cf. Luther, *Freedom*, 31:372-73: "Our faith in Christ does not free us from work from false opinions concerning works, that is, from the foolish presumption that justification is acquired by works."

35. It will be convenient to treat the Corinthian epistles as a unit, and prior to the division of Galatians, though the relative dating of these epistles remains a matter of controversy.

the third day, according to the scriptures" (15:3-4). What they were saved *from* (apart from destruction) becomes clear when Paul says that, should their faith prove vain, they would be yet "in their sins" (15:17). Had billboards blotted the landscape on the road to Cenchreae, a Paul who exploited every available means in his efforts to "save some" (9:19-22) might well have proposed the pregnant text, "Now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

The plight, then, for which the gospel provided the solution was posed by people's sins (1 Cor. 15:3, 17). Paul was prompt with illustrative lists of the sorts of misdeeds that made people "unrighteous" and excluded them from God's kingdom (6:9-10; cf. 5:10): misdeeds characteristic of the Corinthians themselves before they were "washed," "sanctified," and "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (6:11). But the Corinthian Paul could also capture the woefulness of humanity in the doleful words "In Adam all die" (15:22). This is hardly an alternative account of the human dilemma to that which attributes it to human sin. Adam, after all, is the original and prototypical *sinner*: knowing what he ought to do, he was tempted and chose to do differently, thereby destroying his own and marring creation's integrity. Human sinfulness remains at the heart of human misery, but to trace its roots to Adam is to indicate both its universality and its inescapability: what Adam did is what all human beings, in Adam, continue to do. Furthermore, to see Adam's sin as the source of *death* ("Since by man [Adam] came death"; "in Adam all die" [15:21-22]) is to sum up the biblical vision that sees life lived in denial of its Creator as out of step with reality and, in the end, unsustainable.³⁶ It is already a kind of death, and the death to which it leads is both its divine judgment and its inevitable outcome. If "the sting of death is sin" (15:56), sin is that which makes death not the normal, natural, not-to-be-regretted ending of a terrestrial life, but the *unnatural*, *unnecessary* termination of a life lived — unnaturally — in rebellion against its Maker.

But there is more to be said. Powers of darkness are by no means prominent in the Corinthian correspondence,³⁷ but Satan *is* called the "god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4); the supernatural powers served by pagans are in fact "demons" (1 Cor. 10:20-21); and on a standard interpretation, the "rulers of this age" in 2:6, 8 are angelic but evil forces.³⁸ Clearly Paul saw human deeds of unrighteousness not simply as a falling short of divine expectations (though they were emphatically that), but also as deeds serving the unrighteous ends of powers themselves hostile to God. If sinfulness has become inherent in humanity as

a species, then the powers of evil may surely be said to prevail in "this age" — even if Paul, monotheist that he was, thought they, in the end, served divine purposes (5:4-5; cf. 2 Thess. 2:9-12). That said, it should be added that the Corinthian Paul depicts salvation as a deliverance from sins and from perdition but not from satanic powers.

1 Thessalonians conveyed no hint that salvation might even be imagined anywhere but in Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:25, with its reference to a "new covenant" (quoted from the Last Supper tradition), at least implies the existence of an *old* covenant; and indeed, the old and the new are explicitly contrasted in 2 Corinthians 3:6-14. Still, glorious though the old (Sinaitic) covenant is said to have been, no salvific potential is ascribed to it. Its essence is found in the commandments (the Decalogue engraved on tablets of stone (thus making it a covenant "of the letter," as opposed to the new covenant "of the Spirit" [3:6]). Its "ministry" was one of death (3:7; cf. "the letter kills," 3:6) and condemnation (3:9). Since humanity in Adam is already subject to death (1 Cor. 15:21-22) and condemnation (11:32; cf. 5:13), the Sinaitic covenant, as portrayed in 2 Corinthians, did nothing to alter in any fundamental way the human condition — not even for the people to whom it was given. With or without the Sinaitic covenant, "in Adam all die."³⁹

In the Corinthian epistles, then, as in 1 Thessalonians, the *only* option considered for salvation is the apostolic kerygma. Several features of the Corinthian discussion merit attention here.

1. Though there is nothing new in the creedal formula "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3), the emphasis in the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians on the *cross* of Christ is striking and original (1:13, 17, 18, 23; 2:2, 8). Paul's transparent aim with these references is to puncture the pretensions of his readers, reminding them that through the scandal and foolishness of the cross God had overturned human values, demonstrated the futility of human "wisdom," and left human beings with nothing of which to boast (1:18-29).⁴⁰ The issue that pre-

36. See my *Preface*, 76-78.

37. Cf. 1 Cor. 5:5; 7:5; 10:20-21; 15:24; 2 Cor. 2:11; 4:4; 11:14.

38. Cf., e.g., Barrett, *Corinthians*, 70; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 61.

39. Rightly, Wright, "Law," 143: "the problem of Israel . . . is the hidden Adam in the Jewish Also Cummins, *Crucified Christ*, 198. Note that in 1 Cor. 15:56 the "strength of sin" is said to lie "under the law"; i.e., the law provokes the rebellion of the willful and condemns it as transgression. So presumably, we may interpret a cryptic text, drawing on the evidence of Romans (4:15; 5:13; 7:11). In its context in Corinthians, however, the verse appears as something of a thunderbolt from a Roman sky. Hahn ("Entwicklung," 355) concludes that Paul must have communicated to the Corinthians while in their city his understanding of sin, the law, death, and — because it is so closely linked to these themes — justification.

40. As we saw in chap. 13, sec. iv, Jürgen Becker sees here the distinctive feature of the second period in Paul's theological development. Certainly the mind-set of 1 Cor. 1:18-31 pervades the Corinthian epistles, with their insistence on the display of divine strength in human weakness (2 Cor. 4:7, 10-11; 12:9-10) and reminders of human dependency on divine grace (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 1:9, 12; 3:5-6; 12:9).

voked one of the most memorable passages in all of Paul's writings had nothing to do with works righteousness: the Corinthians were *not* attempting to gain God's favor by good works of their own. Nonetheless, as many scholars have pointed out, the Paul who wrote this passage could *not* have conceived of salvation as a cooperative enterprise for which human beings could claim any credit. He proceeds immediately to say as much (1:30-31; see below).

2. As in 1 Thessalonians, God "elects" (1:27, 28) and "calls" (1:9, 24, 26; 7:17-24) his people; and as in 1 Thessalonians, God's call is extended and his election made effective through the proclamation of the gospel and the human response of faith. The "called" in 1:24 are the same as "those who believe" in 1:21; that they are called becomes apparent in their recognition of the power and wisdom of God in the kerygma of Christ crucified (1:23-24).⁴¹ In keeping with the emphasis running throughout the passage, Paul goes on to stress that God focused his election and calling on those who have no claims to earthly attention, thereby exposing the emptiness of all that humans esteem (1:26-29).

3. The language of justification is not prominent in the Corinthian epistles, but it is present. Inasmuch as it appears unannounced, it was presumably familiar to Paul's readers.

In any ordinary sense of the word, "righteousness" (δικαιοσύνη) is what people ought to do, or what they have when they have done it. It is not apparent how righteousness in this sense can be conveyed from one moral being to another, still less how one can *be* another's righteousness. Hence the extraordinary element in Paul's declaration of 1:30-31: it is "thanks to God" that the Corinthians "are in Christ Jesus, who became for us, by the gift of God, wisdom, righteousness (δικαιοσύνη), holiness, and redemption, in order that it might be true, as the Scripture says, 'Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.'" Whether Paul's curious wording indicates merely that Christ became the means by which the Corinthians were justified (i.e., declared innocent, cleared of wrongdoing), or whether it refers to something like the "interchange" envisaged in 2 Corinthians 5:21⁴² — we *became* the righteousness that Christ represents because God made him the sin that we know but he does not — is not clear. Paul's point here is that this extraordinary attribution of Christ's righteousness to others leaves them with nothing of which to boast. That alternative understandings of the path to righteousness leave open the door to boasting is a possible but by no means necessary implication; no other path is considered. That *this* path deliberately excludes human grounds for boasting is not implied but stated.

41. Note how human faith is pictured as the product of a divine work of creation in 2 Cor. 4:6; cf. also how God is thought to put in place the conditions for human faith in 1 Cor. 8:3; 12:3.

42. Cf. Hooker, *Adam*, 13-25.

In 1 Corinthians 6:8 Paul accuses the Corinthians of wronging (ἀδικεῖ) their own "brothers"; he then reminds them that wrongdoers (ἄδικοι, the righteous) will be excluded from God's kingdom. There follows a list of do of various wrongs of which some of the Corinthians themselves had once b guilty — before they were "washed," "sanctified," and "justified (ἐδικαιώθη) in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (6:11). I (to reflect the play on words in the Greek) the "*undikaiois*" were "*dikaioisif*" — the unrighteous were declared righteous — points (as in Rom. 5:7-9) to extraordinary nature of the transaction. The parallel with the metaphor washing suggests that one has to be cleansed of guilt to be cleared of it; that the act by which God declares sinners righteous gets rid of sin rather than s ply overlooks it (the point becomes important when Paul insists that G own righteousness is vindicated in the procedure [Rom. 3:25-26]). Prob Paul is thinking of the Corinthians' baptism (the phrases with which he e v. 11 may well echo baptismal formulas) as representing the washing that r justification possible.

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Is justification in *Corinthians*, then, by faith and apart from works? Es tially, yes; formulaically, no. The human response of faith to the gospel kery (it is *such* faith that is in view, not faith as the characteristic attitude show particularly trusting souls) is what is said to distinguish the "saved" from "perishing" (1 Cor. 1:18, 21; cf. 2 Cor. 2:15-16); it follows that it separates the j fied from the unrighteous. And certainly the justification of the unright who believe, like the salvation of the otherwise perishing, is represented as vine initiative for which humans — as Paul programmatically insists — claim no credit. On this basis the "Lutheran" establishment may well choc declare the Paul of Corinthians an *honorary* member of their fold. On the hand, he has not yet declared his *own* membership or recited their creed

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To sum up: in Paul's references to the "world" "outside" the Christian community as made up of ἄδικοι (the "*unrighteous*") and ἀπολλύμενοι (the "*per-*

ishing") and to the divine judgment that hangs over them are implicit the unmet, universal demands of ordinary "dikaiousness." Here lies the essence of the human plight as depicted in Corinthians (and 1 Thessalonians). No alternative to the cross of Christ is considered as a path to righteousness. The Sinaitic covenant, though divine and glorious, found its essence in divine commands; its function in highlighting the condemnation and death that follow human sin. Paul did not go to Corinth to invite the local Gentiles to share in a salvation already enjoyed by their Jewish neighbors under the Jewish covenant: those under the Sinaitic covenant were themselves "in Adam," and as such, under sentence of death. With no other option in view, and with no apparent emphasis or programmatic purpose, Paul nonetheless uses the language of (extraordinary) righteousness as *one* way to depict the salvation he proclaimed: through Christ God declares the guilty innocent, clearing while cleansing them of their sins, thereby initiating a reconciliation with sinners. Those who respond to this kerygma with faith enter the community of the saved. The mode of their salvation, including specifically that of their justification, leaves them with no grounds for boasting.

iii. Galatians

That God *requires* righteousness of all human beings is presupposed whenever Paul insists that the world, unless it responds to the apostolic kerygma, faces wrath and condemnation. That God, through the apostolic kerygma, *offers* righteousness (now in the sense of an acquittal from wrongdoing) to sinners may be said to be implicit in 1 Thessalonians, explicit but not prominent in the Corinthians writings. No alternative path to righteousness is considered in these letters. It is in the epistle to the Galatians, written specifically to combat the attraction felt by Paul's converts to a rival understanding of the route to righteousness, that "righteousness" language first becomes prominent.

The controversy arose over circumcision: Paul's opponents⁴³ were trying to "compel [the Galatians] to be circumcised" (Gal. 6:12). Itself an indifferent act (5:6; 6:15), circumcision found its significance in signaling the adoption of a Jewish way of life. Paul sees the Galatians already beginning to "observe days,

43. Paul's insistence in Gal. 1–2 on the genuineness of his apostleship, the divine source of his message, and the recognition he received from the "pillars" of the church in Jerusalem was undoubtedly in response to charges made by the advocates of circumcision in Galatia: disputing aspects of Paul's message, they found it important to undermine his authority in the eyes of the Galatians. To call them Paul's "opponents" fairly captures this aspect of their activity in Galatians even if it leaves unstated the views they intended to promote. Cf. Smiles, *Gospel*, 31–50.

months, seasonal festivals, and years" (4:10); *Jewish Sabbath* and festival practices must have been in view. He tells them of a departure from "the truth of the gospel" (2:14) in Antioch similar to that which now threatens them (1:6–9) — and it, too, involved Jewish observances: Peter and other Jewish Christians, anxious not to violate Jewish dietary restrictions, had withdrawn from table fellowship with Gentile believers (2:11–14). Paul recalls the terms with which he rebuked them by saying that they were "compelling the Gentiles to live as Jews" (2:14). As a response to Peter's actions the words are barely comprehensible. Perhaps Paul uttered them in Antioch with an explanation he does not now report: "what your actions say to Gentiles is that Jewish food laws are important and that they should adopt them too." But quite possibly Paul paraphrases what he originally said in these terms to highlight the similarity between the advocacy of Jewish food laws in Antioch and that of circumcision in Galatia; in both cases, Paul is saying, Gentiles are being told that they must live as Jews.⁴⁴

Circumcision has its pains, and Jewish Sabbath and dietary laws their restrictions; in themselves they would have enticed no one. Moreover, in themselves they were believed by no one to be the path to righteousness.⁴⁵ The only grounds by which they could have been effectively urged upon the Galatians was the claim that the God whom the Galatians had come to know through Jesus Christ had commanded that these observances, too, be kept by his worshippers. One could not belong to God's people (the Galatians must have been told) and remain uncircumcised, or dismissive of Jewish food and festival laws.

Such an insistence, in the view of Paul's opponents (though not of Paul), was by no means inconsistent with faith in Jesus as the Christ who died and rose again. Paul calls those who advocated a similar position in Jerusalem "false brothers" (2:4): "false" because, to Paul's mind, they did not uphold the truth of the gospel; but looking like "brothers," presumably because they accepted the messiahship of Jesus. The advocates of circumcision in Galatia, too, appeared as Christians; so much we may infer from Paul's charge that they advanced a different (and perverted) *gospel* (1:6–9) and promoted circumcision to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ (6:12) — a risk that would not have arisen had they not believed Jesus to be the Messiah. Untenable though their position was deemed by Paul, they would undoubtedly have maintained that the coming of

44. Cf. Eckstein, *Verheissung*, 4.

45. Thus when Paul contests the view that one can be declared righteous "by the works of the law" (Gal. 2:16), he does not mean simply, "One is not declared righteous by [observing] circumcision and the food and festival laws" — even though these issues provoked the current crisis. What he is rejecting is the view that one can be declared righteous on the basis of (one's observance of) the Jewish law (cf. 2:21), of which these requirements were a part.

Messiah (a hope long entertained by Jews!) by no means canceled God's covenant with his people or invalidated its laws.

For the Jewish Christian advocates of circumcision, then, the Jewish covenant⁴⁶ and laws still provided the framework within which God's people must live. This was, moreover, the position attributed to them by Paul. When in chapter 1 Paul introduced his own past "in Judaism" (1:13-14), his immediate point was to underline that only through a divine revelation had he come to preach his present message (1:11-12, 15-16); but no doubt he also wanted to say that the way of life that the Galatians were tempted to adopt was one he knew well but had — in the light of God's revelation of his Son — abandoned.⁴⁷ They wanted to be "under the law" (4:21), to be "declared righteous by the law" (5:4; cf. 2:21; 3:21) and its "works" (2:16). Paul believed they needed to be told the conditions under which those who "are of the works of the law" really live (3:10), the slavery to which the covenant of Sinai in fact gives birth (4:21-31; cf. 3:23-24; 4:1-3), the limited purpose for which the law was given (3:19-25). Though the question that provoked the controversy was whether the Galatian believers should submit to distinctively Jewish practices, Paul has little to say about those practices per se. Everything in his response indicates that, to his mind, the issue could only be addressed by assessing the adequacy of the Sinaitic covenant to provide a framework within which its adherents could enjoy God's blessing, inherit God's promises, and be found righteous before God.⁴⁸ From all of this it follows that,

46. Presumably Paul's opponents drew no distinction between the divine commitments to Abraham and the covenant between God and Israel entered at Mount Sinai. Paul (as we shall see) did.

47. We may compare Phil. 3:2-6, where, again, in dismissing Jewish Christian advocates of circumcision, Paul equates their position with that of his *pre-Christian* past.

48. Cf. Calvin, *Comm.* Gal. 2:15: Our opponents object "that the problem was only about ceremonies. This we allow. Why then, they say, should Paul pass from a particular to the whole? This was the sole cause of the mistake of Origen and Jerome. They did not think it consonant that, while the false apostles were contending about ceremonies alone, Paul should cover a wider field. But they did not consider that the very reason for his disputing so keenly was that the doctrine had more serious consequences than at first appeared. Paul was worried not so much about ceremonies being observed as that the confidence and glory of salvation should be transferred to works. . . . Paul therefore is not wandering from the point when he begins a disputation on the law as a whole, whereas the false apostles were arguing only about ceremonies." Also *Inst.* 3.19.3: "Of course I admit that Paul is there [in Galatians] discussing ceremonies, for his quarrel is with false apostles who were trying to reintroduce into the Christian church the old shadows of the law that had been abolished by Christ's coming. But for the discussion of this question, the higher topics upon which the whole controversy rested had to be considered." Stanton ("Law," 103-4) makes a similar point: "I concede that Paul's first use of the phrase 'works of the law' in 2:16a is triggered by the issues which dominate the preceding discussion in Gal 2, circumcision and food laws. But as the initial listeners heard the argument of the follow-

for Paul, the position of the Jewish Christian advocates of circumcision departed in no essential respect from that of non-Christian Jews (and thus that of his own past). Both took the stance that God's favor was to be found within the confines, and among the practitioners, of the Jewish (Sinaitic) law. This position, and not circumcision or other Jewish boundary markers per se (see 5:6; 6:15!), provoked Paul's passionate opposition.

To judge from the quandary of Paul's converts and the contents of his other writings, Paul had not complicated his missionary proclamation in Galatia by raising issues related to the Jewish law. The age in which his hearers lived and themselves participated — he had told them — was evil, a condition reflected in the sins they committed (1:4) and entailing their slavery to powers other than God (4:8). Christ's death for their sins made possible their deliverance from the evil age, their freedom from the enslaving powers, and their knowledge of the true God (1:4; 4:8-9). Quite possibly, since Paul introduces the terminology in his letter without explanation, Paul had used the language of "righteousness," too, in his account of the difference Christ made: those who believe in Jesus Christ, though otherwise condemned as sinners, are declared righteous by God (cf. 2:15-17). A former Pharisee, Paul could not but have realized that he was attributing to Christ benefits he had once associated with life under the Jewish law; he must also have concluded long since that the Jewish law could not supply them. Yet he seems not to have troubled his converts with consideration of (what he saw as) an inadequate alternative to⁴⁹ his message. If we bear in mind, further, that the Galatian believers were confronted with advocates of the Jewish law who presented it *not* as an alternative to faith in Jesus Christ but as the framework within which such faith was to be lived, and that the Galatians themselves would have recalled Paul's Jewish background, his service of the God Jews worshiped, and his reliance on their Scriptures, we will perhaps find their confusion less astounding than did Paul (1:6; cf. 3:1).

For Paul, on the other hand, the alternatives were to be weighed not simply as potential paths to a proper religious life but as potential solutions to the human dilemma — the dilemma posed by human sins and their pending judgment, by human participation in an evil age and its pending dissolution, by human alignment with supernatural powers whose day had passed and whose doom was imminent. All these aspects of humanity's plight as Paul saw it are

ing verses unfold, they were left in no doubt that Paul was concerned about far more than these 'test cases of Jewish distinctiveness over against Gentiles.' Paul rejects the agitators' claim that one's standing before God (past, present, and future) is determined by carrying out the requirements of the law."

49. Instead of "an inadequate alternative to," we ought perhaps to say "the divine preparation for"; see the discussion below.

well attested in non-Christian Jewish writings of his day; none, then, is the creation of his Christian imagination. Nor was it first Christian Jews who thought the majority of their Jewish contemporaries were numbered with the Gentile wicked: *correct* observance of the law had become a divisive issue among Jews, causing the line between righteous and wicked to be differently drawn in different Jewish circles. What *was* new with Paul and his like-minded Christians was the conviction that life under the Jewish law, *however* interpreted, was subject to the same condemnation that threatened the Gentile world. It was this conviction that Paul used his letter to press upon his Galatian converts. The law consigned its subjects to slavery and sin; why should they adopt it now?

Paul's argument begins in 2:15. Several of its aspects have been highlighted in earlier chapters; here it will be helpful if we review its progression in context.⁵⁰ To appreciate its force we must recall that, though Paul's contention was that life under the Jewish law cannot convey God's blessing, those for whom the thesis was to be proven — in Antioch (as reported, beginning in 2:11) as well as Galatia — were themselves Christians; hence the implications of Christian faith and the experiences it had brought are fairly invoked in the argumentation.

Paul begins, however, by articulating (not without irony, in view of v. 17)⁵¹ a standard Jewish view: "we" (Paul is purportedly reporting his speech to Jewish Christians at Antioch) may take as given that Gentiles are sinners whose way of life God condemns (2:15).⁵² The normal Jewish view was that the case

50. Though all scholars agree with some of what follows, and some scholars may even agree with everything that follows, it is certain that not all scholars will agree with everything that follows. This is not a Bad Thing, still less a Cause for Deep Regret. Nonetheless, to achieve the good of an uncluttered reading of Paul in the text, I will, in what follows, confine the good of scholarly exchange to the footnotes.

51. Cf. Holmberg, "Identity," 406-7.

52. Gentiles were, proverbially, "sinners," and they were also outside the covenant, but they were not proverbially sinners *because* they were outside the covenant but because they, proverbially, sinned; cf. Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Thess. 4:5; and chap. 15, sec. v above. From some recent accounts one could be excused for concluding that Paul thought the sinfulness of humankind to be traced, not to the disobedience of Adam, but to the grace of God in choosing, and entering a covenant with, Israel: Gentiles thereby *became* sinners (they were "outside the covenant"); and the possibility was opened for Jews to *become* sinners (they promptly obliged) by presumptuously thinking that God's blessings were reserved for those who observed the covenantal boundary markers. But — the point is important, its subtlety notwithstanding — righteousness is a matter of what one ought to do, and sin, of what one ought not. And though many Jews certainly believed that the laws of the covenant were what all people ought to do, and thus that all who were outside the covenant and did not keep its laws were sinners, the point of calling them sinners was that they did not do what they ought, not that they did not belong to the covenant. Paul's point in 2:15 is no different. For the Paul of Galatians all human beings (apart from those who had received the Spirit) live in the realm of the flesh and produce its works. Paul's illustra-

with Jews was different: to be sure, Jews dismissive of the law were no better than Gentiles, but from such "sinners" those committed to the law's observance were to be distinguished — and would be distinguished by God — as "righteous."⁵³ For Paul, however, this standard distinction cannot be maintained (or, better, is seen no longer to be true) by those who hold that one must believe in Jesus Christ⁵⁴ to be declared righteous by God. For them it follows that Jews living under the law⁵⁵ are no more "the righteous" than are Gentiles.⁵⁶ When Jews — like Paul, Peter, and Barnabas — believed in Jesus Christ so that God would declare them righteous, the obvious implication was that the life they hitherto had lived under the law had not sufficed for the purpose (2:16a, b). Indeed, if Gentile *sinners* need to believe in Jesus Christ to be declared righteous, and "we too" believed to achieve the same end, then "we too" were found to be⁵⁷ "sinners" (2:17a). The Jewish law has not fundamentally altered the human condition.⁵⁸ And Scripture itself says as much: in

tive list of such misdeeds (5:19-21) is neither reducible to nor indeed inclusive of the "vices" of being outside the covenant or excluding from the current people of God those not showing the boundary markers of the erstwhile people of God. Human sinfulness antedated the Jewish covenant, and found typical expressions among both Jews and Gentiles that are quite independent of covenantal considerations.

53. They were not, however, thought to be sinless. Winninge (*Sinners*, 333) makes the point by distinguishing between "sinners" and the "sinfully [but *basically*] righteous." Cf. Aletti, *Loi*, 42-43.

54. On the phrase διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, see chap. 16, n. 18. Since — apart from the verses in dispute — Paul never uses πίστις or its cognates of Christ's act of obedience; since the latter, in any case, is not under discussion here; and since human faith is persistently contrasted with alternatives (involving the law [Rom. 10:5-6, with the "faith" of v. 6 expanded on in vv. 9-10; Gal. 3:11-12], or works [Rom. 4:2-3; 9:32], or works of the law [Gal. 2:16]) in justification texts, it seems to me self-evident that διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, which is here contrasted with "by the works of the law" as a possible means of justification, should be read "faith in Jesus Christ."

55. To be "declared righteous by the works of the law" (2:16) is to be "declared righteous by the law" (5:4; cf. 2:21): Paul uses "law" and "the works of the law" interchangeably in dismissing the possibility that one can, by doing the works required by the law, be found righteous before God. Cf. n. 45 above, and chap. 16, sec. ii. Those "under the law" (3:23; 4:5, 21), or those "of the works of the law" (3:10), are those whose righteousness is assessed by their conformity with the works demanded by the law.

56. Cf. Winninge, *Sinners*, 264.

57. "We" were found to be so "when we sought to be declared righteous through Christ." "Paul still has in mind the event of coming to faith" (Smiles, *Gospel*, 153). Cf. Eckstein, *Verheissung*, 31-32; Lambrecht, "Reasoning," 56-58.

58. Implicit already in 2:15-17 are claims that Paul will develop in chap. 3: the law brings no alleviation to the condition of sinners, but curses them and keeps them confined under the power of sin; yet it is precisely the subjects of sin who are declared righteous by faith in Jesus Christ (3:10, 21-25). Note that the declaration of righteousness through Jesus Christ is character-

God's eyes no one alive can be deemed righteous (LXX Ps. 142:2; MT 143:2).⁵⁹ The global statement permits no exception for Jews living under the law; hence, applied to this issue, it becomes "by the works of the law no flesh will be declared righteous" (2:16d).⁶⁰

At this point Paul anticipates — he had no doubt repeatedly encountered — a vehement protest; its formulation is no less revealing of Paul's thought than its refutation. Those who brought the charge may well have thought Christ's death provided for the atonement and forgiveness of the inevitable sins that Christians, like all human beings, have committed; they did *not* think it did away with the fundamental distinction between the "righteous" (those committed to serving God and obeying his commands) and "sinners" (who show no such inclination). To say that Jews who believe in Christ prove ("we too") to be "sinners" is to erase that distinction, to disregard the law, and to discount

istically one offered to sinners, in both 2:15-17 and 3:22. *Such* a declaration, to Paul's mind, is precisely what the law — whose commands provide a basis for distinguishing sinners from the righteous, and for condemning the former while approving the latter — cannot supply.

59. "No one alive" becomes "[not] all flesh" in Paul's paraphrase. He introduces a term ("flesh") that traditionally marked the unbridgeable gap between humanity and God and that, in his usage, spoke of humanity in its untransformed condition of alienation from, and rebellion against, God. Cf. Barclay, *Truth*, 178-215. The verse Paul paraphrases was cited also at Qumran: "Do not judge me according to my sin; for no one living is deemed righteous (*yitsdaq*) before you" (11Q5 XXIV, 7); cf. 1QH XVII (Sukenik IX), 14-15; also VIII (Sukenik XVI), 19; XV (Sukenik VII), 28. In both cases (as in the original psalm) the point is that, judged strictly by their deeds, sinful human beings cannot possibly measure up to divine standards of righteousness. Cf. Hübner, *Theologie*, 65-67; Thielman, *Law*, 37; also Hays, "Logic," 114-15, who makes the same point about the quotation of the psalm in Rom. 3. Needless to say, the terms of membership in "the" covenant are not in view in the claim that *no* human being is righteous in God's eyes. Dahl rightly notes, "Some of the Scrolls from Qumran speak of the sin of man and of God's righteousness in a manner that sounds strikingly Pauline, not to say Lutheran" (*Studies*, 97). "The beliefs voiced by members of the Qumran community correspond to a number of the classical formulations of the doctrine of justification. The ungodly is righteous only through grace. A man is saved not by his own righteousness but by God's saving righteousness. Man is at the same time sinful and righteous" (99). The routes by which Paul and the Qumran writers reached their sense of a pervasive human sinfulness were presumably quite different, but that sense roused in both a conviction of the radical need for divine grace if any human being is to be deemed righteous.

60. Cf. Eckstein, *Verheissung*, 28-29. The question might be raised why the global statement of Ps. 143:2 is thought to rule out righteousness by the works of the law but not that granted by faith in Jesus Christ. But the point of the text (in Ps. 143 as well as in its Pauline paraphrase) is that human conduct per se — Paul notes that this includes the doing of works demanded by the law — cannot measure up to divine standards of righteousness (cf. the similar statements in Job 4:17-19; 15:14-16; 25:4-6); in neither the psalm nor in Paul are the words meant to exclude God's dealing in grace with creatures he must find sinful.

any moral efforts devoted to its fulfillment. It is, in effect, to make Christ a "promoter of sin" (2:17).⁶¹

Such was Paul's gospel when seen from the perspective of those who believed the Jewish covenant and law still provided the framework within which God's people must live.

To Paul's mind they had not rightly grasped the significance of Christ's death. That death was not to be understood as atoning for the inevitable shortcomings of those who, because of their basic commitment to observe the law, were otherwise righteous; rather, it showed that there can *be* no righteousness based on the law's observance — for otherwise Christ would not have had to die (2:21).⁶² Apart from the divine provision made in the death of Christ, all human beings — including those "under the law" — live effectively in the service, not of God, but of sin. Their need is not for the forgiveness of incidental sins, but for an (apocalyptic!)⁶³ transformation of the conditions of human existence: their life in sin's service must end, preferably in something other than their own (final) death. For believers in Christ this has happened: they have been (like Paul) "crucified with Christ," "dying" because of the death sentence that the law pronounces on their life in sin ("I died by the law," 2:19; cf. 3:10),⁶⁴ but in the process experiencing the end of their old existence, regulated

61. Cf. Pfeleiderer, *Paulinism*, 1:5. According to Smiles (*Gospel*, 153 n. 108), Paul always uses $\mu\eta\ \gamma\epsilon\nu\omicron\rho\tau\omicron$ to deny "an improper conclusion drawn from a *true* ('fulfilled') premise." It is the conclusion (Christ is a promoter of sin), *not* the premise (we proved to be sinners), that is emphatically excluded. Paul's gospel proved peculiarly liable to this charge in his day: cf. Rom. 3:8 ("Some claim that we say, 'Let's do evil so that good may come of it'"); 6:1 ("Shall we go on living in sin so that there may be more and more grace?"). Cf. Eckstein, *Verheissung*, 40-41; Smiles, 148-49. In its day, then, the distinctive (and, for some, damnable) feature of Paul's gospel was held to be that it promoted sin by discounting the law and moral efforts devoted to its fulfillment. This suggests that Paul was too "Lutheran" for his contemporaries' liking.

62. Sanders, who treats "righteousness by the law" and "righteousness by faith (in Christ)" merely as alternative means to the same end, sees in Gal. 2:21 nothing more than a dogmatic declaration that since righteousness is by faith, it cannot be by the law (*Law*, 27; *Paul Pal. Jud.*, 484). In effect, this means that the coming of Christ made the righteousness of the law unviable rather than that the unviability of the righteousness of the law is what necessitated the coming of Christ. But for Paul the death of Christ (2:21) and "righteousness by faith (in Christ)" represent the divine possibility offered to *sinners* who *cannot* be found righteous under the law. Apart from the problem of sin, a solution involving Christ's *death* (cf. "for our sins," 1:4) makes little sense. Note also the connection between a dilemma *created under the law* and the solution offered through Christ in 3:13, 22-25; 4:4-5. Cf. chap. 15, sec. iii above.

63. To use Louis Martyn's terminology (see chap. 13 above) — which captures an essential aspect of Paul's thought, even if the word is used somewhat loosely. See also B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 35-67.

64. Cf. Smiles, *Gospel*, 171-72.

by the law,⁶⁵ in sin's service ("I died to the law," 2:19). Now they may indeed live for God ("that I might live for God"), but only inasmuch as Christ, in whose crucifixion they have shared, is now the effective force in their lives ("I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" [2:20]). To return to the old, untransformed life that was ended at the cross ("If I were to build up again that which I destroyed") would be to prove oneself a wrongdoer (2:18) — both because it would be the wrong thing to do and because it would be to revert to the kind of existence in which wrong things were inevitably done. And it would be to frustrate the grace of God (2:21).

The movement of Paul's argument to this point should be noted. Nowhere has Paul suggested that the Christian gospel was needed if Gentiles were to enjoy blessings already experienced by Jews under their law (or covenant); it was needed, Paul indicates, not so Gentiles might become like Jews, but because in essential respects Jews under the law did not differ from Gentiles. Gentiles apart from the law are sinners; under the law Jews are sinners too. Gentiles apart from the law are only declared righteous by faith in Jesus Christ; the same path to righteousness must be taken by Jews. Gentiles apart from the law do not live for God, but Jews under the law must first *die* to the law before they can live for God themselves. Christ died for Jews under the law (like Paul) no less than for Gentile sinners, and both alike must die *with* him. Should Gentile believers, then, be circumcised and adopt other distinctively Jewish practices? No, because such practices mark life under the Jewish law — and Christ, not the Jewish law, is the solution to the human dilemma.

It was, moreover, by faith in Christ, and quite apart from any practices prescribed by the law, that the Galatians had come to experience the blessings of the new age marked by God's Spirit; for their part the subjects of the law remain in the realm of the "flesh" (i.e., the sphere of untransformed humanity). What, then, could possibly move the Galatians to want to return to the realm of the law and flesh (3:1-5)? Besides, Scripture itself shows that faith, not the Jewish law, is the basis on which God pronounces people righteous: "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (3:6, citing Gen. 15:6).

That Abraham's route to righteousness was not peculiar to himself is apparent from the promise that in him all nations would be blessed: God would declare all righteous (Scripture was announcing in advance) who shared Abraham's faith (3:7-9, with a citation conflating Gen. 12:3 and 18:18). Far from a blessing, the law brings a curse on those for whom it prescribes the path to righteousness (3:10a), since it anathematizes all who "do not continue in all the

things written in the book of the law, to do them" (3:10b, citing Deut. 27:26).⁶⁶ Scripture itself confirms that no one can be found righteous "by" (or "under") the law (ἐν νόμῳ): "the righteous by *faith* will live" (3:11, citing Hab. 2:4). The route of faith (in the apostolic kerygma) here announced is of course very different from that prescribed by the law: "The one who does these things⁶⁷ will

66. The implication on which the argument is based — that none of the adherents of the law "continues in" and "does" all that the law requires — is one the sympathetic reader of Galatians will instinctively make, knowing that Jews under the law no less than Gentiles apart from it belong to the present evil age because of their sins (1:4); that Jews no less than Gentiles have been found sinners who can only be declared righteous by faith in Jesus Christ (2:15-17); that life under the law is marked by transgression, not service of God (2:18-19); that the sphere of the law is that of the flesh, untransformed by God's Spirit (3:2-3), and therefore characterized by the "works of the flesh" (5:19-21); and that the subjects of the law are all confined "under sin" (3:23), with even its staunch advocates failing to keep its statutes (6:13). Das (*Law*, 155) plausibly explains why Paul did *not* more straightforwardly write "All who do *not* comply with the law's demands are under a curse" as follows: "How would the Galatians have taken that? Surely Paul's wording would have appeared to be a challenge to observe the law more scrupulously." The wording Paul chose stresses that *all* who embark on the law's path to righteousness end up (because they transgress the law, as Paul's argument throughout the letter makes clear) under its curse.

That the argument of 3:10 is built on the presupposed premise that no one satisfactorily keeps the law remains the interpretation of most scholars, with the variant that some place great emphasis on the requirement that "all" that is written in the book of the law must be observed: 100 percent fulfillment is needed if one is to be found righteous (see the summaries of Hübner, Schreiner, and Das in Part Two of this book). The debate on this issue seems moot: since Paul claims that "all" are "under sin," he presumably thought no human being would succeed no matter how low the passing grade of righteousness was set. A plethora of alternative interpretations has been proposed in recent years, though none, to my mind, is either necessary or persuasive: e.g., that the curse of 3:10 is conditional (Stanley, "Curse," 481-511; Young, "Cursed," 79-92; but given that Paul sees all humanity under sin, a curse conditional upon the transgression of the law would have long since become actual — and v. 13 indicates that it had done so); that the curse of 3:10 is national and remains in effect on the people of Israel, whose "exile" is thought to be continuing (Scott, "Works," 187-221; Wright, *Climax*, 137-56; cf. Thielman, *Paul*, 126-27; but the notion of a continuing exile was hardly so universally held that it could be assumed without argument [or even mention!], and Paul's statement in 3:10 seems general [ὅσοι hardly introduces so defined a curse] [see Carson, "Summaries," 546-47 n. 158; Dunn, *Theology*, 362 n. 117; Kim, *Perspective*, 136-41; B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 137-39; Seifrid, *Righteousness*, 21-25; Wisdom, *Blessing*, 7-10, 157-58]). For Dunn's interpretation of the verse, see chap. 16, sec. ii above.

67. The antecedent for "these things" in LXX Lev. 18:5 is "all my commandments and all my judgments." Paul may think the referent apparent from the context; or he may assume that his readers will identify the "things" that the law requires to be done (3:12) with "all the things written in the book of the law," which people were to "continue in" and "do," in 3:10. Though Paul uses the phrase "works of the law" interchangeably with "the law" (compare 2:16 with 2:21; 5:4), the term "works" does show wherein, in Paul's understanding, the characteristic emphasis of the law lies. Cf. Smiles, *Gospel*, 119-20.

65. That the law was introduced to regulate life under sin will be spelled out in 3:21-25.

live by them" (3:12, citing Lev. 18:5). Faith trusts God to provide what the law requires human beings to do. Yet (Christian) faith is not a simple alternative to the law, nor is it dismissive of it; on the contrary, assuming the validity of the law's requirement of righteousness and the reality of its curse on those who fail to meet it, the righteousness offered by Christ is marked by the *redemption* it brings *from the curse of the law* on transgressors.⁶⁸ Christ, in his crucifixion, was himself the object of the law's curse ("Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" [Gal. 3:13, citing Deut. 21:23]); thereby he exhausted its force for those otherwise cursed who believe in him. (Indeed, the curse that the law pronounces on transgressors is hardly to be distinguished⁶⁹ from the divine condemnation that looms over all who fall short of God's required righteousness — a condemnation that can also be said to have been absorbed by Christ's death.) Hence Abraham's blessing — that is, that all nations would be blessed in Abraham, in that they are declared righteous, as he was declared righteous, by faith⁷⁰ — has now, in Christ Jesus, become a reality (3:14, referring back to 3:8). And the promised divine Spirit,⁷¹ which could hardly be bestowed upon those still subject to the curse, has now been given to believers (3:14).

Two notes are again worth underlining here. First, the problem that the law poses for "all" who are "of its works" is that they (all) incur its curse on transgressors. Nothing different is to be expected of the denizens of an "evil age" who remain in the realm of the "flesh" (1:4; 3:3). Second, Paul sees a difference in essence between the faith by which sinners are declared righteous and the law that demands righteous deeds of its adherents (3:11-12). It is the difference, we may say, between ordinary and extraordinary "dikaïosness," between the universal requirement of righteous behavior enshrined in the law and the extraordinary divine offer of righteousness to *unrighteous* people through the death of Jesus Christ. Paul's contrast between faith and the doing of the law's demands is, to be sure, not that between trusting passivity — as a general approach to life — and energetic activity. But Paul *is* saying that the deeds of sinners cannot make them righteous, though God will declare them so if they credit and accept his offer of righteousness in Christ Jesus.

68. Cf. Beker, *Paul*, 187; Hübner, "Proprium," 462; *Theologie*, 76-77.

69. See the discussion of thesis 2 in chap. 19 below.

70. Cf. Williams, "Justification," 92.

71. Paul has not referred to a promise of the Spirit earlier in Galatians. Perhaps he assumes familiarity with the (abundantly attested) tradition that the coming of the Spirit was a matter of divine promise; cf. Burton, *Galatians*, 176-77. Possibly he links the gift of the Spirit (as well as God's declaring Gentiles righteous) to the promise given to Abraham that in him "all nations" would be "blessed" (3:8, 14a). Deidun, *Morality*, 48-49, sees a reference to the promise of the Spirit that was to accompany the new covenant. Cf. also Hays, *Echoes*, 110; Williams, "Justification," 91-100.

By introducing Abraham into his argument, Paul makes clear that the salvation God has provided in Christ takes up a story begun in the Old Testament Scriptures; it is not, however, a story in which the law plays the protagonist's role. Paul proceeds by sharply distinguishing the promise⁷² God gave Abraham from the law delivered at Mount Sinai, seeing the two (as he has just depicted faith and the law) as operating on mutually exclusive principles:⁷³ what God graciously offers through his promise⁷⁴ cannot be contingent on (the observance of) the law (3:18). And since the promise came first — "to Abraham and to his seed" (= Christ and, as Paul will later show, all who are "in Christ Jesus" [3:16, 26-29]) — the law must serve a different purpose.

It was a temporary purpose at that, lasting only until Christ, the seed of whom the promise spoke, should appear (3:19). From Moses until Christ, then, the law dealt with transgressions, confining its subjects under sin, restricting their movements just as "pedagogues" do those of children committed to their charge (3:22-25).⁷⁵ Had the law been able to transform⁷⁶ rather than merely regulate human life under sin, then, indeed, sinners could have been declared right-

72. Or "covenant"; the term is introduced because of the analogy Paul draws between a will (Gk. διαθήκη) that cannot be set aside and God's unalterable promise (3:15-17).

73. See the discussion in chap. 16, sec. ii. Note, however, that just as faith and the law, though based on different principles (3:11-12), are not seen as simple alternatives competing with each other (rather, faith brings redemption to those rightly cursed by the law, 3:13), so Paul insists that the promise and the law, though operating on different principles (3:18), do not oppose each other (3:21); rather, the law confines its subjects under sin *in order that* they may obtain the promise of righteousness by faith (3:22). In spite of the sharp distinction that Paul (but not Jewish tradition) drew between God's promise and law, Paul insisted on finding for both a place in the divine scheme. It is true, however, that Paul sees the "Judaism" of his day as continuing to live under the Sinaitic covenant, whereas believers in Christ are the heirs of the Abrahamic promise.

74. "What God promised" was of course that all nations would be "blessed" in Abraham when they are declared righteous, as Abraham was declared righteous, by faith (3:8). In 3:18 it is summed up as the "inheritance," i.e., the possession of the promised righteousness.

75. Possibly Paul thinks that the law, by restricting Israel's contact with pagan nations, kept Israel from the worst excesses of pagan sin (so Dunn, *Theology*, 140-43); but Galatians contains no hint of such a role. Possibly he thinks that fear of the law's sanctions had a restraining influence on human sinfulness: Rom. 13:3-4 assigns such a function to governing authorities, 1 Tim. 1:8-11 appears to attribute it to the law, and "Lutheran" tradition (as we have seen) views this as one of the law's subsidiary functions. But nothing in Galatians supports the suggestion. In Galatians the law's "confining" of sinners most likely refers to its role in prescribing what sinners *ought* to do (3:12) and cursing their transgressions (3:10, 13), thereby accentuating their service of sin, bondage to beings that are not God (4:3), and lack of freedom to live for God (cf. 2:19). More will be said in chap. 19 about Paul's view, as expressed here and elsewhere, of the origin and purpose of the law.

76. To "give life"; see chap. 15, n. 94 above.

teous by the law (3:21). But that was not its purpose.⁷⁷ Hence the law, in the divine plan, is not an alternative competing with the promise that God would justify the nations by faith (3:21a); still less does it set that promise aside (3:17-18). Rather, it sets the stage for the promise's fulfillment: it is precisely those confined by the law⁷⁸ to the rule of sin who are to be declared righteous by faith in Jesus Christ (3:22). Extraordinary righteousness, made possible through the death of God's Son, comes into play where ordinary righteousness, demanded by the law, is demonstrably absent.

Before we move on to the argument of Galatians 4, we should recall that throughout Galatians Paul depicts the condition of Jews and Gentiles as — in the end — indistinguishable. Both belong to the "present evil age" (1:4). Jews, who think of Gentiles as sinners, prove to be sinners themselves (2:15-17). All humanity is "under sin" (3:22). All, because they participate in untransformed humanity, remain in the flesh and do the kinds of works that reflect the bent of the flesh (5:19-21; cf. 3:3; 5:24). The curse hanging over those (presumably Jews) who are "of the works of the law" (3:10) can be little different from the condemnation that awaits all sinners — and Paul appears, in 3:13-14, to think of Jewish and Gentile believers alike as delivered from its bane.⁷⁹

The parallel is carried further in Galatians 4. Gentiles, thinking themselves to be worshiping the gods, in fact serve beings that are no gods; yet, since they are unable to come to the knowledge of the true God, their service of lesser beings amounts to an enslavement (4:8). For their part Jews, thinking themselves to be worshiping God, are actually living a life "under sin" administered by the law. Under the law they, too, are unable to live for God (cf. 2:19); thus their service, too, amounts to slavery. Both Gentiles and Jews, thinking themselves to be serving the divine, in fact are confined to the service of lesser entities, the "weak and beggarly elements" (4:9; cf. v. 3) that include the false gods of the Gentiles and the Jewish law. From such slavery the Galatian believers have been deliv-

77. Cf. Luther, *Gal.*, 26:91: "Let the Law have its glory. . . . I will grant that it can teach me that I should love God and my neighbor, and live in chastity, patience, etc.; but it is in no position to show me how to be delivered from sin, the devil, death, and hell."

78. According to 3:22, "the *Scripture* confined all under sin." Since the statement is introduced as a sharp antithesis (ἀλλὰ) to the notion that the law could bring righteousness (3:21), one would expect it to be made of the law rather than of Scripture. Presumably "Scripture" in 3:22 means something like "the law in the role that Scripture assigns it," perhaps with a reference to a specific text (such as Deut. 27:26, cited in 3:10). Cf. Burton, *Galatians*, 195-96; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 147-48. The reference to Scripture of course ensures the understanding that human confinement by the law under sin has a place in the divine plan. Cf. B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 125.

79. Paul's apparent extension of the domain of the law to include Gentiles is discussed under the second thesis of chap. 19.

ered. For them *now* to take up the law would be to revert to the bondage they experienced before they came to a knowledge of the true God (4:1-11). Conversely, the redemption that Christ brought those "under the law" may be said to have brought Gentiles the same freedom, the same adoption as God's "sons," and the same presence of the Spirit of God's *Son* in their hearts (4:4-6).

After a personal appeal to the Galatians based on the good relations he had enjoyed with them in the past (4:12-20), Paul sums up life under the law and that of faith in a striking allegory (4:21-5:1). Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. What distinguished them, for the purposes of this allegory, was that Ishmael was the son of a slave woman and born "according to the flesh" (i.e., in a normal, human way), whereas Isaac was the son of a free woman and born "according to promise" (i.e., extraordinarily, in fulfillment of a divine promise when his parents were too old to have children). When *these* features are singled out as the significant differences (it is the prerogative of the allegorist to choose the aspects of a story to which importance is attached), then the parallels between Ishmael and life under the Jewish law, as Paul sees it, and between Isaac and the life of faith become evident. The Jewish (Sinaitic) law regulates the untransformed human life of the flesh, and it is a life of slavery inasmuch as its adherents, bound by sin and the law, are not free to serve God. Conversely, the life of faith begins in fulfillment of the divine promise (all nations would be blessed in Abraham, inasmuch as they, too, are declared righteous by faith), and it is a life of freedom to live for God. All this is (explicitly) allegorical (see 4:24), and yet consistent with the notion in Galatians 3 that believers in Christ are the true descendants of Abraham, the true heirs of the Abrahamic promise.

Galatians 5 begins with a reminder that the merits of circumcision cannot be considered on their own, since to be circumcised is to take on the obligation to keep the whole Jewish law (5:3). From the curse to which such a way of life inevitably leads Christ has redeemed those who believe in him; to revert to the law, then, is to derive no benefit from Christ (5:2, 4); falling from the grace by which God has declared them righteous, those who would be "declared righteous on the basis of the law" can only seek that end by keeping its commandments (5:3-4).

Paul concludes his letter by depicting the life Christians are to live; aspects of his account will be discussed in chapter 19 below. Here we need only note that it is a life directed by the Spirit who opposes the flesh, and that Paul again identifies life under the law with that in the flesh (5:17-19), contrasting both with the new life in the Spirit.

By way of summary, then, we note that Galatians implies that God requires (ordinary) righteousness of Gentiles as well as Jews (note that both are responsible

for their sins [1:4], and both need to be declared righteous by faith in Christ Jesus [2:16]). Yet Jews no more than Gentiles are deemed to have produced it, and life under the Jewish law differs in no essential respect from Gentile life without it. Moreover, the human dilemma goes beyond the concrete sins that humans commit; such sins reflect their belonging to an age gone wrong, dominated by sin and, indeed, by powers that are not God.⁸⁰ The law was given to regulate, not transform, this life of sin: it informs its subjects — Jews in the first place, though at times all humanity, itself required to do what is right and condemned for failing to do so, seems loosely included (3:10-14, 22-25; 4:1-7) — of what they ought to do and curses their transgressions; but it cannot introduce them to a new and different way of life. Such life is only to be found in Christ. Those who believe in him are declared righteous and given the Spirit, the mark of the new age. They have *died* with Christ to the old way of life and now live, with Christ *in* them, in God's service.

The new perspective on Paul (which is in fact rooted in a new perspective on Judaism) has raised anew the issue of what (if anything) Paul finds wrong with Judaism. Sanders's slogan "It is not Christianity"⁸¹ has been deemed arbitrary and unsatisfactory by Dunn, who finds Judaism's shortcoming in its limitation of God's covenant blessings to those who observe the boundary markers that define a distinctively Jewish lifestyle.⁸² But the question itself, though not without an answer, may be misleading. Judaism in Galatians is life lived under the Sinaitic law. As a present manifestation of that life, it is in error; Paul implies, in fostering the belief that people can be declared righteous on the basis of their faithfulness to the Sinaitic law; moreover, though Paul voices no criticism of *Jews* on this score, one may wonder what point he would see in continuing to observe the distinctively Jewish practices prescribed by the Sinaitic law now that its mission has been accomplished, its validity ended. But he does not fault the Sinaitic law *per se*. Its operating principle — that life is theirs who do what the law commands — is found articulated in Scripture itself. And though that principle is different from that of faith, it is not *wrong* for that reason (or any other). After all, *that* God places demands for righteous behavior on his

80. Is sin itself understood by Paul as such a power (i.e., a supernatural being holding human beings in thrall)? Possibly, though the evidence for such a view in Galatians is confined to the phrase ὑπὸ ἀμαρτίας in 3:22, which may be simply metaphorical. Note that "under law" appears to be the equivalent of "subject to the law's curse on transgressors": redemption from the law (4:5) and from its curse (3:13) was accomplished by Christ's bearing that curse (3:13), not by his overcoming of a supernatural power ("law") and setting its captives free. No such freeing from "sin" is depicted either.

81. To be sure, this is not the whole story, even in Sanders; see chap. 9, sec. iii above.

82. See chap. 11, sec. ii above.

moral creatures is presupposed in everything Paul writes; the law, in spelling them out, performs a divine function. Paul's point is not that people are not required to do what is right or that the law is wrong in telling them to do so, but that only faith in Jesus Christ provides a solution for humanity's captivity to sin. The fundamental question addressed by Galatians thus is not "What is wrong with Judaism (or the Sinaitic law)?" but "What is wrong with humanity that Judaism (and the Sinaitic law) cannot remedy?"⁸³

On the other hand, students of Judaism rightly insist that Judaism — and indeed, the Sinaitic covenant — was *more* than a collection of demands by which human righteousness was to be assessed. The covenant was given to those chosen by God to be his people, and included provisions of atonement through which their transgressions could be forgiven. Has Paul not overlooked these essential features?

He has — and he has not. Paul has much to say about Israel's election in Romans; but it is not mentioned in Galatians,⁸⁴ and the heirs of the promise to Abraham are those who have faith in Jesus Christ, not the physical descendants (born "according to the flesh," to use the language of 4:23) of the patriarchs. And certainly he never mentions the rites of atonement that were a part of the Sinaitic covenant.

But Paul sums up the conditions of life and blessing under the Sinaitic covenant with a quotation that captures as well as any the spirit of the covenant as reflected, for example, in the book of Deuteronomy:⁸⁵ "The one who does these things [what the law requires] will live by them" (Gal. 3:12, citing Lev. 18:5). Repeatedly Deuteronomy portrays the people of Israel — chosen, to be sure, by God (Deut. 10:14-15) — *not* as already righteous ("you are a stiffnecked people" [9:6]), but as come to a crossroads where decisive choices have to be made: life and blessing await them if they obey God's commandments, a curse and death if they do not (cf. 11:26-28; 30:15-20). None of these texts speaks (nor does Deuteronomy as a whole) of rites of atonement available for those who transgress.

83. Cf. B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 120-21.

84. It might, however, be implicit in Gal. 6:16, if the phrase "Israel of God" has not simply been co-opted to designate the Christian church (so Kuula, *Law*, 88, noting that by qualifying "Israel" with "of God," Paul suggests that there is a distinction between the true or real Israel — that "of God" — and the false or nominal people so designated). See Richardson, *Israel*, 74-84, and on the issue more broadly, the thoughtful comments of B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 174-79.

85. Deuteronomy is, moreover, hardly an isolated book in the Hebrew canon: the Deuteronomistic history is of course stamped throughout by its spirit, and modern scholars seem bent on finding evidence of Deuteronomistic editing in the least suspected parts of the canonical Scriptures. Alexander ("Torah," 299) suggests that the best way to sum up the religion of the rabbis is to say that it was the religion of Deuteronomy.

It does not follow that such rites were not a staple feature of Jewish religion; clearly they were (whether or not they figured in the thinking of Deuteronomy). But such rites atoned for the inevitable sins — and even the very great sins — of people who had taken up (what would later be called) the "yoke" of God's rule and who were committed to the faithful observance of God's law. The message of Deuteronomy addresses the more fundamental issue: it summons Israel to that crucial commitment, by which the faithful could be distinguished from the wicked.⁸⁶ What, under the Sinaitic covenant as portrayed in Deuteronomy, decisively separates the blessed from the cursed is *not* that the former have found atonement for their sins whereas the latter have not, but that the former, though not the latter, have committed themselves to, and shown themselves faithful in, *doing* what God commands. Obedience per se was not difficult (10:12-13; 30:11-14) — though, to be sure, Deuteronomy expresses grave doubts whether Israel has the *will* to show it (9:4-29; 31:16-21, 27-29; 32:5; etc.).⁸⁷

When it comes to the conditions prescribed by the Sinaitic covenant for enjoying life under God's blessing, there is, it seems, no essential difference between Paul's understanding as attested in Galatians and that spelled out in Deuteronomy — and, indeed, current among Paul's Jewish contemporaries. Nor is Paul's bleak appraisal of life under that covenant to be attributed merely to his omission of any reference to Jewish rites of atonement for the sins of the (otherwise) righteous.⁸⁸ More to the point is Paul's (post-Damascus) assessment of the human condition: whereas the *normal* assumption of Second Temple Jews (and presumably, of the pre-Damascus Paul) was that they could and in many cases *did* live up to the basic requirements of the covenant, the Paul of Galatians insisted that they had not and — captives of sin that they were — *could* not do so.⁸⁹ For Jews (and

86. For the wicked there could be no atonement *until* they repented and were prepared to submit to God's law. Paul clearly thought "sinners" lacked the capacity and even the inclination to so repent; cf. Rom. 8:7-8.

87. Cf. Thielman, *Paul*, 65, 173.

88. According to Schreiner and Das (see chap. 12, sec. ii above), Judaism emphasized both the need for observance of the law *and* the availability of atonement for transgressions; but Paul, discounting (in the light of Christ's death) the efficacy of Jewish rites of atonement, saw in Judaism simply the legalism that demanded perfect obedience to the law. But in Galatians Paul differed from Jewish *Christians* who no doubt themselves believed that the death of Jesus Christ replaced the Old Testament sacrifices in providing atonement for the failures of the otherwise righteous. In their case it is self-evident that Paul did not discount the efficacy of the act to which they attributed atonement. What he refused to accept was the notion of Jews and certain Jewish Christians alike that the law served to distinguish the righteous (those committed to, and faithful in, its observance, though perhaps needing atonement for their incidental trespasses) from sinners. His anthropology (*all* are "under sin") was more pessimistic.

89. Cf. Becker, *Paul*, 396.

Paul's Jewish Christian opponents) the law provided a basis on which the "righteous" could be distinguished from "sinners"; for the Galatian Paul it showed what its subjects ought to have done and cursed their failures. In an evil world ruled by sin, *all* are sinners, and only those who believe in Christ can be found — by divine and extraordinary means — to be righteous.⁹⁰ The more pessimistic anthropology of Galatians, and the need there shown for an apocalyptic transformation of the conditions of human existence, are reflected in its distinctive understanding of life under the Sinaitic law.

Is the Galatian Paul, then, a "Lutheran"?

The mantra in recent studies bent on refuting a "Lutheran" reading of the epistle is that the issue it addresses was *not* whether one could *earn* salvation by one's good works, but on what terms Gentiles were to be admitted to the people of God.⁹¹ This is true and even important, but not quite the discussion stopper it is sometimes taken to be. Paul's opponents believed the Jewish covenant⁹² provided the framework by which God's people are defined and within which they must live; the issue for *them* was, very naturally, on what terms Gentiles could be included in the blessings of the covenant. What they had in mind more specifically was certainly *not* whether Gentiles (or Jews) could earn salvation by accumulating good works, but whether Gentiles needed to observe the boundary markers by which those under the Sinaitic covenant were set apart from those outside it. It is also true that Paul thought Gentiles did *not* need to observe them whereas his opponents thought they did. And it is important to note that, understood on their own premises, neither Paul's Jewish Christian opponents nor Judaism as a whole thought salvation was earned by doing what was right more often than what was not.

But Galatians is misunderstood unless we realize that Paul attacked more than the notion that Jewish boundary markers needed to be observed by Gentiles.⁹³ The Jewish law itself — of which the prescriptions of boundary markers were a small though contentious part — did not provide a basis by which *sinners* could be declared righteous; and Jews, for all their observance of boundary markers, were no less sinners than Gentiles. Paul does not fault the law for inviting self-reliance, self-righteousness, or boasting. He does, however, observe that its operative principle demands works: people must do what it

90. Cf. Winninge, *Sinners*, 306: "Whereas Paul's Jewish contemporaries could admit that all human beings occasionally committed sins, they would never have thought of classifying the basically faithful as sinners."

91. See the quotations in chap. 14, sec. iii above.

92. As noted above, *they* drew no sharp distinction between the promise to Abraham and the legislation of Mount Sinai.

93. Cf. Räisänen, *Torah*, 121-22; Zeller, "Diskussion," 488-89.

commands if they are to enjoy life in God's favor. With that demand — which human beings are in no position to meet — he contrasts the path of *faith* by which the *unrighteous* (i.e., sinners) are declared righteous because of Jesus Christ: a path for which the word "grace" suffices as a summative term (1:6; 2:21; 5:4). Paul was not addressing Pelagianism or sixteenth-century disputes over works. But he responded to the insistence that Gentiles be circumcised by taking up the fundamental issue of how human beings, in spite of their sin, can experience life in God's favor. The "Lutherans" were not mistaken in finding an answer to that question in the epistle. Nor, in ascribing salvation to an initiative of divine grace that excludes any contribution from sinful human beings, did they misconstrue its terms.⁹⁴

iv. Romans

Much good can be derived from critical reviews — provided, of course, that one is prepared to listen to what they say. From critics who are sure to point out that the discussion of "Righteousness in Paul" in chapter 15 ought really to be entitled "Righteousness in Romans," I draw the useful conclusion that no extended treatment of justification by faith in Romans is now needed. Whole sections of the epistle critical to our theme require little further treatment. Still, the progression of Paul's argument should be noted and relevant aspects not yet considered should here be taken up.

To the Thessalonians and the Corinthians Paul proclaimed a message of salvation from the divine judgment that awaited wayward humanity. Assumed throughout — it may well have been explicit in his proclamation — was the divine requirement of righteousness: without it the "wrath" and "condemnation" of the biblical God are inexplicable. Issues related to the Jewish law do not, however, appear to have been addressed. In Paul's letter to the Galatians, on the other hand, the law *and* righteousness are central themes: Paul argues that,

94. Cf. B. Longenecker, *Triumph*, 179-83. Note that there is even a precedent in Galatians — where the law and its curse seem in places to include all humanity within their sphere — for Luther's broadening of the term "law" beyond the commands of the Sinaitic covenant to include the righteousness that God requires of all human beings. And in Paul's distinction between the operative principle of the law — it demands deeds — and faith, we may see the roots of Luther's hermeneutic of "the law and the gospel." That said, Galatians does *not* portray the role of the law as one of rousing in sinners a sense of guilt and despair that would drive them to the gospel: its role as a "pedagogue" (3:23-25) was very different, and lasted only until Christ ("faith") came. That Paul's missionary proclamation must nonetheless have included an *equivalent* to this role of the law was suggested above, n. 10.

though requiring obedience to its commands, the law provides no basis by which sinners may be declared righteous. This response was provoked by the insistence of Jewish Christian teachers that the Galatian believers should be circumcised and take up a Jewish way of life under the Sinaitic law. Among the *Roman* Christians — to judge by the letter Paul sent them — circumcision does not seem to have been a subject of contention. Nonetheless, the letter reveals how Paul has assimilated themes first elicited by the Galatian crisis into his basic repertoire. His gospel remains one of salvation (cf. 1:16, where the language is reminiscent of 1 Cor. 1:18, 21) from the wrath of God that looms over a wicked world (cf. 1:18; 5:9, reminiscent of the language, in particular, of 1 Thessalonians). But here, as in Galatians, the message of salvation is explicitly one of righteousness, appropriated by faith (1:17),⁹⁵ and it represents a divine response to a crisis defined but not remedied by the law (3:20).⁹⁶

Paul's opening summary of the message he proclaims (1:16-17) is followed by a statement of the condition of humankind that prompted God's intervention. That human beings are moral creatures held responsible by God for their conduct is assumed in everything Paul wrote; here it becomes the main theme of the argument. The argument itself is advanced in a narrative mode — not for the only time in the epistle. In Romans 7 Paul will present in story form what happens when the rebellious human being ("Everyman") meets the righteous divine law: a "story" informed by more than one story from the Bible (primarily that of Adam and Eve, but with elements taken from Israel's experience under the law as well), and one from which aspects of Paul's personal experience can hardly be excluded (it is related in the first person); but it is a story to whose characters and events no names or dates can be strictly applied. The same is true of the "story" of human depravity in 1:18-32. Here the subject is the deeds of "people" (ἄνθρωποι, 1:18) and the response of God. Aorist tenses abound in the account, suggesting specific times and happenings. But no

95. Hahn ("Entwicklung," 342-66) rightly insists that Paul's *Rechtfertigungslehre* represents an explication of his gospel (noting, in particular, Rom. 1:16-17); he adds (357 n. 3) that it is the gratuitous character of God's salvation that the language of justification is intended to highlight.

96. On one level Paul's delineating of the gospel in Romans serves to replace its oral proclamation to an audience he had not been able to visit but to whom he felt an obligation (1:13-15; cf. Jervis, *Purpose*, 158-64; N. Elliott, *Rhetoric*, 84-87). Paul was also writing, however, to prepare the Romans for an expected visit and to garner their support for a proposed mission to Spain (15:22-29). Some introduction of himself and what he stood for would have been in order in any case; but the care and energy he devotes to the purpose reflect his awareness that he was by now a controversial figure; it was important, then, that the Romans base their understanding of his stance, not on reports they may have heard from sources of dubious sympathy, but on his own presentation of it.

names or dates can be supplied: at what particular point did humanity "exchange" God's glory for images (1:23), or God abandon humanity to the lusts of human hearts (1:24)? This is a dramatized depiction of the human condition,⁹⁷ recalling many a biblical account (and prophetic denunciation) and no doubt informed by personal observation as well; but it is not the retelling of any *one* story that Paul has read or seen. The points to be made are that human beings (the species as such is under indictment) are in a position where they *ought* to recognize God and give him honor and thanks;⁹⁸ honoring their Creator, they *ought* to live in accordance with their nature as divinely created and act decently toward each other. But they do not, and their failure is both inexcusable and provocative of divine judgment. Of course Paul, in telling the story of humankind, does not mean that every individual human being is guilty of each of the wrongs he lists; nor is the truth of his story thought to be established by empirical observation (of *every* human being?). Egregious wrongs empirically observed may illustrate the truth of the indictment, but its basic truth has been absorbed by Paul from the biblical tradition — and given shape by what faith in the cross of Christ says about the situation it redeems.⁹⁹

Since the indictment in 1:18-32 proceeds without reference to the Jewish law, and since the idolatry and immorality that it details figure largely in Jewish accounts of Gentile vices, it has often been thought that the passage condemns the latter, leaving the judgment of Jews for chapter 2. On the other hand, the story of humankind (ἄνθρωποι) can hardly *exclude* Jews,¹⁰⁰ and biblical passages condemning Israel's unfaithfulness are clearly echoed even in chapter 1.¹⁰¹ Moreover, the "wherefore" with which chapter 2 begins requires that the human judge of other human beings in 2:1-6 is included in the general condemnation of 1:18-32: in the light of 2:17-24, Jews who condemn Gentile depravity must be primarily, if not exclusively, in mind.¹⁰² 1:18-32 thus portrays the sinful-

97. Cf. Seifrid, *Righteousness*, 50 n. 46: "There is something of a generic sense to his description; it is Adam's transgression reliving itself in all generations."

98. Cf. Schreiner, *Paul*, 106: "The fundamental problem is not that people have committed 'sins'; it is that they have committed 'sin,' that is, they repudiated the worship of God and embraced worship of the creature. This is borne out by Romans 1:24, 26, 28. Three times Paul says that God 'handed over' (*paredōken*) people to sin. In each instance the reason for his handing them over is attributed to their rejection of God. All human sins, in other words, have their fountainhead in idolatry. The degradation and blight of sin are a consequence of the failure to honor and praise God."

99. Cf. Byrne, "Need," 126.

100. Cf. Dunn, *Theology*, 93; Garlington, *Aspects*, 34-35.

101. Cf. Bassler, *Impartiality*, 122, 195-97; Das, *Law*, 172-77.

102. Note, too, that in 2:1 the one who condemns the presence in others of the vices listed in the preceding verses is said to be guilty of "the same things."

ness and liability to judgment of *all* human beings, with 2:1-6 pointing out that condemning the sins of others is no replacement for doing right oneself.

The remainder of chapter 2 is meant to demonstrate, not the *guilt* of Jews (their guilt, together with that of other people, is the subject of the denunciation beginning in 1:18), but that God's requirement of righteous behavior applies equally to Jews (who have the law in which the requirement is spelled out)¹⁰³ and to Gentiles (who do not have the written law but who are deemed nonetheless to be sufficiently aware of what they ought to do to be responsible for doing it). That God judges all according to their works and approves only the righteous who do what is good (2:6-13) means that Gentiles who are not circumcised are not *thereby* condemned, nor are Jews, who have been circumcised, *thereby* approved. Righteous conduct, not physical circumcision, is what matters.¹⁰⁴

That circumcised Jews may not sin with impunity does not mean that they have not been the recipients of significant divine blessings, including the "oracles" of God. Nor does their unfaithfulness, though leading to divine judgment, mean that God for his part has not been true to his word. On the contrary, God's righteousness and truth emerge all the more clearly when juxtaposed with human unrighteousness and falsehood, though the good of their so appearing does not justify humans in doing what is wrong. God rightly judges them when they do so (3:1-8).

All, Jews and Gentiles alike, have been shown to be¹⁰⁵ "under sin" (3:9).¹⁰⁶ Scripture supports the indictment (3:10-18). As a result, the whole world —

103. Dunn (*Theology*, 115, 118) rightly emphasizes that Paul here attacks the notion that privileges granted to Jews include their exemption from punishment for their sins. It is worth remembering, however, that the sinfulness of Jews, for Paul, is not restricted to the sin of thinking themselves exempt from punishment for their sins, but includes those sins from whose punishment some may sinfully have thought themselves exempt. For Dunn's clarification to this effect of earlier statements, see "Works," 106. Cf. Byrne, "Problem," 302: "In Dunn's treatment, Israel's sinfulness tends to slide very quickly in the direction of national pride. The notion that Paul operated with a two-edged view of Israel's sinfulness — sinning by transgression, and national pride — may indeed have some validity, but too great a stress upon the latter fails to do full justice to the radicality of Paul's critique of human sinfulness, which Luther, with unparalleled interpretive perceptiveness, discerned."

104. For the argument of Rom. 2, see chap. 15, nn. 22 and 23 above.

105. The indictment of "humankind" in 1:18-32 is intended.

106. As in Gal. 3:22 (see n. 80 above), the phrase clearly means more than that human beings commit concrete sins; sinfulness is, inescapably, part of their nature. On the other hand, the temptation to believe that ὑπό is used by Paul either with a genitive of agent or an accusative of demonic power should be resisted. In three chapters that have said nothing of demonic powers, Jews and Gentiles have, according to Paul, been shown to be "under sin"; the same charge is now said by Paul to be supported by a catena of quotations that say nothing of demonic powers and much about the incorrigibility of human behavior. Cf. Räisänen, *Law*, 99-100 n. 29; Winger, "Grace," 169.

those "under the law" are singled out for special mention, presumably because they might well have thought differently — finds itself culpable before God with nothing to say in its defense (3:19). Human beings are required to do the "good" (2:7, 10), to be "doers of [the good spelled out in] the law" (2:13). But none is "righteous," all have "gone astray," none does what is good (3:10-12); as a result, no human being can be declared righteous because he or she has actually *done* the good defined by "the works of the law."¹⁰⁷ The law provides no basis by which a human being (*any* human being) can be found righteous, but it allows human sinfulness to be recognized for what it is (3:20). So far, the argument of Romans 1:18-3:20.

If Paul's "real" goal in the passage is to show on what terms Gentiles may enter the people of God, his method of launching the discussion is passing strange. To tell readers that all the world is guilty before God is hardly designed to whet their appetite for joining a particular community of the condemned, or for discovering by what terms they may do so. On the surface at least, Paul's argument has a different focus: having announced his gospel in 1:16-17, and preparing for his presentation of the extraordinary righteousness it offers in 3:21-26, Paul is showing in 1:18-3:20 why extraordinary righteousness is needed: neither Jews nor Gentiles measure up to God's demand of ordinary righteousness.

107. The "deeds of the law" by which one might be thought to be "declared righteous" in 3:20 are surely what the "doers of the law" do in order to be "declared righteous" in 2:13. If 2:13 sums up God's requirement of ordinary righteousness ("the doers of the law will be declared righteous"), 3:10 and 20 assert that no human being meets the requirement: "none is righteous," "by the deeds of the law no flesh will be declared righteous before God." The truth of the principle of 2:13 is not denied in 3:20, *nor are there any negative connotations to the phrase "the doers of the law" in 2:13 or "the works of the law" in 3:20*. If people cannot be declared righteous by doing good, it is not because doing good is bad, but because bad people do not do good. The offer of life to those who do the law in 2:13 is said in 3:20 to lack application in a world of sinners. This is the point of 3:20, summing up the indictment of 1:18-3:20 and preparing for the introduction of the "extraordinary righteousness" of faith in 3:21-26.

In this passage, then, the "works of the law" by which no human being can be declared righteous (3:20) are hardly the boundary markers of the Jewish people (cf. Das, *Law*, 190: "In Rom 2:17-29, however, Paul sees absolutely no problem with Jewish ethnic identity markers as long as they are accompanied by full observance of the law"; also Martin, *Law*, 146-47). They are rather the good deeds that God requires of all human beings (2:7, 10), that God has spelled out for the benefit of Jews in the Mosaic law (2:13, 18), but that human beings — all of whom are "under sin," none of whom is righteous (3:9, 10) — have not done. Dunn's observation that "there was always something odd not to say suspect about the assumption that Paul's polemic against 'works of the law' was a polemic against 'good works'" (*Partings*, 136) misses the point, as I read both Paul and his "Lutheran" interpreters. Neither Paul *nor* the "Lutherans" ever opposed good works, though Paul *and* the Lutherans were sure that sinners are in no position to be declared righteous for having done them.

The pressing question invited by 1:18-3:20 is the same as that addressed in 1 Thessalonians: how are sinners (for such are all human beings) to encounter God other than in his sin-provoked wrath? It is a question Paul *had* to raise, for without it a gospel of *salvation* had no point. It is, moreover, the question to which Paul responds in 3:21-26.

On the other hand, it remains true, as recent Pauline scholarship has emphasized, that Paul presents his gospel in the opening chapters in Romans in terms ("declared righteous by faith," "not by the works of the law") that he adopted in response to a message requiring circumcision of his Gentile converts. Nor is Paul likely to have been oblivious to that issue when he came to write Romans — and 4:9-12 proves that, in fact, he was not. And although, in the argument of 2:1-3:20, Paul's claim that physical circumcision and Jewishness are of no decisive advantage seems intended rather to disabuse Jews of the notion that they were than to discourage Gentiles from becoming Jews, it is likely enough that the controversy over Gentile participation in the church remained a factor in Paul's thinking here as well. However theological Paul's reasoning may have been, very practical questions, with obvious social implications, were at stake when Paul argued that no one could be declared righteous by the works of the law.

Still, it is remarkable the extent to which Paul's argument in the opening chapters of Romans, however informed by the Galatian controversy, merely spells out fundamental features of Paul's missionary message to the Thessalonians and Corinthians — when circumcision and other Jewish boundary markers were not an issue. It was (as we have seen) a message of salvation from divine wrath for all the world through faith in Jesus Christ. Once the issue arose whether his converts should submit to circumcision and other Jewish boundary markers, Paul made more explicit that Jews under the law no less than Gentiles without it could only be saved through faith in Jesus Christ; there was, then, no reason for Gentiles to submit to a divine law that could not, and was not meant to, provide the means by which human beings could be declared righteous. That the issue of boundary markers compelled Paul to formulate the thesis that one is declared righteous by faith in Jesus Christ, not by the works of the law, is the entirely appropriate emphasis of recent scholarship. That the point of the thesis was merely that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised, and not that all human beings, sinners that they are, can only be declared righteous extraordinarily through the death of Christ Jesus, represents the shortsightedness of which some recent scholarship is guilty.

With "But now . . ." Paul introduces God's response to the dilemma posed, not by the exclusion of Gentiles from the blessings of earlier covenants, but by the

incorrigible sinfulness of Jews and Gentiles alike. Since the key term in the verses that follow (3:21-26) is "righteousness," their substance has been discussed in chapter 15 above. Here we need note only the following points.

1. God responds to the "unrighteousness" of human beings (1:18; cf. 3:10, 20) with an effective demonstration of his own "righteousness" (3:21). If the term does not refer to his own gift of (extraordinary) righteousness to sinners (cf. Phil. 3:9; also Rom. 5:17; 10:3), it speaks of the salvific *act* by which God declares sinners righteous. That God is righteous in doing so, in this context, is not because he thereby keeps promises made earlier to Abraham (no such promises are here in view), but because he promotes what is good and right in his creation *without* overlooking the sinfulness of sinners (such a violation of the moral order *would* have called in question God's righteousness); rather, he provides atonement for their sins through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ (3:25-26).¹⁰⁸

2. The effective demonstration of God's righteousness in Christ was announced in "the law and the prophets" (i.e., the sacred Scriptures), but is (necessarily) operative "apart from the law" (3:21; i.e., the sum of divine commandments given to Israel on Mount Sinai, with the accompanying sanctions).¹⁰⁹ Why must the law be excluded? In this context the problem with the law is not that it does not pertain to Gentiles; on the contrary, Paul has just insisted that Gentiles, too, know its essential requirements (2:14-15) and need to be its "doers" (2:13; cf. 2:26-27). But a law that requires conformity with its commandments cannot provide the basis by which sinners (cf. 3:23) can be declared righteous.

3. Paul stresses the gratuitousness of the righteousness God offers, through Christ, to sinners who believe in Jesus Christ: they are "*freely* declared righteous *by his grace* through the redemption brought about by Christ Jesus" (3:24). The emphasis itself suggests that the righteousness of faith differs from that of the law in this regard; the point is confirmed in chapter 4. The law recognizes the righteousness of those whose works fulfill its demands; such a recognition is granted to achievement rather than given by grace (cf. 4:2-5, 14-16; 11:6). Paul does not deny that the guidance of the law was itself a gift of God's goodness (cf. 2:18; 3:1-2; 9:4). Still less does he suggest that the law was wrong in demanding that people do what is right. It remains the case, however, and of significance to Paul, that a law that demands deeds is not based on grace, whereas the faith by which sinners are declared righteous is.¹¹⁰

108. See chap. 15, sec. iv and v.

109. On the different uses of "law" in 3:21, see chap. 16, sec. i.

110. See chap. 16, sec. ii above.

Nor is a law that demands deeds one that excludes human "boasting"; to this subject, first prominent in Paul's writings in 1 Corinthians 1, Paul turns in Romans 3:27. The term was introduced already, though without particular emphasis, in 2:17-18: "If you call yourself a Jew, and rely on the law and *boast* in God and know his will. . . ." Boasting is hardly singled out in chapter 2 as the tragic flaw of the Jew, though in the context the pride of Jews in their special relationship with God is thought to be misplaced when they transgress his law.¹¹¹ Such pride is at least part of what Paul has in mind in 3:27 as well, as his follow-up question in 3:29 suggests: "Or is God (the God) only of the Jews?"¹¹² But a law that demands works can excite the boasting, not simply of those to whom it has been entrusted, but more particularly of those who believe themselves to have fulfilled its commands: "For if Abraham was declared righteous because of what he did, he has occasion to boast" (4:2).¹¹³ In short, a law that demands works leaves the door open for human boasting; a "righteousness"¹¹⁴ granted "freely," "by [God's] grace," "apart from (the) works (of the law)," does not. The exclusion of boasting, first introduced in 3:27, is scarcely the *primary* point Paul makes when he affirms that justification is by faith rather than by the works of the law; it remains nonetheless *a* point that he links to that affirmation here.

The "righteousness of faith" is operative "apart from the law" (3:21). Yet Paul would not be thought to have disregarded or dismissed God's law; he declares rather that he "establishes" it by attributing to it its real function (3:31). Whether he means that the law (in the sense of the divine commandments)

111. Cf. Thompson, "Critique," 525-27.

112. Of course, Jews would not have *said* that God, who is one, is God only of their people: Paul means to show the absurdity of any presumption based on Jewish privileges by pushing such an attitude to its extreme conclusion.

It is, I believe, a mistake to distinguish sharply between a purported Jewish boasting in Israel's election and possession of the covenant and its law (the only boasting that the "new perspective" will allow to be an issue) and boasting in one's fulfillment of the law's commands. After all, being uniquely in possession of the law easily leads to a belief that one is uniquely positioned to please God by obeying the law's commands. Paul has opposed both notions already in 1:18-3:20: Gentiles, too, are aware of God's demands (2:14-15); Jews and Gentiles are under the *same* obligation to do what is right (2:1-29); Jews have fared no better than Gentiles in measuring up to the requirement (3:1-20); hence "*no flesh* (i.e., *no human being, Jew or Gentile*) will be declared righteous by the works of the law" (3:20). In 3:29-30, Paul adds that it is absurd in any case to think that the God of all the nations would provide only for the salvation of one people ("Or is God the God only of the Jews?"); on the contrary, he had proved himself to be God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews by declaring circumcised and uncircumcised alike to be righteous by faith. See now also Gathercole, *Boasting*.

113. Cf. Thurén, *Derhetorizing Paul*, 169-70, 176-78.

114. I.e., that represented by the "law of faith" (3:27). On the phrase see chap. 16, sec. iii above.

finds its true purpose, not in providing the basis by which sinners can be declared righteous, but in bringing recognition of sin (3:20; 7:7) and defining, highlighting, and condemning transgressions (4:15; 5:13; cf. 5:20; 7:13); or whether, playing on the double sense of "the law," he means that the Scriptures ("the law and the prophets") themselves witness to the righteousness of faith (as he will demonstrate in 4:3), is left unclear.

It is in any case with the example of Abraham, as attested in the Scriptures, that Paul proceeds: the patriarch himself was credited with a righteousness based, not on deeds that would have given him cause for boasting (4:1-2), but on faith in a God who declares the ungodly righteous (4:3-5). David, too, referred to the blessedness of those to whom God credits righteousness apart from their deeds: that, after all, is what he meant when he spoke of the "blessed" whose sins are forgiven (4:6-8). Worth noting — the issue of circumcision had arisen in Galatia and could well arise elsewhere — is that Abraham was credited with righteousness before he was told to be circumcised (4:9-10). Crucial to righteousness was Abraham's faith; that he was found righteous before as well as after he was circumcised makes him a fit "father" of both uncircumcised and circumcised who share his faith (4:11-12).

In Galatians Paul had declared that God made promises to "Abraham and to his [singular] seed," and that that seed was Christ; believers become the "seed of Abraham, heirs in accordance with the promise," only because they "belong to Christ" (Gal. 3:16, 29). In Romans Paul makes the point more directly: a promise was given to Abraham and to "all his seed" — that is, to all, Jews and Gentiles alike, who share in the "righteousness of faith" (4:13, 16). What is important, in Romans as in Galatians, is that the enjoyment of God's promise is not deemed dependent on observance of the law; otherwise the law would preempt both faith and God's promise and would be given a role it cannot perform; rather, the law, by spelling out what should and should not be done, makes wrongdoing the unambiguous violation (the *transgression*) of a divine command and thereby provides an explicit basis for its divine prosecution (4:15).¹¹⁵ If the divine promise was to find fulfillment (if it was to be secure) among those who so provoke divine wrath, it had to be "according to grace" (4:16), granted to those who, like Abraham, trust in God to transform situations otherwise hopeless (4:17-25). Those so "declared righteous by faith" (5:1) are in good standing with God and can take joy, whatever their present circumstances, in their certain hope of future glory. God proved his love for them when Christ died for them while they were still "ungodly," "sinners," God's declared "ene-

115. Cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, 242. Paul's understanding of the function of the law will be discussed in more detail in chap. 19.

mies." That those whom God has now both declared righteous and reconciled will find salvation on the day of his wrath is thus certain (5:1-11).

To this point in the letter Paul has summarized the "gospel" that brings "salvation to every one who believes" (cf. 1:16). The Galatian controversy has remained sufficiently in his mind for him to include the note that physical circumcision is *not* required for God's approval (2:25-29; 4:9-12), nor is observance of the Jewish law a condition if one would share the blessings promised to Abraham (4:13-16). Reference to the latter promise, found in both Romans and Galatians (though not in the Thessalonian or Corinthian correspondence), proves the importance to Paul of showing continuity between his message and the witness and story of the Jewish Scriptures. Still, the central issue in the argument of these chapters, from the declaration of the outpouring of God's wrath in 1:18 to the assurance of salvation from that wrath in 5:9, parallels the thrust of Paul's missionary proclamation as reflected in his other letters: how are human beings to be saved from the judgment that their deeds merit? The focus of his answer, here as elsewhere, is on Christ and on the need to respond with faith to the proclamation of the gospel. Abraham (it may or may not be pointed out) was a model of such faith, and the promise to which he responded was in effect an advance announcement of the gospel (Gal. 3:8; cf. Rom. 4:17-25). Moses (it may but need not be said) was given the law that brought clarity to the human dilemma. But the turning point in human history came, not with Abraham or Moses, but with Christ. The only rival who approximates his importance — though in a negative way — was Adam. Adam¹¹⁶ was both the first human to be created and the one with whom the corruption of the old creation began; Christ inaugurated the new. To their respective roles Paul now turns.

With Adam sin entered the world, and death and condemnation became the lot of all human beings. So much is clear; to be more specific is to invite controversy.

1. On a minimalist interpretation Adam's concrete sin was the first such sin to be committed (in this sense sin can be said, metaphorically, to have "entered the world"). His example was followed by other human beings, who likewise committed concrete sins. For the sins they commit, all die ("death became the lot of all human beings, inasmuch as all sinned"). Some of what Paul says here is patient of such an interpretation; much, however, is not. If *because of* Adam many died (5:15), were brought under condemnation (5:16), and were made

116. Paul was certainly aware of Eve's presence in the Genesis narrative (cf. 2 Cor. 11:3); his focus on Adam in Rom. 5:12-21 (as in 1 Cor. 15:20-49) follows from his desire to find a single counterpart to Christ. It is of course true that the story of human responsibility and sin can be told without reference to Adam (Paul does so in Rom. 1:18-3:20 and elsewhere), just as the story of redemption can be told without reference to Abraham. The essential figure is Christ.

"sinners" (5:19), then the effects of his sin went far beyond that of setting a bad example for his descendants.¹¹⁷

2. At the other extreme, Adam's sin may be thought to have allowed a demonic power ("Sin") to gain a foothold in the world (5:12) and, indeed, to "rule" over its inhabitants (5:21). Paul's references to sin in these terms are thus construed, not as metaphors, but as pointing to a reality in which supernatural forces of evil dominate human affairs. Such a construction of the human plight is often contrasted with its portrayal in Romans 1–3, where Paul speaks only of the concrete sins that people commit.

But such a contrast both *underinterprets* Romans 1–3 and *overinterprets* Romans 5. Romans 1–3 speaks of the concrete sins that humans commit as illustrative of the "ungodliness and unrighteousness" that prevail among human beings, who "suppress the truth with their unrighteousness" (1:18). Human sin has led to a situation in which humans are incorrigibly sinful: their thoughts have been reduced to futility, their uncomprehending heart has been darkened, they have become foolish, they have been left the hopeless prey of their passions (1:21–24). That humans universally commit sins is a reflection of the universal corruption of human nature: all are "under sin" (3:9).¹¹⁸ Conversely, in Romans 5 the reading of "Sin" as demonic power, though attractive in places, simply cannot be sustained. Conceivably a demonic power might have gained a foothold in the world through Adam's disobedience ("By one man Sin entered the world" [5:12]), but what would be the point of specifying that such a power was active *before the law was given* ("Before the law Sin [?] was in the world" [5:13a]), and what could it mean to say that a demonic power (Sin) was not "counted" when there was no law (5:13b)? Conceivably a demonic power (Sin), on entering the world, might have brought along with it another such power ("and by Sin [came also] Death" [5:12]); but elsewhere in the passage the presence of death is attributed, not to the power of "Sin," but to the concrete *sins* that Adam and his descendants commit: does "through sin came death" in 5:12 really mean anything more than "by the transgression of one many died" in 5:15? The "sin" that is said to "reign" in 5:21 is the same sin that "increased" with the coming of the law in 5:20b — and that sin is clearly the equivalent of "transgression (*παράπτωμα*)" in 5:20a. Demonic forces play no part in Paul's argument here.¹¹⁹

117. Cf. Augustine, *De nupt. et conc.* 2.27.45–46.

118. Cf. Hofius, *Paulusstudien II*, 156: "Seit Adam und von Adam her sind ausnahmslos *alle* Menschen, Juden wie Heiden, unentrinnbar der Sünde verfallen, und zwar nicht bloss in ihrem bösen *Tun*, sondern ganz umfassend in ihrem gottfernen und gottfeindlichen *Sein*. Sie sind ἀσεβεις — 'Gottlose.'" See also Hofius, *Paulusstudien*, 127.

119. The personification of sin is carried further in Rom. 6, where the Roman believers are urged not to let sin "rule" them (6:12, 14) or to serve any longer as its "slaves" (6:6, 16, etc.). If

3. That sin entered and rules the world means more than that people sin, though it does not refer to the dominance of humans by demonic powers. We ought rather to think (as in Rom. 1–3) of the corruption of human nature¹²⁰ from what it was created to be, the *sinfulness* that marks humanity since (and because of) Adam, making human beings "sinners" (5:19) who themselves "commit sins" (5:12). That condemnation and death are the lot of all human beings is thus a consequence of Adam's misdeed while, at the same time, those so afflicted are not innocent.¹²¹ We are all, thought Paul, in this together.¹²² The old creation of which we are a part has itself been marred.¹²³ The coming of the law exacerbated rather than reversed the human condition (5:20).¹²⁴

But Adam's disobedience was offset — and more than offset — by Christ's obedience: if the former deed subjected the old humanity to condemnation and death, the righteous deed of Christ has brought into being a new humanity,¹²⁵ the objects of God's grace,¹²⁶ whom God finds righteous (5:16, 17, 18, 19, 21) and to whom he grants life (5:17, 18, 21).

After Romans 5 justification does not become a theme in Romans again until chapter 9. On the intervening chapters two observations seem germane.

1. If it was typical for Jews of Paul's day to hold that salvation was by grace; if, in fact, Paul's position on the relation between grace and works was identical

such expressions are taken to mean that "Sin" is a demonic power, then the same, presumably, must be said of the "Uncleanness" and "Lawlessness" to which the Roman believers had once given service (6:19). And what supernatural force is meant by the "Obedience" and "Righteousness" to which (to whom?) the believers *are* to yield (6:16, 18, 19)? Cf. Winger, "Grace," 168–74, and esp. Röhser, *Metaphorik*, 103–29.

120. Cf. Becker, *Paul*, 390; Whiteley, *Theology*, 53.

121. Cf. Laato, *Approach*, 100.

122. Cf. Hofius, "Antithesis," 191: "We all of us stand in the shadow of Adam. None of us can go back before Adam."

123. Cf. Hübner, *Theologie*, 270. According to Rom. 8:19–23, even the nonhuman world has been subjected to a corruption from which it will only be delivered when the children of God experience the redemption of their bodies.

124. Paul will expand on this latter point in Rom. 7.

125. "The many" who were affected by Adam's transgression and "the many" who benefit from Christ's righteousness (5:15, 19) refer respectively to the old and the new humanity: God has restored his human creation. Cf. 11:32; 1 Cor. 15:22; and note the universal perspective of Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20. That Paul here means that all humanity affected by Adam's sin is destined for salvation through Christ's obedience is argued by (among others) Hultgren (*Gospel*, 82–124) and Bell, "Salvation," 417–32; Schreiner is among those who think not (*Paul*, 182–88).

126. Nowhere in Paul's letters does divine grace receive greater emphasis than here; note τὸ χάρισμα, ἡ χάρις, and ἡ δωρεά all in 5:15 alone, τὸ δώρημα and τὸ χάρισμα in 5:16, οἱ τὴν περισσεύαν τῆς χάριτος καὶ τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης in 5:17, and the "superabundance" and "reign" of "grace" in 5:20 and 21.

with that held by many of his contemporaries; and if his rejection of the works of the law from any part in justification meant no more than that Gentiles did not need to observe Jewish boundary markers, then it is curious that *he* was repeatedly called upon to quiet the suspicion that believers, by his gospel, could continue to sin with impunity. That, at least, is the suggestion he emphatically denies in Romans 6. The denial revokes nothing of what was said earlier about grace; rather, it draws out the implications of belonging, with Christ, to the new humanity. Christ shared the conditions of the *old* humanity, though without himself succumbing to sin (cf. 8:3). But he died to the way of life dominated by sin and death, and now lives for God (6:9-10). Believers in Christ are not simply freed from the *condemnation* of their sins (though deliverance from the judgment that looms over sinners is an obvious precondition for enjoying life with God). Their baptism represents the death, with Christ, of a life "serving" sin and the opening up of a new life in God's service (6:11).¹²⁷ One cannot in fact be a part of the new humanity and continue to "obey" sin: Paul puts the alternatives starkly (6:16-23), knowing that as long as believers continue in this life, temptations to sin will remain.

2. The several links Paul has drawn in the early chapters of Romans between the law and sin (3:20; 4:15; 5:13, 20; 6:14-15; 7:1-6) demand some clarification of their relation to each other; it is given in 7:7-25. The law itself is holy, its commandments holy, righteous, and good. But when rebellious human beings are confronted by a righteous law, their innate rebellion springs to life and expresses itself in a fatal disobedience (7:7-13).¹²⁸

Paul dramatizes the encounter in a first-person narrative, drawing its substance from a variety of biblical narratives (that telling of Adam and Eve's disobedience in particular, as well as others relating Israel's experience under the Sinaitic law) and, no doubt, from personal observation and experience;¹²⁹ but

127. Both Judaism and Paul attempt to motivate right behavior on the part of God's people by noting that it is the only fitting response to what God has already done for them. In spite of some prophetic precedents (cf. Jer. 31:33-34; Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:26-27), however, it was not *typical* of Judaism to see right behavior as first made *possible* by a divine transformation of human beings; rather, the ability to do what God has commanded was generally presupposed. Paul, clearly, thought differently. Cf. Laato, *Approach*, 67-146.

128. More will be said about Paul's understanding of the purpose of the law in chap. 19.

129. Kim, *Origin*, 53, rightly warns us against denying that Paul shared something of the human experiences portrayed in Rom. 7 (i.e., the arousal of desire for what is forbidden in response to its prohibition, and the conflict between the desire to do good and the act of evil): "To deny to Paul these human, all too human, experiences is to make him twice divine. For it would imply that Paul was a superhuman being who was exempted from such experiences as are common to man, and yet that without having suffered them, he could still describe them as vividly as he does in Rom 7. Furthermore, it is to rob Paul's statements about the freedom in Christ

his depiction does not correspond strictly with *any* one story, including his own.¹³⁰ His essential point is that the law is not to be confused with sin, though it provokes a sinful response in sinful human beings.

Nonetheless, we may at least see underlying his depiction the same understanding of human depravity as reflected in 1:18-3:20 and 5:12-21: Adamic humanity does not, and — in its present state of corruption — *cannot*, do good.¹³¹ That impotence is depicted in 7:14-25. Yet even here Paul's *point* is that the law must be acknowledged to be good even by those who do not do it. To seek to define whether he has in mind the Christian or the pre-Christian struggle with sin is probably to ask a question he did not intend to answer; indeed, his account seems to mix elements from both.¹³² Most of what he says clearly reflects his Christian perception of life lived under the law, but modern scholarship has perhaps too quickly banished *every* suggestion of Christian experience from the passage. 7:24-25, if reflective of *any* experience, would seem to reflect his continuing awareness of the struggle between a mind devoted to God's service and a "flesh" drawn toward sin. Galatians 5:17 speaks of the same conflict, and there the life of believers is undoubtedly in view. To be sure, in the case of

from the law of their empirical reality. For he who has had no experience of the bondage of the law (of sin) cannot know freedom from it, either." Cf. also Barrett, "Conscience," 36-48; Beker, *Paul*, 240-43; W. D. Davies, *Studies*, 94; and the balanced comments of Sanders, *Paul Pal. Jud.*, 443-44 n. 5; also Sanders, *Law*, 152-53. Kim goes on to say, however, that other passages in Paul (Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:4-6) make it clear that before his conversion he did not regard such common experiences as problematic, and that he was "rather satisfied with his achievement in Judaism" (54).

130. Rightly, B. Dodd, *Example*, 230. Cf. what was said earlier in this section about Rom. 1:18-32.

131. Neither of the earlier passages is as explicit about the *inability* of humans to do good as Rom. 7; but the point is consistent with what is said about the corruption of human nature in 1:21-24 and of human beings as "made sinners" through Adam's disobedience in 5:19. On 2:14-15, 26-27 see chap. 15, nn. 22 and 23 above. Rom. 2:14-15 does indeed allow that Gentiles show, whenever they do what the law commands, that they are aware of the requirement to do right. Only a wooden reading of Rom. 7 would find it contradictory of that point: Paul surely does not mean, even in Rom. 7, that human beings (even *unredeemed* human beings) never give to the poor, or that they do not do what is right when they do so. The "Lutheran" tradition, as summarized in Part One of our study, doubtless represents Paul's thinking: it allows that human beings have moral sensibilities (this is Paul's point in 2:14-15; cf. also 12:17; 1 Cor. 5:1; etc.) and do many acts of *relative* goodness while insisting that nothing done by those not rightly related to God can, in any ultimate sense, be God-pleasing or good (cf. Rom. 8:7-8; 14:23). That a bad tree bears bad fruit may not have been said by Paul, but Luther quite rightly (and very frequently) quotes the saying in commenting on Pauline texts. On Phil. 3:6 see sec. v below.

132. "Sold under sin" in 7:14 seems impossible as a Pauline description of the Christian (cf. 6:7, 11); yet the delight in God's law and the fervent desire to do what is right of which Paul speaks in 7:15-25 seem impossible in a Pauline description of the *non-Christian* (cf. 8:5-8).

believers it was not, for Paul, a hopeless struggle: a love that "fulfills the law" is expected of those who "conduct themselves in accordance with God's Spirit" (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:14). But the Paul who in *this* context longs for deliverance from "the body of this death" (Rom. 7:24; cf. 8:23) undoubtedly had in mind its ever present propensities toward sin as well as its physical weaknesses.¹³³

The challenges presented by Romans 9–11 go far beyond what can — or needs to be — covered here;¹³⁴ but neither can they be totally ignored. For our purposes the following comments must suffice.

1. That human beings can only be declared righteous by faith and because of Jesus Christ is emphatically reaffirmed in these chapters. The righteousness of faith is for Jews and Gentiles alike, and only through it can they be saved (10:6–13). The pathos and point of this section in Romans have their roots in that conviction — and in the observation that most Jews, to date, have rejected the gospel. They are wrongly pursuing righteousness through keeping the law's commands (through works) rather than through faith.¹³⁵ Paul can only pray for their salvation (10:1) and do whatever he can, however indirect (11:13–14), to promote it. But even the eventual salvation of "all Israel" — in which Paul fervently believes — will only take place when Israel as a whole abandons its unbelief (11:26–27 cannot be detached from vv. 23–24).

2. Paul affirms that *Israel* is the object of God's election and will one day (necessarily through faith) find salvation (11:26–29). That many Jews do not now believe does not mean that God's purposes for his people have failed — and that for three reasons. (a) Not every descendant of Abraham need belong to the Israel whom God has elected: God's call, not physical descent, is decisive (9:6–13). (b) Moreover, the unbelief of the majority of Israel is a temporary thing: a divine hardening that serves divine purposes, but lasting only until the full complement of Gentiles has believed. (c) In the meantime there are Jews even now who believe, thus making up the present "remnant" that testifies to God's continuing relations with his people (9:27–29; 11:1–6).

3. Paul's depiction of the *nature* of Israel's sin and redemption is shaped by his Christian convictions; but the pattern itself of sin, judgment, and ultimate redemption is completely traditional. Every crisis in Israel's history provoked

133. Ziesler ("Role," 41–56; cf. also Laato, *Approach*, 125–26) suggests that, throughout Rom. 7, Paul has in mind the inability of humans to control their desires as the respect in which they *cannot* keep the law (i.e., the prohibition of coveting); the suggestion echoes Augustine's reading of the chapter, which focuses on the "concupiscence" (the "hankering for sin," also seen as a violation of the tenth commandment) that is never fully overcome in this life, even by the believer; cf. *De spir. et litt.* 4.6; 36.65; *C. duas epp. Pel.* 1.10.18–1.11.24.

134. Cf., more substantially, my article "Romans 9–11."

135. On Rom. 9:30–10:13, see chap. 16, sec. iii.

reflection on the sin that had brought divine judgment. Beyond crime and punishment lay redemption — inevitably, given God's commitment to his people. From that redemption and the ultimate salvation of "Israel" certain incorrigible Jews would be excluded (cf. Ezek. 11:21, qualifying 11:17–20; *m. Sanh.* 10:1–4, qualifying the introductory statement of 10:1). The notion that these chapters betray the hopeless contradiction between Paul's conviction that salvation is only to be found in Christ and his continuing commitment to his compatriots fails to recognize how worn is the path Paul treads.

4. Paul's insistence that God calls his people by an act of grace without regard for their works (9:11–16; 11:5–6) coheres nicely with his insistence that righteousness is attained through faith, not works (9:30–32; 10:5–13; earlier, 4:1–8).¹³⁶ His claim that the objects of salvation are the disobedient who find mercy (11:30–32) parallels what he says about the justification of sinners in the opening chapters of the epistle. And his observation that Jews, failing to submit to the righteousness God offers, continue trying to establish their "own" (10:3), means that they are still attempting, by doing what they should, to gain recognition for "ordinary" righteousness rather than recognizing the need of all for God's extraordinary gift. They have not misconstrued the law in thinking that it demands works (cf. 10:5); they have, however, failed to see that the righteousness demanded by the law can only be attained by faith in Christ (9:30–32), whose coming marks the "end of the law" as a path to righteousness (10:4).

5. What, in the Pauline corpus, is *new* in Romans 9–11 is the insistence that Israel's election and the commitments God made to the patriarchs will eventuate in the future salvation of (*now* unbelieving) Israel (11:25–32).¹³⁷ Elsewhere Paul typically appropriates Israel's prerogatives for the church (e.g., Phil. 3:3); he confines the "seed" of Abraham to whom promises have been made to Christ and those who belong to him (Gal. 3:16, 29), or to those who show Christian faith (Rom. 4:11–16); or he insists that, though God has been good to Israel, the privileges they have received carry with them no presumption of approval on the day when God judges all people without partiality (2:1–3:20). The blessing invoked on the "Israel of God" in Galatians 6:16 might conceivably be a harbinger of Romans 11:26; in the context of Galatians, however, it seems more likely to be another instance where the language of God's people is applied to the church.¹³⁸ The notion that unbelieving Israel — as a whole, though not necessarily every individual Jew, and not without coming to faith in Christ — is, because of its election, destined for salvation is unique to these chapters.

136. Cf. Hübner, *Theologie*, 316.

137. Cf. Becker, *Paul*, 469.

138. Cf. n. 84 above.

It is in these chapters (11:16-24), too, that we find the people of God pictured as a single olive tree whose branches, to start with, were the Jews. Gentile believers have been grafted into that tree, and, to be sure, unbelieving Jews have (at least temporarily) been broken off. But here Paul indicates — what, to judge by his epistles, he had not said to the Thessalonians, Corinthians, and even the Galatians — that believing Gentiles gain admission to a people of God constituted already *before Christ came*.¹³⁹

The novelty of the indication should not be exaggerated: one cannot imagine Paul ever denying that David, the prophets, and the seven thousand who were faithful in Elijah's day (11:2-4) were recognized by God as his people.¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, it should not be underestimated either. That a covenant with *Israel* as such remains in force and will lead to that people's salvation, its present unbelief notwithstanding, is a *mystery* that Paul discloses here to the Roman Christians (11:25-29). Paul's Gentile mission was *not* predicated all along on the conviction that Christ brought blessings to Gentiles already enjoyed — *apart* from Christ — by Jews under their "covenant." Rather, Paul was bringing to Gentiles the same gospel that other apostles took to Jews — because *both* needed to be saved (Gal. 2:7-9; cf. 1 Cor. 15:11).

With the parenthesis of Romans 12-16 we need not concern ourselves here.

How "Lutheran" is Romans? It seems fair to say that all the essential features of the "Lutheran" Paul find support in Romans, though the emphases of the Reformer are not always those of the apostle. The doctrine of justification by faith is indeed the divine response to the dilemma posed, not by the earlier exclusion of Gentiles from the covenant, but by God's demand of righteousness from all human beings, none of whom is righteous (2:6-13; 3:9-20). The works (or works of the law) by which no flesh can be declared righteous (3:20, 28) are not the boundary markers that distinguish Jews from Gentiles, but the righteous deeds that God requires of all human beings. Jews continue to pursue righteousness through such works (9:32); this pursuit Paul finds misguided, not because the law does not demand works (cf. 2:13; 10:5), but because no one *is* righteous, and God has provided for the righteousness of sinners, through Christ, by faith. Justification is thus a gift of grace, received through faith, not gained by works. Received in this way, it excludes the possibility of human boasting (3:27; 4:2) — an observation that receives less emphasis in Romans than in Luther's writings, but is undeniably Pauline. Paul says, too, that the law brings recognition of sin (3:20); according to Romans 7, it provokes dormant

139. In Galatians Paul sees believers, through Christ, as the seed of Abraham (3:16, 29); it is *not* said, however, that Abraham had "children" in this sense before Christ.

140. On the place of "Old Testament saints" in Paul's thought, see chap. 15, n. 44.

sin into rebellious expression and makes its sinfulness apparent (7:7-13). If Paul's focus here (unlike that of Luther's primary purpose of the law) is not on the sense of guilt and dismay that the law brings to individual sinners, 1:18-3:20 surely supports the conclusion drawn above from 1 Thessalonians that Paul's missionary preaching included reference to humanity's failure to meet divine requirements and consequent expectation of judgment.

That — as the new perspective on Paul emphasizes — Gentiles need not be circumcised is certainly part of what Paul says in Romans, as he did in Galatians. But in both letters the reason given is not that blessings already enjoyed by Jews are available now for Gentiles as well, but that sinners are justified, apart from the law, by faith in Jesus Christ.

v. Philippians¹⁴¹

Our interest in Philippians here is largely confined to 3:2-11, where Paul warns his converts about those who advocate circumcision and tells of his own rejection of the "righteousness of the law" in order to embrace the "righteousness of faith." Otherwise we need only note the following.

1. In Philippians, as in the other letters we have looked at, it is clear that the message Paul originally proclaimed to his readers was one of salvation from the perdition otherwise facing the world (here the "crooked and perverted generation" of 2:15; cf. 1:28).

2. The salvation of Paul's converts, here as elsewhere, is attributed to God (1:28), who "began a good work in them" (1:6) by granting them the privilege to believe in Christ (1:29) as preached by Paul in the gospel (cf. 1:5, 7, 12; 2:22; 4:3, 15).

3. The good that believers are now able (and expected) to do is itself the work of God through Jesus Christ (1:11), in that God both directs their will so that they desire what pleases him and enables them to do it (2:13).¹⁴²

141. Philippians was written *after* Romans if it was written from Rome, *before* Romans if written from Ephesus. I treat the letter here since I think the evidence slightly favors the former alternative; but nothing in my reading of Philippians depends on the chronology — nor would it be affected if the letter, as we have it, includes parts of two or three letters from Paul to Philippi.

142. Cf. Augustine, *De grat. et lib. arb.* 16.32: "It is certain that it is we that *will* when we will, but it is He who makes us will what is good, of whom it is said . . . , 'The will is prepared by the Lord' [Prov 8:35 LXX]. . . . It is certain that it is we that act when we act; but it is He who makes us act, by applying efficacious powers to our will, who has said, 'I will make you to walk in my statutes, and to observe my judgments, and to do them' [Ezek 36:27]."

4. The "good work" that God has begun in them is one that God will bring to completion (1:6; cf. 1 Thess. 5:23-24). That he must do so follows from the nature of salvation as a future hope (cf. Rom. 5:9; 8:24; 13:11) to be attained by those who maintain their initial faith throughout their lives (cf. 11:22; 1 Cor. 15:2; Gal. 4:11; Phil. 2:16; 1 Thess. 3:5). On one level, then, it is crucial that the Philippians themselves continue in the path that leads to their salvation (which they thus "work out," 2:12).¹⁴³ As they do so, however, they need to recognize that God himself, working in and through them, brings about whatever they do (2:13).

Nothing Paul writes in Philippians 3 suggests that advocates of circumcision were present in Philippi; he seems rather to be writing as a precautionary measure against the possibility of their arrival. Perhaps because of the lack of a present threat, perhaps also because his good relations with the Philippians lead him to believe that his mere warning will suffice, he deals with the matter briefly and without any of the theological argumentation invoked especially in Galatians, but also in Romans. For his friends in Philippi, Paul believed, he needed only to say that from his own experience he knew all about the "righteousness of the law" — and he had rejected it.

As in Galatians, Paul identifies his own pre-Christian experience with the position of those who would impose circumcision on his Gentile converts; in both cases the Sinaitic law was thought to provide the framework within which the people of God must live. Any who thought they measured up well by its standards should know that Paul had done even better (3:4): not only was his heritage impeccable, but he himself had observed the law according to the strict and expert interpretation of the Pharisees,¹⁴⁴ and he had proven his zeal by per-

143. Does Paul then think, after all, that believers must contribute to their own salvation? The anxiety he more than once betrays to qualify statements of what believers achieve with an assurance that God (or God's grace, or Christ) is the effective agent suggests that he does not see it that way; see Eastman, *Grace*, 44 (of 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 3:5), 86 (of Gal. 4:9), 89 (of 2:20), 195-96, 198 (of Phil. 2:13); and note Augustine, *De gest. Pel.* 14.36: "O mighty teacher, confessor, and preacher of grace! What meaneth this: 'I laboured more, yet not I?' Where the will exalted itself ever so little, there piety was instantly on the watch, and humility trembled, because weakness recognised itself." Clearly Paul did *not* think that an act of grace brought those who believe into the people of God but that they now must maintain their status by their *own* deeds; he could not be more emphatic that anything they do even as believers remains a product of divine grace. Note, too, that it is frequently the necessity of persisting in *faith* that Paul stresses (Rom. 11:22; 1 Cor. 15:2; 1 Thess. 3:5). It is nonetheless true that he expects the faith of believers to be expressed in appropriate actions and denies a place in God's kingdom to those of whom this is not true (cf. Rom. 8:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21). As Calvin put it, "we are justified not without works yet not through works" (*Inst.* 3.16.1).

144. Cf. Baumgarten, "Name," 411-28.

secuting the church. In short, his performance, as he judged it by the righteousness of the law, was "blameless" (3:4-6). On the claims Paul here makes, the following observations should be borne in mind.

1. The righteousness of the law for Paul included both his Jewish heritage (the Israelite family into which he was born, his circumcision as an infant) and the conformity of his own behavior with the requirements of the law. For a Gentile convert to Judaism, only the latter could come in question. Paul seems, however, to regard native Jewishness as preferable.

2. Both the Jewishness of one's heritage and one's conformity with the law invite comparison with the claims of others: Paul, indeed, boasts of his superior merits on both counts. Here we may recall that, according to Romans 3:27, "boasting" (in the privileges enjoyed by Jews and in deeds done in fulfillment of the law) is *not* excluded by the "law of works."

3. The point Paul is making is that he knows the righteousness of the law as well as any and surpassed others in its performance, so that the Philippians may safely trust his judgment, follow his example, and reject the advocates of the law: that is his *point*.¹⁴⁵ From what he says one may also *infer* that he did not suffer from poor self-esteem, nor was his conscience of an introspective, troubled sort.¹⁴⁶ On the other hand, it would be wrong to conclude from what Paul says here that he saw nothing unsatisfactory in the righteousness of the law and only opted for faith in Christ because it somehow seemed even better. Though "blameless" from his former perspective, his persecution of the church (3:6) could only have appeared to him, from the moment he encountered the risen Christ, as a bad thing to have done (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9).¹⁴⁷ And all his merits under the law he characterizes as belonging to the realm of the flesh (Phil. 3:3-4). For Paul that means that they could not please God (cf. Gal. 3:3; Rom. 8:7-8); true service is carried out by the *Spirit* of God (Phil. 3:3).

Nonetheless, the dramatic change in the direction of Paul's life can be explained by the glories of Christ that he embraced at least as well as by the limitations of the law that he left behind; and here Paul focuses on the former (3:8-

145. Cf. Thielman, *Plight*, 110.

146. Cf. the summary of Stendahl in chap. 8, sec. ii above. Note, however, the qualifications of Espy, "Conscience," 161-88.

147. Cf. Deidun, "Cake," 51: "In [Phil. 3] v. 6 [Paul] recalls a fact which . . . Paul never allows his readers to forget (but which Sanders never mentions): that his former righteousness, seemingly at the very point of its perfection, made him a zealous persecutor of the Church. His mention of it here makes it difficult to understand Sanders' inferences from this passage, namely, that Paul considered his former righteousness to be '*in and of itself a good thing*.' . . . It is surely not too much to suppose that Paul could never have considered to be intrinsically good the righteousness which drove him to do what he was most to regret."

11). Knowing Christ, and having the righteousness God offers through faith in him¹⁴⁸ rather than that based on his own conformity with the law, are now his goals. He pursues them, fully aware that to share in the power of Christ's resurrection entails a share in his sufferings and death.

vi. Ephesians, the Pastorals — and James?

According to Romans 3:20, 28, no human being is declared righteous by the works of the law. In the context, Paul's argument makes clear that these works amount to the doing of good that God requires of all human beings, Gentiles and Jews alike (2:7, 10; cf. "doers of the law," 2:13). Hence the same point is made when Paul says that one is declared righteous "apart from [unspecified] works" (4:2, 5-6; cf. 9:32): apart, that is, from the good works of which one might boast (4:2) or by which one might be thought to have earned recognition as righteous; rather, such recognition is granted paradoxically to the "ungodly" as a gift of grace (4:4-5).

The same Pauline themes find restatement in Ephesians and the Pastorals: human beings are sinners and, as such, destined for wrath rather than salvation; but God offers to them salvation quite apart from the "deeds of righteousness" he otherwise requires, as an act of divine grace.¹⁴⁹ We may add that both Ephesians and the Pastorals insist that, though not saved *by* good works, believers have been saved *for* them.

The readers of Ephesians are described as having been "dead in their trespasses and sins,"¹⁵⁰ misdeeds that are seen as characteristic of "the age of this world" and in keeping with the nature and desires of its satanic ruler (2:1-2). Human beings follow the desires of their "flesh" and "thinking," but these have been so corrupted¹⁵¹ that all are "by *nature* children of wrath" (2:3). But though such was the readers' past, they have been brought to life, together with Christ, in a demonstration of the extraordinary opulence of divine grace (2:4-7). "For

148. To "have righteousness" from another — even when the other is God — remains a curious locution; cf. the discussion of "extraordinary righteousness" in chap. 15, sec. iii above. For the reading "through faith *in* Christ" for διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ in Phil. 3:9, see Koperski, "Meaning," 198-216.

149. Cf. Marshall, "Salvation," 339-58. Marshall's article provides a counterbalance to Luz, "Rechtfertigung," which maximizes perceived differences between Paul on the one hand and Ephesians and the Pastorals on the other.

150. "Trespasses" and "sins" here seem synonymous; the heaping up of synonymous terms is typical of the letter. Cf. Best, *Essays*, 74-75.

151. Cf. 4:17-18. The corruption of the "old" humanity requires that it be replaced by a new, "created *according to God* [= in the divine image, from which the old humanity had fallen? cf. Col. 3:10] in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (4:22-24).

you have been saved by grace, through faith. This does not come from you, but is the gift of God; it is not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are God's workmanship; we have been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand in order that we should live in them" (2:8-10).

"Saved," "by grace," "through faith,"¹⁵² "not of works," "lest anyone should boast":¹⁵³ it is hard to imagine a more compact yet comprehensive statement of the themes we have seen in Paul. The formulation itself departs in certain respects from its Pauline predecessors. In Galatians and Romans one is "declared righteous" rather than "saved" by "faith" — though, to be sure, Romans 5:9 assures us that those who have been "declared righteous" *will be* "saved," and "salvation" is indeed the general Pauline term for the good offered in the gospel.¹⁵⁴ Salvation itself is generally a future hope — a *certain* hope, to be sure, for those who believe — in the acknowledged Pauline epistles rather than, as in Ephesians 2:8, something already possessed. Variations in detail there are; but 2:8-10 remains as fine a statement as any of Paul's "Lutheranism."¹⁵⁵

Its closest rival in that regard is perhaps Titus 3:4-7. "We" were once "unintelligent, disobedient, lost in error, slaves of lusts and sundry pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another" (3:3). Clearly "we" were not the sort of people who could be saved by "works done in righteousness that we performed" (3:5)¹⁵⁶ — though our author makes *very* clear that he has no objections to such works in principle, and indeed expects them to be done by believers (3:1, 8, 14; cf. 2:7, 14). "Our" salvation was rather brought about "according to his mercy through the cleansing of our rebirth and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, whom God poured lavishly upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior so that, having been *justified by his grace*, we might become heirs in our

152. "Faith" here is the response shown by people who "heard the word of truth, the gospel of [their] salvation" (1:13; cf. 1:15, 19).

153. Speaking of Eph. 2:8-9, Barclay (*Truth*, 251) notes: "This passage is proof that an aversion to individual self-righteous attitudes is not an invention of the Reformation, or even of Augustine!"

154. Note, too, that "those who are being saved" in 1 Cor. 1:18 are the same as "the believers" (whom God "saves" through the apostolic kerygma) in 1:21. It is, of course, the "believers" in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 1:7) who are "delivered" from the "wrath to come" (1:10).

155. Lincoln, "Summary," 617-30, concludes that "the sort of generalization of justification and focus on grace found in Augustine has a precedent within the canonical Paul of Ephesians where works represent human effort and performance which can obscure the gracious activity of God in providing a complete salvation" (628).

156. Marshall, "Salvation," 350, esp. n. 34, notes that 3:5 could be interpreted as saying that, though the readers "had done some righteous deeds, nevertheless God took no account of these in showing pure mercy to them"; but the context strongly suggests that the point is rather that they "had not done any righteous deeds on the basis of which they might conceivably have been saved."

hope of eternal life" (3:5-7). 2 Timothy 1:9 stresses, too, that God saved us, "not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, given to us in Christ Jesus before times eternal" — though but recently revealed. In each of these cases, Ephesians and the Pastorals echo Paul's own insistence that God saves sinners by his grace, through Christ, apart from the righteous deeds he requires but does not find in fallen humanity.¹⁵⁷

On page 449 of Sanders's *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* there is a one-line footnote (n. 9) in which the perfect tense of $\sigma\epsilon\omega\sigma\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\iota$ in Ephesians 2:5, 8 is said to represent "a distinct theological development" (Paul generally spoke of salvation in the present or future). There is no other reference to Ephesians 2:8-10, 2 Timothy 1:9, or Titus 3:4-7 in either *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* or *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* — or for that matter in Dunn's *Jesus, Paul, and the Law*¹⁵⁸ or Wright's *The Climax of the Covenant*. The omission is of course not unjustifiable: these letters, for a variety of reasons, are widely considered to have been written by someone *other* than Paul and are therefore commonly disregarded in studies of Paul's thought.¹⁵⁹ One cannot but feel, however, that the omission, in this case at least, is unfortunate. No study that took Ephesians and the Pastorals into account could conclude, what proponents of the new perspective have sometimes claimed, that the Pelagian crisis or sixteenth-century controversies are the source of the "misreading" of Paul that sees him excluding human works from salvation rather than particular works from the terms for Gentile admission to the people of God.¹⁶⁰

157. Cf. Kruse, *Paul*, 270.

158. Dunn's *Theology* does, however, cite these texts, though with the insistence that the perspective is no longer that of Paul: "in Eph. 2.8-9, . . . the issue does seem to have moved from one of works of law to one of human effort. But when the texts in the undisputed Pauline letters are read within the context of Paul's mission emerging from its Jewish matrix, the resulting picture is rather different. Within that context we gain a clear picture of Paul fiercely resisting his own earlier pre-Christian assumption that God's righteousness was only for Israel, and only for Gentiles if they became Jews and took on the distinctive obligations of God's covenant with Israel. . . . The danger which he particularly confronted was that ethnic identity would in the event count for more than the gracious call of God or significantly determine and qualify that call" (371).

159. I myself devoted only a footnote to them in *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith* (166 n. 64), though one that makes the same point I argue here: "Such texts ought at least to warn us that 'Reformation spectacles' are not required to read Paul as denying that human 'works' are a factor in salvation."

160. Cf. Marshall, "Salvation," 358: "The earliest interpretation of the Pauline *Hauptbriefe* in Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles understands Paul to be denying that God acted in Christ on the basis of human works that might have predisposed him to favour humankind. . . . A question mark is thus placed against the view that Paul was opposed to 'works of the law' simply as the symbols of a Judaism which excluded the Gentiles. Rather, Paul was opposed to any view that regards works as something on which people may depend for salvation rather than purely

Nor was it only first-century "friends" (or disciples) who so construed the apostle. We have already noted in Paul's letters his response to those who thought his emphasis on grace, or his exclusion of the law, permitted (or even promoted) moral license (cf. Rom. 3:8; 6:1, 15; 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23; Gal. 2:17; 5:13). To their voices we should add that of James, for it is hard to see anyone other than Paul as the (ultimate) *source* behind the view, opposed by James, that one can be justified or saved by faith apart from works — with Abraham as the test case (James 2:14-26);¹⁶¹ and the works at the center of the controversy are not the distinctively Jewish requirements of the law, but works in general in which obedience to God, or even basic human decency, is shown: the clothing and feeding of the needy, Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, and Rahab's preservation of the Israelite spies are cited as examples (2:14-17, 21-25). Here we have, in the words of Friedrich Avemarie, "a very old perspective on Paul."¹⁶² It suggests that by first-century critics, as by Augustine, Luther, and many others, Paul was deemed to have dismissed any role for (good) works in answering the perennial religious question of how a human being can be found acceptable by God.¹⁶³ It makes very clear that an insistence that salvation is by faith and grace, not (good) works, was anything but self-evident and uncontroversial in Paul's day. And it underlines the novelty of the new perspective that would limit his concerns to issues deemed more pressing by the modern mind: ethnocentrism, racism, and nationalistic pride.¹⁶⁴

upon divine grace." Avemarie, "Werke," 304-5, cites also Polycarp, *Letter to the Philippians* 1.3 and 1 *Clement* 32.4 as examples of post-Pauline texts that understood the thesis of justification apart from works in a "quasi-Reformational" way.

161. Cf. Penna, *Paul*, 93-94. Avemarie, "Werke," 289, shows the astonishing degree of verbal correspondence between James and Paul in these verses. We need not concern ourselves here with whether the target of James's polemic was Paul himself or his interpreters. For Augustine's insistence that there is no true contradiction between James's point and the writings of Paul, see the discussion in chap. 1 above; Luther, famously, was dubious about their possible harmonization (see, e.g., *Pref. James*, 35:395-96). In addition to Avemarie's discussion of the relation between Paul and James, cf., recently, Laato, "Justification," 43-84.

162. Such is the subtitle of Avemarie's "Werke."

163. Cf. Penna, *Paul*, 113.

164. Cf. Matlock, "Studies," 439 (responding to the insistence of Stendahl, Sanders, and Dunn that Paul's thought must be reconstructed in categories of his own time and place, not those of a later age): "The susceptibility of the . . . axioms of the new perspective to analysis as arising from, or at least as being in keeping with, contemporary concerns makes the stance of objectivity look immediately suspect. . . . For indeed, we moderns are not typically concerned so much about sin and guilt and forgiveness as we are about notions of community, so that *our* theological climate is reflected here." Also 442-43: In "new perspective" writings, Paul at times sounds "surprisingly liberal, Western and pluralist — and that after all the warnings of his *distance* from us (leaving us to ask once more whether Luther's Paul comes to grief more for his failure to fit the twentieth century than the first)."

The Law in God's Scheme

As readers of mysteries make their way through a book, they tend to match wits with the author. From the opening pages they begin formulating their own ideas of what has taken place, or will take place, and of who is responsible for what. Approaching the end of a novel, they like to think they have figured things out; they read on, anxious to confirm their suspicions.

The end is the supreme test of the author's mettle: in a well-crafted mystery it will both surprise readers and at the same time compel their admission that it makes perfect sense in the light of what preceded it. Details overlooked in a first reading of the book now prove significant. The perfection of the "perfect ending" lies partly in its capacity to release whatever emotional tensions the novel may have roused in its readers, but partly also in the sense of appropriateness with which it leaves them. Rightly understood, they feel, the book *could* not have ended in any other way.

The revelation that Paul received of God's Son (Gal. 1:15-16) provided just such a surprising climax to the drama of divine redemption, requiring him to reassess and reconstrue a story he thought he had understood. The earlier protagonists in the story remained the same: Adam, Abraham, Moses. . . . What he understood them to have said and done did not change: after all, *that* part of the story had long since been fixed in Holy Writ. But his understanding of their roles and significance needed rethinking now that the mystery of redemptive history had been resolved and Jesus was seen as its climax. When the spotlight shifted to Christ, then Adam, Abraham, and Moses necessarily looked very different.

So, too, did the Mosaic law. Prior to Damascus Paul was as fervent as any Jew in his pursuit of its righteousness. *After* Damascus he was convinced that the only viable path to righteousness, for Jew and Gentile alike, was by faith in Christ. In important respects Christ took the place once occupied by the law in

Paul's thinking. Yet the law remained divine, its commands "holy, righteous, and good" (Rom. 7:12). Paul's Christian convictions compelled him to rethink what God's purpose for the law might have been.

"Lutheran" tradition is united in thinking that the law was meant to bring sinners to see their need for the Savior. That the claim derives from a reading of Paul is self-evident; whether the claim construes him correctly will be explored below. The "Lutheran" interpreters of Paul at whom we looked in Part One also agreed in thinking that, though Christians are not justified by the Mosaic law and are not bound by its ceremonial regulations, their conduct ought nonetheless to conform to its moral commands. The adequacy of this interpretation, too, will be tested.

In what follows I will attempt to sum up Paul's *Christian* understanding of the Mosaic law in a series of theses and to say something about the origin of each in his pre- or post-Damascus thinking.¹ Much has been said about the law in earlier chapters and requires only brief recapitulation here. A few of the theses represent restatements of positions I advanced in the tenth chapter of *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith* — a chapter that attracted more critique by itself than the rest of the book put together. In the present monograph I have done what I could to distribute objectionable material more equitably among the chapters of Part Three, but it is perhaps inevitable that an imbalance remains. Paul has not made things easy for us, insisting as he does that believers are not "under the law" while maintaining that they nonetheless "fulfill" it. One is an antinomian if one highlights the former declaration, a legalist if one focuses on the latter, and a hopeless harmonizer (perhaps in combination with one of the other two epithets) if one attempts to do justice to both. You pay your money and you make your choice.

Thesis 1: Human beings find themselves in an ordered world not of their making, with the capacity to acknowledge or deny their dependence on the Creator, to conform to or defy the wise ordering of his creation. Life and divine favor are enjoyed by those who fear the Lord and do good. Those who reject what is good and do what is "wise in their own eyes" court disaster.²

There is nothing distinctively Pauline in the notions that human beings are accountable to their Maker and that their deeds bear consequences; indeed, my

1. The theses are largely taken over from my article "Sinai," 147-65. Material from my *Law*, 174-218, has also been incorporated.

2. Cf. what was said about "ordinary dikaiosness" in chap. 15, sec. ii.

formulation of the thesis owes more to the language of Proverbs than to that of Paul. But its substance finds articulation in Romans 1:18–2:29 and is presupposed wherever Paul condemns human *un*righteousness and anticipates divine judgment. The eternal power and deity of God, Paul argues in Romans 1, may be inferred from his created order. When, therefore, people refuse to acknowledge him or give him thanks — when they focus their devotion on creatures rather than the Creator — their conduct is both willful and inexcusable. Divine judgment is at work when those who thus close their minds to the most basic truth about their existence proceed to further violations of nature's order: they must live with the consequences of their deeds in a world marred by human violence, insolence, and irresponsibility. Nor is judgment confined to the bane of sin in this world. Still to come (Paul maintains in Rom. 2) is the day of God's righteous judgment, when life everlasting will be bestowed on all who do what is good, but wrath poured out on those who do evil. The principle applies, Paul insists, to Jews and Gentiles alike.

For our purposes the absence of any reference to the law in Romans 1:18–2:11 is significant. Merely to be a moral creature in God's world, Paul believes, is to be bound to do what is good and to avoid evil (cf. 2:6–10). Most fundamental is the duty to give God his due; those who receive life from the hands of God respond appropriately with thanks and praise. To refuse to do so, and thereby to suppress knowledge of human dependence on God, is senseless, perverse — and the precursor of other acts that are "contrary to nature (*παρὰ φύσιν*)" and "unfitting (*τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα*)" (cf. 1:26–28).

The expressions "fitting" and "unfitting," as well as "according to nature" and "contrary to nature," were used by many in antiquity. For Paul in Romans 1 they serve to define the good to be pursued and the evil to be shunned. Human beings are born into an already ordered cosmos. Nonhuman creation instinctively conforms to its order. For their part humans are faced with the moral choice of patterning their behavior in accordance with nature's order, thus doing what "befits" them, or of defying it. Since even the defiant inevitably participate in, and depend on, the wise ordering of the cosmos, such would-be declarations of independence are both preposterous and highly "unfitting."

They are also, Paul maintains, inexcusable. Those who act perversely and applaud the perverse do so, he claims, in deliberate defiance of the judgment of God (1:32). Those who do what is right, he goes on to say, thereby show their awareness of its claims upon them (2:14–15). *All* are subject to the demands of the good, demands inherent in their status as moral creatures in God's world. And their waywardness cannot be excused by ignorance.

This first thesis, though fundamental to Paul's thinking as a Christian, he

doubtless picked up in Tarsus or Jerusalem rather than on the road to Damascus. Its clearest expression in the Jewish Scriptures (as suggested above) is to be found in the book of Proverbs: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (9:10); "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn from evil" (3:7); "The one who finds [wisdom] finds life and gains favor from the Lord; the one who misses [wisdom] harms his own soul; all who hate [wisdom] love death" (8:35–36).

Indeed, as suggested above, the perspective in Romans 1 has close parallels in pagan thought as well. The language of "fitting" and "unfitting" behavior, of conduct "according to nature" or "contrary to nature," echoes Stoic formulations. A major difference between the thinking of most ancients and that of many in the modern West is that whereas the former saw it as a human responsibility to *discover* what is good, many moderns think they must themselves *decide* what is good. The shift is fundamental. Implicit in the ancient posture is the perception that humans are not the source of the order of the cosmos, though it is their vocation to discern and affirm it. Implicit in the modern posture is the notion that the nonhuman creation has no inherent goodness of its own, that value and meaningful order were not introduced to the cosmos prior to the (rather tardy) appearance of *Homo sapiens*, and that humans are free to impose whatever shape they please on their lives and environment. The ancient perspective is demonstrably that of Paul.

Thesis 2: The law of Moses articulates the appropriate human response to life in God's creation. It is a divine gift to Israel, a signal token of God's favor to his people.³

If our first thesis is most explicit in Romans 1:18–2:11, the second finds its primary expression in 2:12–29. The underlying assumption of the passage appears to be that though all people possess some nagging awareness of the demand to do good and avoid evil, their moral perceptions have been clouded by their predilection for evil (cf. 1:21). As a result, human beings are thought to be well served by a law that reminds them of their fundamental responsibilities. Such a reminder, providing plain guidance of what is at the same time God's will and appropriate behavior for all human beings, has been given to Jews in the law of Moses. So favored, Jews are in a position to instruct Gentiles of things that Gentiles, too, need to know — to be "guide[s] for the blind, light[s] for those in darkness, instructor[s] of fools, teacher[s] of the young." Thus the "knowledge and truth" that Paul sees embodied in the Mosaic law (2:19–20) are manifestly

3. Again, see the discussion of "ordinary *dikaio*sness" in chap. 15, sec. ii.

thought to be of universal application, though Jewish apprehension of the truth has been facilitated by the gift of the law.

From Romans 2 alone, no reader would suspect that the Mosaic law contains precepts peculiar to Israel. All people, Paul insists, will be judged by whether their deeds are good or evil. Nothing in the passage suggests that "good" and "evil" have different contents for different people. In this passage, at least, it is primarily the form in which people encounter the universal moral demands that separates Jews from Gentiles. Jews learn them from the law of Moses.⁴

In this second thesis, too, there is nothing specifically Christian. Already in Deuteronomy the "statutes and ordinances" given to Israel were thought to be recognizably righteous in the eyes of other nations (Deut. 4:5-8).⁵ If Proverbs prescribes the pursuit of wisdom for all people without reference to the Mosaic law, later Wisdom literature identified Torah with the wisdom of the created order; in Sirach 24, for example, as in Romans 2, Jews are seen as having privileged access to universal norms. And Philo repeatedly makes the claim that the "law of nature," which is binding on all people, finds perfect expression in the laws of the Jews (e.g., *Creation* 3; *Moses* 2.52). Not yet, then, do we see signs of Paul's Christian reevaluation of the law.

Some scholars indeed suggest that in Paul's Christian reevaluation of the law he may have *departed* from this thesis: they believe that in the heat of the Galatian controversy he denied the divine origin of the law. A second problem relating to this thesis should also be considered here: whereas in certain passages Paul maintains that the law was a peculiar gift to Israel, in others its domain appears to be universal. How are we to account for the inconsistency?

1. As noted in Part Two, Albert Schweitzer interpreted Galatians as indicating that "the Law was given by Angels who desired thereby to make men subservient to themselves."⁶ Schoeps understood Galatians 3:19 in a similar way: "In the last analysis this means that the law springs not from God but from the angels."⁷ Drane and Hübner agree, and find here one of the ways Paul's position in the earlier epistle differs from his stance in Romans.⁸ For Räisänen Paul at least "toys" with the idea of angels as the source of the law in Galatians; that he entertains the notion reflects again the inconsistency of his thought.⁹

4. Other passages in which Paul speaks of the Mosaic law but has in mind moral demands thought to be binding on all people are noted in chap. 15, sec. ii above.

5. See chap. 15, n. 17 above.

6. Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 69.

7. Schoeps, *Paul*, 183.

8. See above, chap. 10, sec. i and ii.

9. Räisänen, *Law*, 133.

What can be known about the background to Galatians 3:19 has been assembled in many places;¹⁰ our summary here may be brief. According to the Old Testament narrative, the Israelites as a whole heard God's voice utter the Decalogue, though Moses met with God to receive the remainder of the law (Deut. 5:4-31). Tradition allowed, however, that angels were present when God gave the law, and the notion that an angel actually delivered God's law to Moses (perhaps based on Moses' conversation with the "angel of the Lord" in Exod. 3) was not uncommon in Paul's day (cf. Acts 7:38, 53; Heb. 2:2; *Jub.* 1:29-2:1; etc.). The tradition, then, was a common one. But Paul's use of the tradition, on any reading, is radical.

For the Paul of Galatians the giving of the law through angels is a dramatic indication of the law's inferiority to God's promise. To be sure, even Hebrews compares "the word spoken by angels" with that "spoken by the Lord" (2:2-3) and concludes that the latter must be treated with greater solemnity. Still, no denigration of the law is intended. But in Galatians 3 Paul seems bent on showing the law's limitations on all counts: chronologically later than the divine promise (3:15-17), valid only "until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made" (v. 19), unable to impart life (v. 21), but given "because of transgressions" (v. 19), the law, moreover, was "ordained by angels by means of an intermediary" whose presence excludes the possibility of a direct revelation by God (vv. 19-20). For the moment, at least, Paul appears to have nothing good to say about the law.

But does he intend to say more than that God allowed angels to pass on his law to Moses?¹¹ Is he suggesting that angels created the Mosaic code? The participle διαταγείς (rendered "ordained" by RSV, NRSV; "promulgated" by NEB) indicates that the Israelites received their orders from angels but does not make evident whether the angels were the source or the mediators of the commands. The preposition διὰ is ambiguous in the same way. Only context can determine which is meant — hardly an unusual situation in the interpretation of texts! Yet the context shows clearly enough that Paul is speaking of the communication by angels of a law divine in its origin.

a. Admittedly Paul speaks of the Abrahamic covenant as "ratified by God" in 3:17, but says of the law quite baldly that it "came" (430 years later). Still, the failure to stress the divine origin of the law should occasion no surprise in a passage not concerned to balance the law's credits with its debits but concentrating exclusively on the latter. In such a context an argument from silence means little.

10. E.g., Callan, "Midrash," 549-67.

11. Cf. my Review, 195-96.

b. Admittedly again, Paul's analogy comparing God's promise to Abraham to a will that cannot be altered by outsiders perhaps suggests that Paul is thinking of the law as coming from outsiders (angels) who are unable (though not unwilling) to alter the conditions of God's promise. But analogies are never perfect, and Paul's, as a rule, less so than most. A detail Paul himself does not press in an illustration that shares the limitations of the species is a dubious base for a challenge to the fundamental conviction that God gave the law.¹²

c. Without affirming the divine origin of the law, Paul assumes the traditional view throughout Galatians.¹³ The law contains the will of God that believers fulfill (5:14). Transgression of the law involves sin (cf. 2:17-18) and draws down upon sinners the divine curse (i.e., that cited from *Scripture* in 3:10). God's purposes for the law are, moreover, a subject for discussion (3:19-24). That a law that states the divine will, invokes the divine curse, and was designed to serve divine purposes had its origin in the independent — even hostile — activity of angels is scarcely conceivable.¹⁴ It could not in any case be advanced without a clarification lacking in Galatians.

d. It is the purpose not of hostile angels but of God that is intended with the phrase "because of transgressions" (3:19). The point of the enigmatic phrase is developed in verse 22 and, presumably, in Romans 5:20, 7:7-13, always with God's intentions in view. In Galatians 3:19 itself the adjacent phrase ("until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made") refers to God's design with the law, thus precluding the possibility that the preceding words reflect demonic purposes.

e. If the argument throughout Galatians, including 3:19a, implies the normal view that the Mosaic law is divine, then the ambiguous expression of 3:19b ("ordained by angels") should be interpreted in a way consistent with this implication.

Our thesis claims that the law is a divine gift to Israel. That it is *divine* seems true for Paul, even in Galatians. But was he always clear that it was given to *Israel*?

2. According to Psalm 147, God "makes his word known to Jacob, his statutes and ordinances to Israel. He has not done so for any other nation; they do not know his ordinances. Praise the Lord!" (vv. 19-20). The distinction is at times just as clear in Paul: Jews who "are instructed in the law" (Rom. 2:18; cf. 9:4) are contrasted with Gentiles "who do not have the law" (2:14). Paul behaves one way in the presence of Jews, who are "under the law," but in another when

among Gentiles, who are "outside the law" (1 Cor. 9:20-21). Yet Räisänen is among the many scholars who have pointed out that when Paul depicts the human dilemma apart from Christ, he at times appears to treat Jew and Gentile alike as subjects of *the law*.¹⁵ We may begin with the relevant texts in Romans.

In Romans 6:14-15 Paul declares that the Roman believers (Gentiles presumably included!) are "not under law but under grace"; the implication would seem to be that prior to their experience of grace, they were in bondage to the law. Still clearer is 7:4-6: those to whom Paul writes have "died to the law"; in the process they were "discharged" from it. Donaldson attempts to resolve the difficulty, suggesting that "on the basis of such verses as 2.12, 14; 7.1 and 9.4 an argument could be constructed that in Rom 5-8 Paul is speaking of the law from an exclusively Jewish Christian perspective"; if, on the other hand, we assume that Gentiles *are* included among those "under the law," then "it is not because Paul takes this for granted, but rather because he has already laid the groundwork in chapters 1 and 2."¹⁶ There Paul argued that Gentiles may be led by conscience to conform to the law's requirements, thus becoming a "law to themselves" (2:14). As a result, Gentiles, like Jews, can be spoken of as "under the law."

Neither of these proposals can be excluded as impossible; neither commends itself as likely. Much of Romans does deal with problems of special concern to Jewish Christians; furthermore, the constituency of the Roman church included Jews as well as Gentiles,¹⁷ and Paul at times directs his remarks exclusively to one of these groups (e.g., 11:13-32). But to read Paul's statements of bondage and deliverance in Romans 5 through 8 as limited to *Jewish* Christian experience requires such prodigious concentration that one may doubt whether Paul's intentions were so narrow. Romans 7:1 ("I am speaking to those who know the law") is sometimes taken as an indication that Jews are addressed, but Paul's detailed usage of the Old Testament in his letter to the Galatians shows that he did not think Jews alone were competent to understand an argument based on the law.¹⁸ And there simply are no other hints in these chapters that the encouragement, admonitions, and arguments offered are intended for but a segment of the Roman church.

Does Paul, then, deliberately speak of all nations as "under law" on the basis of his argument that Gentiles may be a "law to themselves"? It seems unlikely. The point of the argument in Romans 1 and 2 is that Gentiles are respon-

12. Cf. Bläser, *Gesetz*, 53.

13. Cf. Sanders, *Law*, 67-68.

14. Cf. Bläser, *Gesetz*, 51-53.

15. Räisänen, *Law*, 18-23, with ample bibliography.

16. Donaldson, "Curse," 95-96.

17. Cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, 16-22.

18. Whether the Galatians themselves shared his optimism remains one of history's unanswered questions.

sible before God even though *they do not have the law*; the knowledge they have is a sufficient basis for judgment. Their sins are said to be committed "without the law." Their judgment will take place "without the law" (2:12). Though their moral awareness is sufficient to enable them at times to do "things required by the law" (2:14) and so to be "doers of the law" (2:13), the argument that follows continues to assume that possession of the law is a prerogative of the Jews (2:17-24; 4:14, 16). Those who are "under the law" according to 3:19 are undoubtedly Jews.¹⁹ Thus the argument of Romans 1 and 2 can hardly have been intended to pave the way for a description of Jews and Gentiles alike as under the law.

The most likely explanation remains that of Sanders.²⁰ Paul's own presuppositions are Jewish. He speaks naturally, and probably without reflection, of Abraham as "our forefather according to the flesh" (4:1), or of the wilderness generation as "our fathers" (1 Cor. 10:1), even when he is writing to churches predominantly Gentile. Similarly, he at times depicts the plight of all humanity in terms borrowed from, and (strictly speaking) appropriate only to, the Jewish situation ("under the law"). Quite likely the generalization took place unconsciously. Paul *could*, no doubt, have defended his usage with a simple reminder that Gentile awareness of God's demand for righteousness creates at least an analogous situation to that of Jews. But he does not do so, and his argument in Romans 7:7-13 shows that the bondage of which he is thinking in verses 4-6 results from an encounter between the individual and the explicit demands of the Mosaic code. The Jewish situation is in mind, but Paul treats it as though it were universal.

The references in Galatians are more difficult, but may be dealt with briefly here since a precedent for imprecise usage has already been established. Donaldson finds an interesting pattern in 3:13-14, 23-29, and 4:3-7: in each case (a) a plight is described of which the law is a part, and to which a group referred to with first-person plural pronouns is subject; (b) Christ is then said to identify himself with the plight and (c) to provide redemption for those under it, so that (d) saving blessings might be made available to all believers. Donaldson believes Jews are the subject of the plight (a) and the objects of Christ's redemption (c); the progression from the redemption of Jews to blessing for all believers is thought to follow a pattern well attested in Jewish eschatological expectation, where Israel's redemption paves the way for salvation to be extended to the Gentiles.

But the passages in Galatians give us little reason to believe that Paul had such a progression in mind here. On the contrary, both 3:26 and 4:6 seem sim-

ply to apply to the Galatian Christians the blessings referred to in the preceding verses — they, too, have been set free and adopted as sons — without a hint that Gentiles participated on terms that differed from those of Jews (cf. 1:4; 5:1, 13). 3:13-14, too, can be read as saying that Christ's death for all brings blessings to all: if the "we" who have received the Spirit in 3:14 must include all believers, is the same not to be said of the "we" redeemed from the law's curse in 3:13?

It seems safest to conclude that Paul does picture Gentiles as sharing the Jewish dilemma; he has not systematically maintained the distinction between Jews who are under the law and Gentiles who are not. His primary concern in the passages in question is to show that God's law fulfilled a divine function, though it did not lead to life. In outlining that function for Gentile readers, he sometimes speaks as though they, too, have felt its effects. That their situation, in Paul's mind, was analogous to that of Jews is clear enough (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20; Gal. 4:1-11). Still, since Paul raises no argument in its defense, his usage of the phrase "under the law" to include Gentiles was likely an unconscious generalization.

Thesis 3: The law of Moses contains ordinances binding only on Jews; their observance has marked Jews off from other nations as God's people.

Though Paul, like many Jews, could speak of Torah as embodying what is God's will and appropriate behavior for all people, he could also insist, as did other Jews, that it contained precepts required only of Israel. In 1 Corinthians 9:20-21 he claims that he lives among Jews, who are "under the law," as though he himself were "under the law," whereas when he is among Gentiles, who are "outside the law," he lives as one "outside the law." In this passage Jews but not Gentiles are thought to be subject to demands contained in the law: demands whose observance or nonobservance is for Paul a matter of effective missionary strategy rather than moral right or wrong. Food laws and the observance of Sabbaths and festivals must be in mind.

Similarly, the Galatians to whom Paul writes have betrayed an eagerness to be "under law" (4:21; cf. 3:2) by observing "days, months, seasonal festivals, and years" (4:10). Elsewhere Paul insists that Gentiles ought not be compelled to "live as Jews" (2:14); they are not, in other words, to be forced to adopt Jewish food laws.

Nowhere in his extant letters does Paul explain that the Mosaic law combines²¹ demands binding on all humankind with other precepts required

19. Cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, 195-96.

20. Sanders, *Law*, 82.

21. Augustine, however, notes the combination; see, e.g., *C. Faust.* 6.2; 10.2.

only of Israel.²² The absence of such a clarification is presumably to be attributed to the nonsystematic character of his writings. Both halves of the conviction are amply attested in his letters. And both halves are traditional.

Thesis 4: Adamic humanity does not, and cannot, submit to God's law.²³

In Romans 1:18–3:20 Paul declares that all humanity is culpable before God for wrongdoing that begins with the refusal of creatures to give their Creator due glory and thanks and comes to include violations of creation's order and of the norms of decency toward each other. Human thinking has been reduced to futility, human understanding darkened.²⁴ All, in Paul's terms, are "under sin" (3:9) and liable to divine judgment (3:19–20). In Romans 5 Paul traces human sinfulness back to Adam, whose descendants were "made sinners" by his disobedience (v. 19). They live "in sin" (Rom. 6), expressing in concrete acts of sin the pretensions of autonomy and the underlying hostility toward God that Paul sums up in the term "flesh" and sees as endemic in Adam's race. When flesh that is hostile to God encounters the wisdom of God in his created order or in the Mosaic law, the issue is inevitable: human rebelliousness is provoked into sinful actions (7:7–13). Flesh does not find within itself a capacity to submit to God's law (8:7–8; cf. 7:14–25).

Such is the argument of Romans. Paul's anthropology elsewhere is less explicit but hardly more optimistic. In 1 Thessalonians Gentiles do not know God and are the prey of their sinful passions (4:5), while Jews reject God's messengers (2:14–16); apart from God's salvific work in Christ, all belong to the "darkness" that can expect divine wrath (5:3, 7–10). In the Corinthian correspondence the world outside the church is made up of the "unrighteous" (1 Cor. 6:1) who will have no share in God's kingdom (6:9). The Mosaic law may be glorious, but

22. They were, however, binding on Israel only until Christ came; cf. Gal. 3:19, 23–25. Continued observance was for Paul a matter of personal indifference — though missionary strategy determined his own behavior (1 Cor. 9:19–23), and one should in any case avoid giving needless offense to others (Rom. 14:1–15:6). Paul's policy as advocated in Rom. 14, though tolerant of Jewish Christians who wanted to continue traditional observances, could, if adopted, only lead in time to the loss of Jewish distinctiveness; cf. Barclay, "Law," 287–308.

23. This thesis summarizes briefly a number of the anthropological considerations noted in our review of Paul's letters in chap. 18.

24. Cf. Augustine, *De lib. arb.* 3.18.178: "It is an absolutely just punishment for sin that each man loses what he is unwilling to use rightly, when he could without any difficulty use it if he willed. Thus the man who does not act rightly although he knows what he ought to do, loses the power to know what is right; and whoever is unwilling to do right when he can, loses the power to do it when he wills to. In fact, two penalties — ignorance and difficulty — beset every sinful soul."

to sinners it can only bring "condemnation" and "death" (2 Cor. 3:7–9; cf. 1 Cor. 15:56). According to Galatians, all humanity is "under sin" unless justified through faith (3:22–24). Jews who have received the law and Gentiles who have not both live in the realm of the flesh (cf. 3:2–3); its wicked deeds are notorious (5:19–21). In Philippians, too, Paul sees humanity as "crooked," "perverse" (2:15), and headed for perdition (cf. 1:28).²⁵

Thesis 5: For Adamic human beings the law cannot serve as the path to righteousness and life.

This thesis appears to run counter to several texts in Paul's letters that speak of the "righteousness of the law" or of the law as given with the promise of life for its adherents (Rom. 2:13; 7:10; Phil. 3:6, 9). Leviticus 18:5 is twice quoted to this effect by Paul, in Romans 10:5 and Galatians 3:12. Numerous parallels from Deuteronomy could also have been cited. There is no reason to suspect that Paul differed in his understanding of these texts from his Jewish contemporaries: God had chosen and redeemed Israel as his "peculiar" people, had granted them the gift of Torah, and had promised life in his favor if they kept its "statutes and ordinances."

Still, it is important to note that for Paul, however favored Jews may have been, and whatever additional motivation they may have had to do what is right, the same basic conditions apply for them as for Gentiles if they would be found righteous by God: God will judge all, without partiality, by their deeds, and approve only those who do the good (Rom. 2:6–13).²⁶ Jews need to be "doers," not mere "hearers," of the law that spells out the "good"; yet (as we have seen) for Paul, humanity *in Adam* does not — and effectively cannot — submit to the law. Even from Adam's most favored descendants, the gift of the law elicits only stiff-necked rebellion, not humble submission. The institution of the law may have been accompanied by the promise of life and blessing for those who obey its precepts no less than by the threat of cursing and death for those who defy them. Only the threat, however, can be operative among those in the flesh.²⁷ So Paul says that *all* who are "of the works of the law" are subject to the curse it pronounces on transgressors (Gal. 3:10).

25. Discussion of the roots of thesis 4 will be postponed until we have considered thesis 5.

26. This, of course, is the requirement of "ordinary *dikaio*ness" discussed in chap. 15, sec. ii.

27. Cf. Calvin, *Comm.* Gal. 3:10: "It is accidental that the law should curse, though at the same time perpetual and inseparable. The blessing which it offers us is excluded by our depravity, so that only the curse remains." Also *Comm.* Rom. 7:10: "It is an accident that the law inflicts a mortal wound on us, just as if an incurable disease were rendered more acute by a healing

What are the roots of Paul's anthropological pessimism? A number of texts from the Jewish Scriptures can be cited that speak of the universality of human sin. In Genesis 3 Adam and Eve are undoubtedly thought to be representative of all humankind. The chapters that immediately follow are designed to show how sin intrudes upon and corrupts all interhuman relations, as well as those between humans and the nonhuman creation and those between humans and God.

From among the nations, the Scriptures go on to say, Israel has been sovereignly chosen and redeemed to be God's covenant people. But neither before nor after Israel's election is it suggested that Israel is more *righteous* than other nations (cf. Deut. 9:4-6). On the contrary, the Pentateuch,²⁸ Deuteronomistic history, and prophetic literature uniformly depict the nation as stubbornly resisting God's demands in spite of extraordinary displays of God's goodness on its behalf. Prophetic texts view Israel's recalcitrance as so deeply rooted that only a divine transformation of Israel's heart — a heart transplant, as Ezekiel 36:26-27 puts it — could render the people submissive to God's ways (cf. Jer. 13:23; 31:31-34). There are, in short, numerous texts in the Hebrew Scriptures that could be cited in support of this fifth Pauline thesis.²⁹

That being said, it must also be conceded that most Jews did not construe the human predicament — or at least the predicament of Israel — in terms as bleak as Paul's. The gift of Torah was commonly seen as the linchpin in God's dealings with humanity's weakness and propensity for sin. Its laws, marking out the path by which Israel could enjoy life and divine blessing, were not considered beyond human capacities to fulfill. In any case, its institutions provided atonement for those who repented of their shortcomings.

That Paul does not mention Jewish understandings of repentance and restoration is often thought remarkable. From his own perspective, however, effective repentance must surely lie beyond the capacities of a flesh that "does not, and cannot, submit to God's law" (Rom. 8:7). Paul's exclusion of Jewish notions of repentance is therefore quite consistent with his anthropology, as sketched

remedy. The accident, I admit, is inseparable from the law, and for this reason the law, as compared with the Gospel, is elsewhere referred to as 'the ministration of death' [2 Cor. 3:7]. The point, however, holds good, that the law is not injurious to us by its own nature, but because our corruption provokes and draws upon us its curse."

28. Cf. the comments of Luther on the book of Numbers: "laws are quickly given, but when they are to go into effect and become operative, they meet with nothing but hindrance; nothing goes as the law demands. This book is a notable example of how vacuous it is to make people righteous with laws; rather, as St Paul says, laws cause only sin and wrath" (*Pref. OT*, 35:238).

29. Cf. Thielman, *Plight*, 36.

above. Still, the source of so pessimistic a judgment demands explanation, for it remains unusual in the context of Jewish thought.

To be sure, Paul's pessimism is not unprecedented. Some interpreters have traced it to the more pessimistic strands of rabbinic teaching³⁰ or, perhaps, to Hellenistic Jewish thought.³¹ The difficulty with such views is that, to judge from his own testimony about his pre-Christian experience, Paul must have been among the more optimistic Jews in his assessment of at least his own capacity to meet the standards required by the "righteousness of the law" (Phil. 3:4-6). The evidence for Paul's "robust conscience" to which Krister Stendahl has drawn attention³² does not suggest a mind schooled to doubt humanity's capacity to please God.

Here, then, it seems we must speak of a postconversion reevaluation. If the crucifixion of God's Son was required to redeem humankind — a conclusion that Paul could not doubt once Jesus had been "revealed" to him as "God's Son" (Gal. 1:15-16) — then the sinfulness of humankind must be both radical in itself and beyond the capacity of existing (and less drastic) measures to overcome. To this extent E. P. Sanders is certainly correct in insisting on the movement of Paul's thought "from solution to plight." The notion that in Adam all die may well have become fundamental to Paul's thinking first when he saw it as presupposed in the affirmation that "in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22).

Not that Paul, the Christian apostle, had to create a crisis ex nihilo to correspond to and legitimate his understanding of redemption in Christ. The positing of a relationship between Adam's sin and human death was no Pauline innovation. The Jewish Scriptures (as we have noted) are replete with denunciations of human waywardness. And Frank Thielman has quite properly reminded us that the movement from plight to solution is repeatedly traced in both biblical and postbiblical Jewish tradition.³³ Nonetheless, it seems likely that Paul was first moved to draw extensively on that tradition, and to mold it in the way he did, by reflecting on the disclosure of the human predicament implicit in the cross of Christ. Like the reader of a novel with an unanticipated ending, Paul may well have felt that he first grasped the seriousness of scriptural appraisals of human sinfulness when he returned to ponder them in the light of the story's climax.

30. Cf. the summary of Schoeps in chap. 7, sec. ii above.

31. See the summary of Montefiore in chap. 7, sec. i above. Also Sandmel, *Genius*.

32. See the summary of Stendahl in chap. 8, sec. ii above.

33. See chap. 12, sec. iii above.

Thesis 6: The giving of the law served to highlight, at the same time as it exacerbated, human bondage to sin.

Why did God institute a law that, on Paul's reading, people would not and could not keep? The question may be asked; it is worth noting, however, that, as formulated, it seems completely detached from reality as Paul saw it. For Paul the law merely spells out the moral requirements inherent in the terms of human existence in God's world.³⁴ If moral creatures are completely dependent on God for their life and well-being, then they cannot live rightly without acknowledging God and giving him his due. This is not an arbitrary decree permitting adjustment to human predilections or capacities any more than solutions to mathematical problems can be altered to suit students' inclinations or abilities to deduce them. The occurrence of murder, adultery, theft, and false witness has doubtless been a feature of human society ever since humans were banished from Eden; Paul could not deem them, for that reason, morally acceptable. That humans do not — and even *cannot* — live up to moral standards that they themselves must acknowledge was a truth to be confronted, not clouded over by the suppression or falsification of the standards. Ezekiel was to bear witness to the truth whether or not Israel heeded him (Ezek. 2:3-5). In the same vein, Paul clearly believed, the law rightly attests to what is required of humankind, whether or not it is obeyed.

Whenever Paul explains God's purposes for the law, a link with sin is posited. The complex relationship he sees can perhaps be summarized in the following series of statements, each to be developed below.

1. Sin precedes the law and exists where there is no law. Even apart from the law, sinners are culpable for their misdeeds and face divine judgment.
2. The coming of the law transforms sinful acts into violations of God's commands, subject to stated sanctions.
3. Moreover, the coming of the law creates a situation in which "sin" can tempt the law's subjects to disobey its commands. In this way the actual number of sins committed is increased.
4. The law also serves to bring sinners some awareness of their dilemma.

1. That, in the checkered history of humanity, wrongdoing preceded the formulation of law codes is a proposition that few would challenge though none, perhaps, could prove. For Paul the matter was decided by comparing the relative positions of Adam and Moses in Scripture's genealogical tree: "Sin

came into the world through one man [Adam]. . . . Sin was in the world before the law was given" (Rom. 5:12, 13). It follows, then, that the definition of sin as "the transgression of the law"³⁵ is not quite adequate — if we may speak legitimately of sin before the law was given.

Paul at least does so, with good biblical precedent. He also presupposes — again, with scriptural justification — the existence of sin among Gentiles who do not have the law: "All who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law" (Rom. 2:12). Throughout Romans 1-3 Paul argues not only that Gentiles sin but also that they are responsible for their wrongdoing and liable to judgment: Paul knows no guiltless sinners. Gentiles are "without excuse" (1:20); God's wrath falls upon them as well as upon Jews (1:18), though the law will play a role only in the assessment of the latter (2:12).

Räsänen is among those who find Romans 5:12-14 inconsistent with the earlier passage.³⁶ Romans 2 declares judgment for those who sin without the law, whereas in Romans 5 we are told that "sin is not counted where there is no law." The critical words, of course, are οὐκ ἔλλογεῖται, "is not counted" (5:13). The words perhaps suggest that sin is somehow not treated as sin or held against the sinner in the absence of law, a conclusion that does not mesh with 2:12. One might, of course, argue that Paul can hardly have forgotten in Romans 5 what he wrote in Romans 2, and hence that the context within which Romans 5 is to be interpreted must include the earlier chapter; a weakening of the force of οὐκ ἔλλογεῖται would naturally follow. But such a procedure, though normal enough in the interpretation of texts, will hardly do when Paul's consistency of thought is the point in question. If, however, the immediate context of 5:12-14 shows that Paul is still bent on maintaining the position he argued in chapter 2, then we can hardly deny the appropriateness of a weaker reading of 5:13b.

According to 5:12, sin and death entered the world through Adam's transgression of a specific commandment (παράβασις); death then became the lot of all, "inasmuch as all sinned." However we define the relation between Adam's sin and that of his offspring, πάντες ἡμάρτον most naturally means that all committed concrete sins;³⁷ moreover, the words are part of a phrase (introduced by ἐφ' ᾧ, "inasmuch as")³⁸ affirming that people's sins led to their death. The same point is made in verse 14: Paul stresses both the guilt and the punishment of all, though noting, significantly enough, that later sins were not of the same character as Adam's ("death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over

35. That the KJV misreads 1 John 3:4 is generally agreed; cf. Marshall, *Epistles*, 176-77.

36. Räsänen, *Law*, 145-47.

37. Cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, 279.

38. Lyonnet, "Sens," 436-56; Meyer, *Christians*, 122 n. 3.

34. See the first two theses of this chapter.

those who did not sin in the same way that Adam transgressed"). The law, by implication, effects a change from sin to transgression, but hardly one from innocence to guilt. Between these two verses we find yet another statement that sin was "in the world" (i.e., sins were committed) even before the law was given. Since the closing words of verse 12, the first half of 13, and the opening of 14 are devoted to an insistence that those living before Moses did sin, and that death resulted from their sin, there appears to be little warrant for reading 13b as though Paul (for this half-verse?) meant that sins committed in the absence of law were not quite worthy of the name or held against the sinners. To repeat, Paul knows no innocent sinners.³⁹ Whatever his precise point in 13b may be, the culpability of sins committed prior to the giving of the law is not in question. οὐκ ἐλλογεῖται must refer, not to an absence of guilt or punishment, but to a difference in the way sins are prosecuted. What is that difference?

2. According to Räisänen, Paul "tries to show that, as regards man and sin, the coming of the law makes a difference," but "what he actually shows is that there is none."⁴⁰ At best Paul can point to "a technical trifle": "until the law sin had been punished because it was sin; since the law, the very same punishments are imposed because of 'transgression.'" The technicality of the change thus "would seem to be a matter of no consequence whatsoever."⁴¹ Paul's dilemma, according to Räisänen, is that, having rejected the law by an "aprioristic theological thesis (Christ has superseded the law)," he is now forced to "undergird his thesis" by showing "that the effects of the law are negative, and only negative"; such a thesis can only be "carried through . . . with violence."⁴²

But is Paul's procedure as arbitrary as Räisänen suggests? Paul believes that adultery, murder, stealing, and coveting (the four examples cited from the Decalogue in Rom. 13:9) are wrong; those who love their "neighbor" as they ought will not commit adultery with their neighbor's spouse, murder, steal from their neighbor, or even covet for themselves what their neighbor possesses. This seems a comprehensible position to hold. Paul believes, moreover, that even apart from the law people are aware at some level that such deeds are wrong; God, then, is right to punish those who commit them. These convictions, too, seem intelligible; certainly they have been held by many. Paul nonetheless believes there is a point in God telling people explicitly that they must not commit adultery, that they must not murder, steal, or covet ("whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear"); furthermore, he believes the rebel-

liousness of those who proceed nonetheless to commit such acts is still more apparent, and the wrongful acts more flagrantly wrong, because God has given his law: the coming of the law transforms the evil deeds of its subjects into blatant transgressions of God's revealed commands. And though a sovereign God is always free (and always right) to punish sin, there is both an appropriateness and an inexorability about God's wrath when it becomes operative as the stated sanction attached to a given law.

The transformation of sin into a more clearly defined act of rebellion, subject to the defined sanctions of the law, is the point of 5:13b (cf. 4:15). The term used — ἐλλογεῖν — "has here to do with heavenly book-keeping."⁴³ That sin "is not counted" in the absence of law does not mean that it goes unpunished — the immediate context affirms the opposite — but simply that God cannot judge "according to the book." Ample power to punish sin is ever at his disposal: forty days of uninterrupted rain are more than adequate for the task. But for the due registration of wrongs committed, and the consequent demonstration both of human culpability and of the divine justice that punishes sin, the institution of the law serves an important function.

3. But Paul goes further still. Not only does the law transform sin into acts of flagrant defiance against God's explicit commands; in a sense it actually *provokes* transgressions. This is Paul's point in 7:7-13. By itself verse 7 is ambiguous: "But for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what I mean to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.'" Paul's words here are certainly susceptible of interpretation along lines suggested by 4:15 and 5:1 though no doubt an "I" who lived before the commandment came might have longed for what belonged to someone else, such an "I" might not have *recognized* the longing as the sin of "coveting" had the law not prohibited it in those terms. The stress here, not found in chapters 4 and 5, would then be that sinners themselves gain a "knowledge" of sin — a recognition that they are acting in defiance of God's law — through the coming of the command.

But Paul goes on to say that "sin, taking the opportunity given by the co-

43. Räisänen, *Law*, 145. Cf., however, Hofius, "Antithesis," 195-96, who sees the verb pointing, not to an activity in the heavenly world, but to that by which knowledge of a charge is conveyed to the one accused. It indicates "that the Torah first brings to expression and to knowledge that which has already been the reality for all of us from the days of Adam, namely, that we are sinners, and that under the condemnation of God, death is the consequence of our sins. The Torah does not initiate the combination of sin and death. It finds it already there. B shows that it is really there. It brings it to inevitable expression. It objectively clarifies that of us is *homo peccator*, the one who has fallen victim to death as the *κατάκριμα* imposed by God. Without the law we cannot know the fact that we are sinners standing under the divine sentence and justly condemned to eternal death."

39. Cranfield, *Romans*, 282.

40. Räisänen, *Law*, 146 n. 91.

mandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness" (7:8).⁴⁴ Humanity's sinfulness — its insistence on choosing its own path, even in defiance of its Creator — springs to life and concrete expression when humans are told what they ought and ought not to do. Told not to covet, they will flaunt their presumed autonomy by coveting. In effect, then, the coming of the law served to *worsen* the human dilemma — partly because it brought definition (as "transgression") to wrongs that would have been committed in any case, but partly also because it increased the actual number of sins committed. There are "sinful passions" that, among those bent on rebellion, are themselves "aroused" by a law that prohibits their expression (7:5; cf. 5:20). The cryptic claim of Galatians 3:19 — the law "was added because of transgressions" — is presumably an abbreviated way of making the same point we find in Romans: through the law human bondage to sin is defined and increased — in order that deliverance may be found through faith in Christ (Gal. 3:22).

4. What, finally, are we to make of Romans 3:20? Here Paul concludes his lengthy indictment of humanity (1:18–3:20) with these words: "For no flesh will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin." If the opening words of the verse are taken by themselves as the conclusion to the preceding argument, then the final phrase ("through the law comes knowledge of sin") may introduce a new point to be developed in a later context.⁴⁵ In this case, and in the light of 4:15 and 5:13, the "knowledge of sin" brought by the law might refer to the recognition roused in sinners that the wrongs they commit are violations of God's stated will for which they are liable for punishment. Less likely, perhaps, is the suggestion that "knowledge of sin" means the practical experience of sin depicted in 7:7–11: without the law, one would not "know" (i.e., experience) the sin of succumbing to the temptation to disobey a divine command with which one is confronted. Paul's words are ambiguous enough, however, to allow either interpretation.

44. Bultmann found here confirmation for his thesis that the fundamental sin of Jews is their attempt to establish their own righteousness by fulfilling the law, suggesting that the "desire" to do so is at least included in the *πᾶσαν ἐπιθυμίαν* of 7:8 ("Anthropology," 154) — as though the Decalogue concludes with a command to people not to want to do what they have just been commanded to do! But the desires aroused according to v. 8 are clearly understood as violations of the law's command cited in v. 7, and that command prohibits the coveting of what belongs to another. Hence *πᾶσαν ἐπιθυμίαν* means "covetousness for all manner of things," in defiance of the command; a "desire" to fulfill the command is hardly in view. See my "Letter," 237–38; also Räisänen, *Torah*, 95–111.

45. Cf. Rom. 6:14, where Paul introduces a notion ("not under law") that he does not develop until 7:1–6.

On the other hand, we may well feel that the bringing of a knowledge of sin corresponds very nicely with the concerns of the first three chapters of Romans, and that 3:20b, as well as 3:20a, should be seen as a summary of the preceding argument. How does the argument of 1:18–3:20 relate the law to the knowledge of sin?

Certainly the law is not thought to bring such knowledge to Gentiles. They "do not have the law" (2:14), sin "without the law," and perish "without the law" (2:12). Paul's indictment in chapter 1 is directed to all humanity (1:18), but is stated in terms that leave Gentiles "without excuse" (2:20) even though they do not have God's law: "What can be known about God is there for them to see. . . . Although they knew God they did not honor him as God. . . . They exchanged the truth about God for a lie" (1:19, 21, 25). Paul seems deliberately to avoid using the law of Moses to convict Gentiles of sin.

On the other hand, "as many as have sinned under the law will be judged by the law" (2:12). Paul insists that Jews are required to obey the law's commands and will be condemned for their transgressions. Thus the law effects the conviction of Jews before the divine tribunal.

But is a demonstration of guilt at the divine tribunal what Paul means by the "knowledge of sin" in 3:20? Surely human, not divine, knowledge is intended; and if the knowledge of sin that the law brings to men and women becomes theirs first on the day of judgment, its appearance is too tardy to be of use. 3:20, then, appears to be saying that the law brings to Jews an awareness⁴⁶ that they, too, are sinners and will be judged as such. Two possibilities from the preceding argument suggest themselves.

a. In 3:19 Paul concludes on the basis of a number of quotations from "the law" (i.e., the Scriptures) that those who live under the law are guilty before God. This may be Paul's point in verse 20: Jews should learn from Scripture's testimony that "no one does good" (v. 12), and hence that they too are sinners. Note, however, that the law that brings this knowledge is Scripture as a whole, not specifically the Mosaic law code. Since the "works of the law" that do not justify, according to 20a, are the deeds demanded by the Mosaic code, one would expect Paul's explanation of what the law does accomplish, in 20b, to refer to the same body of commands.

b. In 2:17–24 Paul probes his imagined Jewish interlocutor on the subject of personal obedience to the specific commands of the law: "Do you steal? . . . Do you commit adultery? . . . Do you rob temples? . . . Do you dishonor God by breaking the law?" Perhaps, then, Paul means that reflection on the commands

46. Note that, according to Rom. 3:19, "what the law says it says to those [Jews] who live under the law."

of the law should arouse in Jews an awareness of their transgressions, thus leading to a knowledge of sin.⁴⁷

Such a reading roughly corresponds with Luther's understanding of the "principal use" of the law: confronted with the law's demands, sinners are convinced of their guilt, tremble at the thought of God's judgment, and grasp at God's mercy offered in Christ. Luther, to be sure, does not restrict "law" to the Mosaic code, nor on his understanding are the sinners whose pangs of conscience the law awakens limited to Jews. The question remains: does Paul believe the Mosaic code functions among Jews in a way comparable to Luther's principal use of the law?

The suggestion is routinely rejected by many. We may recall Stendahl's argument.⁴⁸ Paul was not himself given to introspection, nor does he give any indication of having suffered from a troubled conscience; at least in his case, then, the law did not serve its "principal function"! Moreover, that the law served as a pedagogue εἰς Χριστόν (Gal. 3:24) means that it performed its task "until Christ came," not that it leads sinners through remorse for transgressions to a merciful Savior.

The case is a forceful one, but it may have been overstated. Certainly Galatians 3:24 does not speak of the way the law prepares sinners psychologically for the reception of the gospel, but rather of the temporal limitations placed on the law's validity. Yet (as I argued in the discussion of 1 Thessalonians above)⁴⁹ Paul's message of salvation in Christ demands a negative complement, a dilemma from which Christ delivers. Paul's missionary preaching certainly included warnings to Gentiles of the wrath to come, even if the Mosaic law was not proclaimed as the basis of their condemnation. Is it unlikely, then, that Jews were threatened with the same wrath, told that election was no substitute for obedience, and that transgressions of the law would lead to their condemnation? In the present context the argument of Romans 2 is addressed to Christian readers; but may it not reflect at least the general pattern of Paul's message in the synagogues?⁵⁰ Such a proclamation would, after all, be entirely in line with the message of the prophets, of John the Baptist, and indeed of Jesus himself.

Nor are we entirely dependent on conjectures. Romans 3:20 and 7:7⁵¹ both speak of a "knowledge of sin" conveyed to sinners through the law. Naturally, for Paul, such knowledge could not be an end in itself, but must be meant to in-

duce a cry like that of 7:24 ("Who will deliver . . .?"), to be answered with a recognition of God's promise of redemption (cf. v. 25). Luther's principal function of the law gives its pedagogical role an emphasis that towers out of all proportion to the few allusive references in the Pauline texts; but Paul does appear to provide its foundation.⁵²

Thesis 7: The righteousness of God revealed in Christ Jesus is operative apart from law. Those who continue to pursue the righteousness of the law mistakenly attribute to the works of their unredeemed flesh a role in securing divine approval.

A law that accentuates but cannot overcome human sinfulness can play no role in humanity's redemption. It rightly demands compliance with God's will, but places its demands on creatures who are hostile to God and incapable of pleasing him. Their transformation must be brought about by other means to which they themselves, the "weak" and "ungodly" (Rom. 5:6), are in no position to contribute.

Of the nature of divine redemption as Paul perceives it, we need only recall here its utter *dependence* on divine grace and its *independence* from the law and its works. After depicting humanity in Romans 3 as "under sin" (3:9), culpable and without excuse before God (3:19), Paul then underlines the gratuitousness of redemption: those who believe "are freely declared righteous by [God's] grace through the redemption provided in Christ Jesus" (3:24). The "ungodly" are approved, not because of anything they do, but by believing in the one who "declares the ungodly righteous" (4:5). 5:12-21 is a paean of praise of the "grace of God and the gift made abundantly available to many through the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ" (5:15). The "free gift" or "grace" is operative to secure divine approval in a situation where "many transgressions" prevail (5:16). Death reigns until people are enabled to "reign in life" by "receiving the overflow of grace and of the gift of righteousness" (5:17).

Nonetheless, there are those (Paul declares) who ignore *God's* righteousness and continue to try to establish their own. They seek to attain the righteousness that the law demands by doing the works it prescribes rather than realizing that God's approval can only be gained by responding in faith to what God has done in Christ Jesus (9:30-32). In earlier chapters I have argued at length that the works that according to Paul can play no role in attaining righteousness are the righteous deeds by which one might imagine oneself to be so

47. Cf. Beker, *Paul*, 107; Wilckens, *Römer*, 1:180.

48. See chap. 8, sec. ii above.

49. See chap. 18, sec. i.

50. Cf. Meyer, *Christians*, 138 n. 14.

51. Even if the "knowledge" of Rom. 7:7 is primarily experiential, an awareness of the experience by the subject can scarcely be excluded.

52. Cf. Weima, "Function," 223-27. The roots of this thesis will be noted after the discussion of the next.

deemed rather than the boundary markers that distinguished the Jewish people from Gentiles.⁵³ Here we need only note that the latter suggestion fails to do justice to the clear relation between, on the one hand, Paul's exclusion of human works and, on the other, (1) the Pauline anthropology that insists that flesh cannot please God; (2) the Pauline soteriology that insists on the gratuitousness of salvation; (3) the Pauline understanding of redemptive history (see Rom. 9–11) that insists that God always operates on his own initiative without considering anything humans might do; and (4) the Pauline moral vision that insists that humans have no grounds for boasting before God (3:27–4:5; 1 Cor. 1:26–31; Gal. 6:14). The pendulum of academic fashion has of late swung far away from systematic portrayals of Pauline theology; one result has been that even the obvious relation between these fundamental features of his thought has been lost to view.

Two objections to this reading of Paul may be briefly noted here. First, is not human faith itself a "work" that contributes to the process of justification? To this objection the obvious answer must be that Paul does not see it so. The very texts in Romans that insist on the gratuitousness of God's gift of righteousness also insist that it is credited to those who believe (3:22–24; 4:1–5; 5:1–11). If that crediting were in response to some work, Paul reasons, it would be a wage, not a gift of grace. But it is clearly the latter, he claims, in that it is granted to those who "do not work but *believe* on him who declares the ungodly righteous" (4:4–5). This text, in particular, presupposes a fundamental distinction between "working" (i.e., performing deeds that merit recognition) and "believing." Later in Romans Gentiles who obtain the "righteousness of *faith*" are explicitly said *not* to be active in pursuit of righteousness — unlike Jews who pursue it but do not obtain it, thinking it a matter of works, not faith (9:30–32). That the law demands works is precisely what shows, for Paul, that its operative principle is not that of faith (Gal. 3:12; cf. Rom. 4:16; 10:5–8).

Why does Paul distinguish in this way between the faith that is necessarily involved in justification and the works that are necessarily excluded? Again we need to turn to Paul's anthropology. No product of Adamic humanity can be pleasing to God, since the underlying orientation of Adamic humanity is hostility toward God. Even deeds that outwardly conform to the law's commands can only be acceptable as expressions of faith in God, and the mind-set of the flesh is the opposite to that of faith. The human faith essential to justification cannot, then, be a characteristic or product of the flesh. Rather, it is for Paul a response to the divine word of salvation (10:17) first aroused by God himself through an act of divine illumination parallel to that by which the old creation

came into being: "The God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to bring the light of the knowledge that the glory of God is displayed in the person of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). Thus faith for Paul does not — as indeed it cannot — originate in a movement of the flesh. Rather, it is a gift of God that is effective in bringing about a new, and necessarily divine, creation (Phil. 1:27; cf. 2 Cor. 5:17–18; 1 Thess. 2:13).

But (a second objection is raised) does Paul not himself require "works" of believers? Indubitably he does. Yet such works for Paul are not to be confused with the products of the unredeemed flesh. Those restored by grace to a right relationship with God and granted his Spirit to empower their living must express the reality of their new life in suitable behavior. They are to live in a manner worthy of the God who has called them to be his own (Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 2:12). Their faith is to be active in love (Gal. 5:6). At the same time, Paul believes, they will sense, as he did, that God is "at work" within them, granting both the desire and the ability to do what he approves (Phil. 2:13; cf. 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:9; Gal. 2:20). The presence of God's Spirit *must* bear fruit in the lives of believers who are redeemed by divine grace. But this Pauline conviction hardly contradicts the thesis that no flesh can be declared righteous by its works.

Paul cites Scripture in support of each component of this thesis: that the righteousness of God revealed in Christ Jesus is operative by faith and apart from the law (cf. 3:11–12; Rom. 10:5–13); that righteousness is credited to those who "have faith . . . without works" (4:1–8); and that God operates at the initiative of his sovereign and gracious will without regard to human actions (9:10–18; 11:4–6). But Paul himself, by his own testimony, once pursued the "righteousness of the law" (Phil. 3:6). Hence the distinction between such righteousness and that of faith, as well as the conviction that righteousness is ultimately a gift granted quite apart from the works of the law, can only have been the product of his Christian reevaluation. Scripture, when reconsidered from his Christian perspective, was found to support these convictions. But the convictions impressed themselves on Paul only when the crucifixion and resurrection of God's Son were believed to be both efficacious for human redemption and revelatory of the inadequacy of earlier institutions — even *divine* institutions — to achieve such an end.

And yet the divine law must have had a divine purpose. The thesis that the Mosaic law served merely to highlight human bondage to sin (thesis 6) must also, then, have been the product of Christian considerations.

Thesis 8: Believers in Christ are not under law.

Bearing in mind that this thesis represents only the first half of the paradoxical relationship, as Paul portrays it, between Christians and the law, we may begin

53. See particularly chap. 16, sec. ii.

with statements in which Paul relegates that relationship to the past.⁵⁴ Paul can say that believers have been "redeemed" (Gal. 4:5) or "set free" (Rom. 7:6) from the law, or even that they have "died" to it (7:4, 6; cf. Gal. 2:19). The upshot is that they are not "under law" (Rom. 6:14-15; cf. 1 Cor. 9:20).

Part of Paul's point is clearly that the curse that the law pronounces on its transgressors does not threaten believers. Christ absorbed that curse on their behalf, thereby freeing them from its effects (Gal. 3:13, presumably reflected in 4:5). But Paul's language implies freedom as well from the law's demands. At times the law's ritual demands are specifically in mind (cf. 1 Cor. 9:20-21; Gal. 4:21). The Paul who insisted that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision amounts to anything (6:15; cf. 5:6), that no food need be avoided as "unclean" (Rom. 14:14), and that, in the observance of holy days, the dictates of individual consciences may be followed (14:5-6) cannot have thought Christians obligated to observe the ritual demands of the law.⁵⁵

But when, as in Romans 6:15, Paul is concerned that Christian freedom from the law might be misconstrued as a license to sin, freedom from the law's ritual commands cannot be in view. A similar concern is addressed following declarations of freedom from the law in Galatians 5:13-26. Indeed, none of the declarations of Christian freedom suggests a limitation of that deliverance to ritual demands.⁵⁶ Nor when Paul insists that the law was a temporary imposition, confining people under sin *until* the coming of Christ and faith, can the law of which he speaks be restricted to its ritual aspects (3:19-4:7). In Romans 7:4-6 Paul says flatly that because believers have "died" to the law, they now serve God not in the old way of the letter but in the new way of the Spirit. The point is not that Christians are relieved from the obligation to observe a few ritual demands, but that theirs is a whole new way of life and mode of divine service. It is, moreover, striking (and has struck many) that Paul repeatedly refrains from citing prohibitions from the law even when dealing with basic issues related to idolatry or sexual morality, opting instead to argue from Christian principles (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:12-20; 10:14-22; 1 Thess. 4:3-8). And when Paul speaks of the need for Christians to discern the will of God, he does not refer

54. In a number of these statements, the law appears to have been a factor in the pre-Christian lives of all believers, Gentiles as well as Jews. See the discussion of thesis 2 above.

55. Barclay ("Law," 300-301) rightly notes that Rom. 14 shows Paul's "fundamental rejection of the Jewish law in one of its most sensitive dimensions." Paul makes judgments relating to the food laws and those pertaining to special days, but in a manner that is "unashamedly non-legal" and based on no "appeal to a 'higher principle' in the law or . . . allegorical interpretation of the law." Paul "makes no effort to explain or excuse himself"; it is "as if the relationship between his convictions and the law is no longer of central concern."

56. Cf. Bläser, *Gesetz*, 41-44, 228-29.

them to the law (though, according to Rom. 2:18, the law provided Jews with guidance about God's will), but speaks rather of presenting themselves to God, of refusing to pattern their way of life after that of this age, of being "transformed by the renewal of [their] mind[s]" (12:2). They "approve what is excellent" (the same phrase as in 2:18 is used of Christians in Phil. 1:9-10) when their love grows in knowledge and judgment. The fact that Jews had to discover the will of God in the statutes of Torah but Christians must discover it as their minds are "renewed" and they grow in insight shows clearly that the will of God is no longer defined as an obligation to observe the statutes of the Mosaic law.⁵⁷

Thesis 9: Christian righteousness nonetheless fulfills the law.

This is the other half of the paradox. Enough has been said already, however, to suggest that the paradox is not as paradoxical as it is sometimes made to appear.⁵⁸

After all, Paul never confused Christian freedom with notions of autonomy (as though those who are indebted to their Creator for their share in both his old *and* his new creation could ignore their dependence on him) or with suggestions that believers were free to pursue whatever desires they please (cf. Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:17; 6:7). We noted above (thesis 1) that in the divinely ordered cosmos certain human activities are fitting and others unfitting; some types of conduct are according to nature whereas others defy it. Inherent in the human condition is the demand of (ordinary) righteousness: there is a goodness humans *ought* to pursue and an evil they *ought* to shun. Christians have, to be sure, been (extraordinarily) declared righteous *apart* from deeds of righteousness — but *not* so that they can subsequently ignore them! Sharing the cosmos with others, they are hardly exempt from its inbuilt expectations.⁵⁹ Paul tells his readers to "abhor what is evil and cleave to what is good" (Rom. 12:9), to "over-

57. The roots of Paul's thinking in theses 8 and 9 will be considered together below.

58. For Räisänen the combination in Paul's letters of declarations of Christian freedom from the law and the insistence that they nonetheless fulfill it is but another instance of Paul "want[ing] to have his cake and eat it" (*Law*, 82). In Sanders's view Paul in effect gives different answers to different questions: "Sometimes he says that the Law is, for Christians at least, at an end, while at other times he urges fulfillment of it. . . . When he was asked, as it were, the question of what was the necessary and sufficient condition for membership in the body of Christ, he said 'not the law.' . . . When, however, he thought about behavior, he responded, 'fulfill the law'" (84).

59. Indeed, for Christians the service of God involves responding "in a worthy manner" (Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 2:12) not only to the wise ordering of the old creation but also to the grace of God in the new.

come evil with good" (12:21), to be "wise when it comes to the good, innocent when it comes to evil" (16:19). If, then, as our second thesis maintains, "the law of Moses articulates the appropriate human response to life in God's creation," there is nothing surprising in the expectation that Christians, through love, will fulfill the law (8:4; 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14).

But what, then, is the point in saying that they are not under the law?

1. "Law" in these contexts stands not simply for the concrete commands and prohibitions of Torah, but also for the mode in which these obligations encounter rebellious humanity: as commands that are externally imposed (their inscription on tablets of stone is in marked contrast with demands recognized and endorsed within human hearts; cf. 2 Cor. 3:3, 7) upon a will bent on its self-assertion, gaining compliance (if at all) only through the sanctions with which it threatens disobedience.⁶⁰ Those who live under the law do not *really* live for God, whatever statutes they may observe (cf. Gal. 2:19; Rom. 7:4); and those who "die" to God's law die, not to the service of God, but to an unsatisfactory way of serving him. No longer is their service to be experienced as an obligation to observe demands externally imposed.⁶¹ God's Spirit makes God's love a reality in their hearts (5:5) and enables them to serve God in the new way, filled with the fruits of the Spirit that no law condemns (Gal. 5:22-23). Without faith those under law cannot measure up to its commands. With faith that is active in love, believers not under law may in fact fulfill the righteousness that the law requires.⁶²

2. Still, it is worth noting that when Paul speaks of Christians "fulfilling" the law, he is describing, not prescribing, their behavior.⁶³ When Paul *prescribes* what Christians are to do, the language used is not that of fulfilling the Mosaic

60. So, at least, Augustine; cf. *De nat. et grat.* 57.67: "That man is under the law, who, from fear of the punishment which the law threatens, and not from any love for righteousness, obliges himself to abstain from the work of sin, without being as yet free and removed from the desire of sinning." Rom. 13:3-4 might be cited as providing a parallel to the notion that the law has an inhibiting effect on the *expression* of evil. In any case, Augustine captures well Paul's emphasis that the flesh does not, and cannot, (*really*) submit to God's law (Rom. 8:7).

61. Cf. Augustine, *De spir. et litt.* 14.26: "The man in whom is the faith that works through love, begins to delight in the law of God after the inward man; and that delight is a gift not of the letter but of the spirit."

62. Cf. Luther, *Pref. Rom.*, 35:375-76: "To be without the law is not the same thing as to have no laws and to be able to do what one pleases. Rather we are under the law when, without grace, we occupy ourselves with the works of the law. Then sin certainly rules [us] through the law, for no one loves the law by nature; and that is great sin. Grace, however, makes the law dear to us; then sin is no longer present, and the law is no longer against us but one with us. This is the true freedom from sin and from the law."

63. Cf. Barclay, *Truth*, 142. For what follows, see my article "Fulfilling."

law.⁶⁴ "Walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh" (5:16; cf. Rom. 8:12-13). Naturally, it is from Paul's *prescriptions* that we must derive his view of the basis for Christian obligation. When, on the other hand, Christian ethics is related to the Mosaic law in the fulfillment passages, the view is retrospective.⁶⁵ Paul's purpose is to provide assurance of the quality of Christian conduct, not to define its several duties.⁶⁶

Note, too, that Paul speaks of a Christian "fulfilling," not "doing," of the law. The verb *ποιεῖν* is of course very general and may occur in any context, including where the Christian practice of righteousness is the topic (cf. 13:3; 1 Cor. 9:23; 10:31; Gal. 6:9). Yet, in Paul, Christians are never said to "do" (*ποιεῖν*) the law,⁶⁷ though those under the law are seen as obligated to "do" its commands (Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:10, 12; 5:3); indeed, as we have seen, the law itself, in Paul's mind, rests on the principle of "doing" as opposed to "believing" (3:12; Rom. 10:5-6). If, then, the essence of life under the law is the requirement to *do* its commands, it is not strange that Paul avoids the term in contexts where he relates Christian behavior to the law. On the other hand,

64. 1 Cor. 7:19 might be cited to the contrary; the Mosaic law is not, however, in view in this chapter (the only "commandments" mentioned are Pauline and dominical; cf. vv. 10, 17, 25, and the frequent Pauline imperatives), and the statement need mean no more than that submitting to God's will is essential. On two (!) occasions in the acknowledged epistles, Paul apparently draws from a *precept* in Torah additional support for his position on a matter of behavior: Deut. 25:4 is cited and interpreted allegorically (its literal force is rejected) in the midst of a lengthy justification of Paul's right to be supported by his churches (1 Cor. 9:8-10); and in 1 Cor. 14:34 (the authenticity of which has been questioned) the command that women are to be silent in church is said to be "also" found in Torah (though, presumably, as an implication of its narrative rather than an explicit demand). In neither case is Torah treated as the direct source of Christian duty. Cf. Deidun, *Morality*, 157-60.

65. Cf. Betz, *Galatians*, 275; van Dülmen, *Theologie*, 229-30; Gerhardsson, *Ethos*, 66-67.

66. The Galatians needed to be assured that the conduct produced by the Spirit *apart* from the law (cf. 5:18) was better, not worse, than that produced by those living as subjects of its demands (5:14; cf. v. 13; 6:13). After Paul's dramatic portrayal in Rom. 7 of the impotence of those living under the law to obey it, he clinches his argument by claiming that God's Son succeeds where the law proved weak: the possibility has been opened "that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (8:4). In 13:9 as well, Paul is claiming that Christian love inevitably meets the standards set by the law.

67. Cf. Barclay, *Truth*, 139. I assume that Christians are not in view in Rom. 2:13-14. Räisänen (*Law*, 63-64 n. 104) uses this passage as evidence against the view that Paul distinguished between "doing" and "fulfilling" the law, since "the Gentiles Paul had in mind could not 'do' the law (or its ἐργον) in any other sense than the Christians 'fulfilled' it, i.e. by living according to its central principle(s)." But Rom. 2 is speaking merely of deeds that comply with particular commands of the law (as opposed to its transgression); much more is meant when Paul speaks of Christian "fulfillment" of the law. See below.

where specifically Christian behavior is related positively to the Mosaic law, the verb πληροῦν or a cognate inevitably occurs (8:4; 13:8, 10; Gal. 5:14); yet these terms are *never* used where the requirements or achievements of those living under the law are in view. Given the occasional nature of Paul's correspondence, such a consistent distinction in usage is striking indeed and demands some explanation.

What Paul means by "doing" the law is clear enough: those under the law are obligated to carry out, to perform, its individual and specific requirements (5:3). Certainly the verb πληροῦν can also mean "to perform" (cf. Col. 4:17), but there are nuances to its usage that should not be overlooked. The verb "is used . . . with an impersonal object, originally at least pictured to the mind as a receptacle to be filled, an empty form to be filled with reality; thus of a promise, prophecy, or statement of fact, 'to satisfy the purport of,' 'to fit the terms of' . . . ; of commands and laws, 'to satisfy the requirements of,' 'to obey fully,'"⁶⁸ To "fulfill" the law thus implies that the obedience offered *completely satisfies* what is required. But this in turn means that πληροῦν is specially suited, whereas ποιεῖν is not, for use by an author who claims to have superior insight into what is required to satisfy the "true" intention of the lawgiver or the "real" demand of the law. Matthew 5:17 is a perfect illustration: πληρῶσαι says something different from, something more than, what ποιῆσαι would say in the context.⁶⁹ The meaning must not be reduced to the bald claim that Jesus "does" the law (and the prophets?) by carrying out each of its specific requirements; rather, in some not clearly defined way (the verb πληροῦν has the advantage of positive connotations but not the liability of excessive specificity)⁷⁰ the "true" meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures is satisfied, and they reach their intended goal, in Jesus' ministry.

Paul's usage seems similar. He would scarcely have been content with the bald claim that those who love their neighbors have "done" the law (contrast Rom. 13:8). On the one hand, so prosaic an assertion would be too blatantly open to the objection that circumcision and food laws need to be "done" as well; on the other hand, the term would give no expression to Paul's implicit claim that those who have believed in Christ and been filled with his love fully satisfy the "real" purport of the law while allowing the ambiguity of the term to blunt the force of the objection that certain individual requirements (with

which, Paul would maintain, Christian behavior was never meant to conform) have not been done.⁷¹

Thus statements of the law's "fulfillment" should not be thought to compromise Paul's claim that the law does not bind believers. Christians serve God, he declares, not in the old way where conduct is prescribed by the law's "letter," but in the new way of those who have "died" to the law but live through God's Spirit (Rom. 7:6). Paradoxically the *results* of the old way under the law are said to be sinful passions, transgressions of the law, and death (7:5; 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 3:19). Paradoxically again, the "fruit" borne in the lives of those who have "died" to the law amounts to the law's fulfillment. The righteousness that divine commands could not elicit from a rebellious humanity becomes a possibility first for those transformed through the drama of divine redemption and the gift of the divine Spirit (Rom. 8:3-4).

3. The traditional interpretation that sees believers free from the "ceremonial" but not the "moral" demands of the law is not quite Pauline, but at the same time it is not without a point. Paul himself never makes such a distinction; his declarations of freedom from the law include all its demands without further specification; they mean, not simply that believers are delivered from the obligation to observe particular (ceremonial) statutes, but that they serve God in a new way, not "by the letter" but "by the Spirit." On the other hand, the distinction between ceremonial and moral is not without a point, since Paul does think the (moral, patently *not* the ceremonial) commands of the Mosaic law embody the expectations of goodness inherent in the human condition. And Christians, too, are to do the "good." Their doing so, however, should be very different from a formal compliance with requirements externally imposed; rather, it should represent an expression of their submission and devotion to God and of the fruit his Spirit bears in their lives.

It is in this sense (and therefore, I believe, correctly) that our "Lutherans" distinguished the moral from the ceremonial demands of the law and saw Christians as bound to fulfill the former. For Augustine the law fulfilled by those whose will has been transformed by divine grace is the law of love; its various works were written on tablets of stone for the Israelites, whereas love itself is "shed abroad in the hearts of believers" by the Holy Spirit.⁷² For Luther the

68. Burton, *Galatians*, 295.

69. Cf. Luz, "Erfüllung," 416. According to Luz, *Matthew*, 179, Matthew uses ποιέω (+ τὸ θέλημα) or τηρέω (+ τὰς ἐντολάς) for the disciples but reserves πληρόω for Jesus, with the nuance "that Jesus has done the will of God completely."

70. Cf. Barclay, *Truth*, 140-41; Luz, "Erfüllung," 413; Räisänen, *Law*, 87-88; Trilling, *Israel*, 178-79.

71. Cf. Luther, *Pref. Rom.*, 35:367-68: "Accustom yourself, then, to this language, that doing the works of the law and fulfilling the law are two very different things. The work of the law is everything that one does, or can do, toward keeping the law of his own free will or by his own powers. . . . To fulfil the law, however, is to do its works with pleasure and love, to live a godly and good life of one's own accord, without the compulsion of the law. This pleasure and love for the law is put into the heart by the Holy Spirit."

72. *De spir. et litt.* 17:29.

Mosaic law as such binds only Israel, but the law of nature contained *within* the Mosaic law is to be observed by all.⁷³ In Calvin's view the moral law (spelled out in the Decalogue) is "the true and eternal rule of righteousness, prescribed for men of all nations and times, who wish to conform their lives to God's will."⁷⁴ Wesley believed the moral law to be "coeval with [human] nature" and written by the Creator on the human heart. "More perfect knowledge" of the law was made possible when it was inscribed on tablets of stone and given to the Israelites.⁷⁵ But it "must remain in force, upon all mankind, and in all ages; as not depending either on time or place, or any other circumstances liable to change, but on the nature of God and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other."⁷⁶

What, finally, are the roots of these last Pauline theses? The hypothesis that Paul, already in his pre-Christian days, shared with other Jews a belief that Torah's validity would end with the coming of the Messiah has been tested and found untenable. W. D. Davies searched valiantly for Jewish sources suggesting such an understanding.⁷⁷ H. J. Schoeps proposed that Paul's views were so determined.⁷⁸ But the parallels discovered are scanty and remote. The evidence that most Jews believed Torah's laws to be eternal is so overwhelming that Paul could not have simply assumed a contrary position. Furthermore, Paul's arguments bear all the marks of a Christian reevaluation.

The belief that Messiah had come would not itself have forced Paul to reassess the validity of Torah. Reevaluation, however, was required by the belief that in order to fulfill God's redemptive purposes the Messiah had been crucified. It followed that neither the Torah, nor the Sinaitic covenant of which it was a part, nor the institutions it ordained could cope with human sin. Their role could only be seen as preparatory.

To be sure, Paul would have already read in the Scriptures that true obedience to God will be forthcoming only when God writes his laws on people's hearts, replaces their hearts of stone with hearts made pliable to his purposes, and imparts to them his Spirit (so Jer. 31:33 and Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:26-27). Such texts may well have influenced the formulation of his Christian thought. But the notion that a preparatory age characterized by the service of the letter had given way to the age of the Spirit seems, again, Christian in its origins — its inspiration lying in the conviction that God's Son has died and risen, and his

Spirit has been poured out, to bring about a new creation ruled by righteousness. The message of the cross was for Paul first and foremost redemptive. But it was also revelatory of God's purposes in the time of "the law and the prophets" as well as in the present "day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

73. Cf. Luther, *Gal.*, 27:53; *Moses*, 35:172-73.

74. Calvin, *Inst.* 4.20.15.

75. Wesley, *Sermons*, 2:6-8.

76. Wesley, *Sermons*, 1:552.

77. Cf. W. D. Davies, *Torah*.

78. See chap. 7, sec. ii above.