

Evangelical Review of Theology

EDITOR: DAVID PARKER

Volume 26 • Number 4 • October 2002

*Articles and book reviews original and
selected from publications worldwide for
an international readership for the purpose
of discerning the obedience of faith*



Published by
PATERNOSTER PERIODICALS

for
**WORLD EVANGELICAL
ALLIANCE**
Theological Commission

Being 'Under the Law' in Galatians

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Keywords: Sin, curse, slavery, salvation history, freedom, redemption, new life,

Introduction

The phrase 'under the law' is of considerable importance in Pauline theology and especially in the letter to the Galatians, where it appears five times (3:23; 4:4; 4:5; 4:21; 5:18). Being 'under the law' is parallel to being 'under sin' (3:22), 'under a pedagogue' (3:25), 'under guardians and stewards' (4:2), and 'under the *stoicheia* of the world' (4:3). This phrase primarily refers to the existence of Jews before the coming of faith (3:23-25).¹ Paul also relates the existence under the law to subjection to the flesh which stands in opposition to the Spirit (5:16-18). However, with the coming of Christ the

bondage of the law was brought to an end (3:25).

Now the question is: what is the nature of the Jewish existence 'under the law'? The majority of interpreters nowadays argue that that existence means a situation under the guardianship or supervision of the law, considering the basic functions of pedagogue (3:25) and guardian and steward (4:2) in the Graeco-Roman world. For them, the Jewish situation is a state of spiritual minority before the arrival of spiritual

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1 Many interpreters think that the switch from 'we' in 3:23-25 to 'you' in 3:26-29 is a switch from discussion of the Jewish situation to discussion of the Gentile situation. L.L. Belleville, "'Under Law': Structural Analysis and the Pauline Concept of Law in Galatians 3.21-4.11", *JSNT* 26 (1986), pp. 69-70; T.L. Donaldson, 'The "Curse of the Law" and the Inclusion of the Gentiles: Galatians 3.13-14', *NTS* 32 (1986), pp. 94-112; J.D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 137-43.

maturity.² Does this view correctly represent what Paul really intends by the phrase 'under the law' in Galatians? In my opinion, it fails to grasp Paul's point correctly.

In setting out a better interpretation in this article, I will first of all discuss the function of the law in the history of redemption in 3:15-22, especially 3:19, then the meaning of being 'under the law', and lastly freedom from the slavery of the law. I shall argue that in view of the statements in 3.10, 13 and 4.4-5 'under the law' in Galatians means 'under the curse of the law'.

The body of Galatians except for the prescript (1:1-5) and postscript (6:11-18) is divided into four sections: proposition (1:6-10), narration (1:11-2:21), argument (3:1-4:31), and exhortation (5:1-6:10). The phrase 'under the law' occurs four times in the second argument (3:23; 4:4, 5, 21) and once in the second exhortation (5:18).

The argumentative section contains two basic points: no one is justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Christ (3:1-14); the believers

are no longer slaves under the law but sons of God (3:23-4:7; 4:21-31). The pericope 3:15-22 which treats the salvation-historical function of the law in relation to the promise is a transitional excursus. The pericope 4:8-20 is an appeal, anticipating the exhortative section in 5:1-6:10. The exhortative section based on the argumentative section also includes two exhortations: the believers should not accept circumcision for justification, but live by faith (5:1-12); the believers should not subject themselves to the flesh, but walk by the Spirit (5:13-6:10).³

1. The Function of the Law

Against his opponents' contention that the Gentile Galatians should receive circumcision and the law in order to inherit the promise made to Abraham, Paul argues that Abraham by faith accepted the promise and that the Galatians by faith received the Spirit which was the actual fulfilment of the promise of Abraham (Gal. 3:1-14).⁴ He then goes on to assert that the inheritance is not based on the law (3:18). For Paul the law, which came much later, had no power to invalidate the promise (3:17). The law was not contrary to the promise (3:21); rather, it prepared the way for its fulfilment. The law was originally given as the obligation of the Sinai covenant. Yet it was broken and thus pronounced a curse upon those who transgressed

2 R. Longenecker, 'The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7', *JETS* 25 (1982), pp. 53-61; Belleville, 'Under Law', pp. 59-71; D.J. Lull, "'The Law Was Our Pedagogue': A Study in Galatians 3:19-25", *JBL* 105 (1986), pp. 481-98; N.H. Young, 'Paidagōgos: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor', *NouT* 29 (1987), pp. 150-76; T.D. Gordon, 'A Note on paidagōgos in Galatians 3.24-25', *NTS* 35 (1989), pp. 150-54; R. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC; Dallas: Word Books, 1990), pp. 145-50; M.A. Kruger, 'Law and Promise in Galatians', *Neotestamentica* 26 (1992), pp. 320-21, 324; F.J. Matera, *Galatians* (SPS; Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992), pp. 136-40; J.D.G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), pp. 196-200; Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, pp. 137-43.

3 See In-Gyu Hong, *The Law in Galatians* (JSNTS; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), pp. 68-73.

4 See Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, pp. 125-48.

it, particularly Israel. From this curse of the law Christ redeemed them so that the Abrahamic promise was fulfilled (3:13-14). With this fulfilment the law as the covenant obligation gave way. Thus it was temporally limited to the period between the promise and its fulfilment. This period of the law is something like a parenthesis.

At this point Paul raises a question about the purpose of the law in the history of redemption. In Gal. 3:19a he formulates it this way: 'Why (*ti*) the law then?' This question is elliptical. The word *ti* here can be understood as 'why'⁵ or 'what'.⁶ No matter how we take it, the context clearly suggests that the question primarily concerns the function, purpose and significance of the law in the divine plan of salvation, not its nature.

Paul answers the question: 'It was added for the sake of transgressions (*tōn parabaseōn charin prosetethē*)' (3:19b). The verb *prosetethē* refers back to the giving of the law 430 years later than the promise of Abraham (3:17). The prepositional phrase *tōn parabaseōn charin* is not unambiguous, for the *charin* may denote either purpose (1 Tim. 5:14; Tit. 1:5, 11; Jude 16) or reason (1 Jn. 3:12; cf. Lk. 7:47; Eph. 3:1, 14).⁷ If the former is the case, the phrase may mean 'for the purpose of

transgressions', namely to produce transgressions or reveal transgressions. In the second case, it can mean 'because of transgressions', namely to check transgressions.

This latter view agrees with the traditional Jewish understanding of the Torah as a hedge against sin.⁸ Some think along this line.⁹ To my mind, however, it is impossible to interpret *tōn parabaseōn charin* to mean 'because of transgressions' as if these transgressions had taken place without the law, since *parabasis* is a *legal* term, referring to a concrete act of breaking a promulgated law or an explicit command.¹⁰ The term *parabasis* is not something which is antecedent to, but something which is subsequent to the coming of the law. According to Romans 4:15 and 5:14, there was *hamartia* but no *parabasis* between Adam and Moses because the law had not yet been given.¹¹

The real issue is whether Paul thinks of the law's function as *evoking* transgression or as *revealing* sin as transgression. Many interpreters correctly regard the first option as representing Paul's intention here. In doing so, however, they do not provide sufficient evidence drawn

8 Cf. H.J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* (ET; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), pp. 194ff.; T. Laato, *Paulus und das Judentum: Anthropologische Erwägungen* (Abo: Abo Academy, 1991), pp. 83-94.

9 L. Keck, *Paul and his Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), p. 74; Lull, 'The Law Was Our Pedagogue', pp. 482ff.; Kruger, 'Law and Promise in Galatians', pp. 318-21.

10 J. Schneider, *TDNT*, V, pp. 739-40; BAGD, pp. 611-12.

11 Cf. Lull, 'The Law Was Our Pedagogue', p. 484.

5 E.g. RSV; NASB; F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Exeter: Paternoster, 1982), p. 175; Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 137.

6 E.g. H.D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), p. 161; Belleville, 'Under Law', p. 55.

7 BAGD, p. 877.

from Galatians itself, but mainly appeal to Romans 5:20.¹² I certainly agree that a close parallel exists between Galatians 3:19 and Romans 5:20. But in my opinion, Galatians alone, especially the immediate context of 3:19b, divulges significant indications to support the first view.

First of all, 3:8-14 states that the promise was made to Abraham long before the law was promulgated, and was fulfilled through the cross of Christ which removed the curse of the law imposed upon Israel owing to their transgressions. This means that when the promise was given, there was no law; when it was fulfilled, however, the law, especially its transgressions, was presupposed. It follows that the law came to help the promise to find fulfilment through Christ *by producing transgressions*.

Secondly, Paul's forceful denial that the law is against the promise (3:21a-b) can be understood *only* when we presuppose a possible attack by his opponents on his provocative view of the law in 3:19b.¹³ Since the opponents firmly believe that the law and the promise

are compatible, they would immediately ask in reaction to the offensive statement: do you mean, then, that the law contradicts the promise?

Thirdly and lastly, we should note the *enslaving* function of the law. Galatians 3:23 says: '(B)efore faith came, we were confined under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.' This bondage under the law is described as being equivalent to bondage under sin in 3:22 and bondage under the elemental spirits of the world in 4:3, 8-9.¹⁴ This entirely negative character of the law denotes the role of the law in causing transgressions.

We therefore understand Galatians 3:19b to mean that the law was added for the purpose of *provoking* transgressions. This function of the law is more than one of revealing sin as transgression (cf. Rom. 3:20), though it does include it.¹⁵

In this connection it is worthwhile to consider Romans 5:20a: 'And the law came in that the trespass (*paraptōma*) might increase.' It is not so easy to determine the precise meaning of the term *paraptōma*. In 5:15, 17 and 18 *paraptōma* is used to describe Adam's sin (*parabasis*) in 5:14. This leads many scholars to see *paraptōma* as equivalent to *paraba-*

12 E.g. C.E.B. Cranfield, 'St. Paul and the Law', *SJT* 17 (1964), p. 46; J. Eckert, *Die urchristliche Verkündigung im Streit zwischen Paulus und seinen Gegnern nach dem Galaterbrief* (BU; Regensburg: Pustet, 1971), p. 82; Betz, *Galatians*, p. 165; Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 175; G. Ebeling, *The Truth of the Gospel: An Exposition of Galatians* (ET; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), p. 193; J.L. Martyn, *Galatians* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1997), pp. 354-55.

13 Cf. A.J. Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World: An Exegetical Study in Aspects of Paul's Teaching* (Kampen: Kok, 1964), p. 128; J. Lambrecht, 'The line of Thought in Gal. 2.14b-21', *NTS* 24 (1977-78), p. 492; Betz, *Galatians*, pp. 173-74.

14 See below.

15 Cf. E. Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), p. 188; F. Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief* (HTKNT; Freiburg: Herder, 1974), p. 245; R.Y.K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 160; D.B. Wallace, 'Galatians 3:19-20: A *Crux Interpretum* for Paul's View of the Law', *WTJ* 52 (1990), p. 238.

sis.¹⁶ Yet, in 5:20, *paraptōma* is parallel to *hamartia*, which was in the world before the law (5:13). There is, however, no instance in which *paraptōma* shares in the personal use of *hamartia*.¹⁷

All these observations seem to indicate that *paraptōma* has a broader connotation than *parabasis* (a violation of a commandment or a law which did not exist between Adam and Moses¹⁸), but it is not the same as *hamartia*. According to Cranfield, *paraptōma*, being equivalent to *hamartēma* (Rom. 3:25), refers to 'a false step, a going astray (it is cognate with *parapiptein*), and so a misdeed' which disrupted humanity's relationship with God.¹⁹ If this is correct, we can understand Romans 5:20a this way: the law came in to increase sinful deeds which had occurred. This thought is not an exact parallel to that of Galatians 3:19b, but there is no essential difference between the two refer-

ences. They basically concern the same thing: the law was given to intensify the seriousness of the existing sin and to radicalize the crisis of Adamitic human existence (cf. 1 Cor. 15:56; 2 Cor. 3:6, 7, 9).²⁰

Returning to Galatians 3:19b, a question may be raised: how does the law produce transgressions? Unfortunately, in this regard Galatians is silent. If, however, we accept Romans 5:20a as a parallel (not exact but approximate) to Gal. 3:19b, we can find an answer to the question in Romans, since Romans 7:5ff. offers a clarification of the abrupt statement of Romans 5:20a.²¹ Although the assertions of Romans 5:20a and Galatians 3:19b are slightly different, they share one and the same explanation. In Romans 7:5 Paul states that through the law 'passions of sins' were aroused in people who were in the flesh. The 'passions of sins' means passions which express themselves in concrete acts of sin rather than in false striving for self-righteousness, as implied in the plural form of the words 'passions' and 'sins'.²²

16 E.g. C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (BNTC; London: A. & C. Black, 1962), p. 113; J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 207-208; O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), p. 140; U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Röm 1-5) (EKKNT; Zürich: Benzinger Verlag, 1978), p. 322 n. 1070.

17 W. Michaelis, *TDNT*, VI, p. 172 n. 11; cf. H. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1983), p. 144 n. 81; H. Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought: A Contribution to the Development of Pauline Theology* (ET; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), p. 80.

18 J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (Dallas: Word, 1988), p. 279.

19 C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, I (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), p. 284; cf. Michaelis, *TDNT*, VI, p. 172; J.P. Louw and E.A. Nida, et al. (eds.), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domain*, I (New York: UBS, 1988), 88.297.

20 Thus it is not necessary to assume a theological development from Galatians to Romans in this respect. Cf. Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*, pp. 80-1.

21 Cf. J.C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), p. 239; K. Snodgrass, 'Spheres of Influence: A Possible Solution to the Problem of Paul and the Law', *JSNT* 32 (1988), p. 104; D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 348.

22 Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 364; cf. Bandstra, *The Law and Elements of the World*, pp. 127-28; G. Bornkamm, *Paul* (ET; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1975), p. 126; Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*, pp. 72ff.; T.F. Morris, 'Law and the Cause of Sin in the Epistle to the Romans', *HeyJ* 28 (1987), pp. 285-87.

The thought is specifically elaborated in Romans 7:8ff. In the absence of the law sin was 'dead', that is, powerless and inactive (at least relatively). When the commandment 'Thou shall not covet' appeared on the stage, however, sin, through this commandment, took occasion to stir up in man coveting of every kind. This account is an obvious allusion to the fall story in Genesis 3, in which the serpent (sin) tempted Adam to eat the forbidden fruit by means of the commandment not to eat it.²³ Notice that the expression 'sin deceived (*eksēpatēsen*) me' in Romans 7:11 is reminiscent of the woman's complaint 'the serpent deceived (*ēpatēsen*, LXX) me' in Genesis 3:13.²⁴ It can be said, therefore, that by providing an operational base for sin to kindle people's sinful passions, the law served (though not directly) to provoke or stimulate transgressions.²⁵

Hübner ascribes the negative function of the law expressed in Galatians 3:19b to its origin from the demonic angels. In order to avoid any cynical comment on God's dealing with peo-

ple for salvation, he interprets the participial clause *diatageis di' angelōn* in 3:19d to mean 'ordained by the angels', taking the *dia* causatively to express source.²⁶ It should be noted, however, that the participle *diatageis* is subordinate to the main verb 'was added' (*prosetethē*). This verb is a divine passive, suggesting God as the giver of the law. Moreover, the verb 'was added' is qualified by the subordinate clause 'until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made' in 3:19c. This temporal clause clearly refers to God's design with regard to the law (cf. 3:22).

Thus it becomes obvious that it is God who added the law to provoke transgressions.²⁷ This does not say that God is responsible for sin. Rather it seems to mean that the law still remained in God's hands, serving his redemptive plan, though it assumed the negative function in encountering the power of sin.

In any event, the consequence of the giving of the law is: 'The Scripture has shut up all people under sin' (*synekleisen hē graphē ta panta hypo hamartian*) (3:22a; cf. Rom. 11:32).²⁸ It is remarkable that the singular *graphē* is not accompanied by any Old Testament quotation, in view of the fact that in Paul (and also in the New Testament in general) the term usually refers to a specific pas-

23 Barrett, *Romans*, p. 143; F.F. Bruce, 'Paul and the Law of Moses', *BJRL* 57 (1975), pp. 268-69; Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*, pp. 74-5; Dunn, *Romans* 1-8, p. 400.

24 I think that Romans 7:7-13 depicts the Christian Paul's look in hindsight at the plight of Israel under the law, including himself before his conversion. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, pp. 238-42; D.J. Moo, 'Israel and Paul in Romans 7.7-12', *NTS* 32 (1986), pp. 122-35; cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, I, pp. 342-44; M.W. Karlberg, 'Israel's History Personified: Romans 7:7-13 in Relation to Paul's Teaching on the "Old Man"', *TrinJ* 7 (1986), pp. 65-74; S. Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith: Paul and his Recent Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), pp. 181-82.

25 Cf. Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*, pp. 70-8.

26 Cf. BAGD, p. 180.

27 For further objections to Hübner's suggestion, see Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, pp. 154-55.

28 Although the *alla* connects Galatians 3:22 with the preceding hypothetical assumption in v. 21 by showing a contrast between them, v. 22 actually stands in a result-reason relation to 3:19b. See Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, pp. 42-5.

sage in the Old Testament (Gal. 3:8; 4:30; Rom. 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2). It is also notable that the *graphē* is described in personal terms. These observations suggest that it refers to the entire Scripture which is invested with the authority of God.²⁹

The *synkleiō* can be taken in various senses,³⁰ but is undoubtedly used here in the negative sense of 'to shut up', 'to confine', or 'to imprison'. The neuter plural *ta panta* probably refers to all people (cf. Jn. 6:37, 39), since the entire argument here is on the personal level.³¹ The expression *hypo hamartian* means under the bondage of sin, a supreme power of the old age, as the *synkleiō* suggests.³² This understanding of sin fits into the broad framework of Paul's eschatological understanding of the Christ event in Galatians (1:4; 6:14-15).³³ As Witherington argues, being under sin is a broader category than being under the curse mentioned in 3:10, for it includes all, even the Jews.³⁴ Sin is the universal human dilemma, but the curse is the dilemma for the people of the law, name-

ly the Jews.³⁵ The picture behind the statement in 3:22a seems to be that of the jail. The Scripture is represented as the magistrate, all people as the prisoners, and sin as the jailer.³⁶

2. Being 'Under the Law'

After dealing with the law and sin in the transitional section in 3:15-22, Paul goes on to describe the slavery of the law in antithesis to the sonship in Christ in 3:23-4:7. The slavery is expressed as being 'under the law' in 3:23 and 4:4-5 (cf. 4:21; 5:18). Then it is compared with being 'under a pedagogue' (3:25), 'under guardians and stewards' (4:2), and 'under the *stoicheia* of the world' (4:3).

Here it is important to note that these 'under' (*hypo*) phrases are parallel to 'under sin' in 3:22. The linkage between being under the law and being under sin also appears in Romans 6:14: 'For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.' 6:14a contains a promise which is valid for every believer at the present time and 6:14b offers the reason for it. This suggests that if people are under the law, sin has dominion over them. For Paul, to be under the law means to be under the power of sin.³⁷

Before considering the import of the diverse analogies of the law we should first investigate the meaning

29 Cf. D. Guthrie, *Galatians* (NCB; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1973), p. 107; C.H. Cosgrove, 'The Mosaic Law Preaches Faith: A Study in Galatians 3', *WTJ* 41 (1978-79), p. 160; Ebeling, *The Truth of the Gospel*, pp. 192-93; Belleville, 'Under Law', p. 56; Fung, *Galatians*, p. 164; Martyn, *Galatians*, pp. 360-61.

30 See O. Michel, *TDNT*, VII, pp. 744-47.

31 Guthrie, *Galatians*, p. 107; Betz, *Galatians*, p. 175 n. 116; Fung, *Galatians*, p. 164 n. 65; cf. Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 180; Belleville, 'Under Law', p. 56.

32 Cf. Burton, *Galatians*, p. 196; Belleville, 'Under Law', p. 56.

33 See Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, pp. 74-96.

34 Cf. Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 371.

35 B. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), p. 261.

36 Guthrie, *Galatians*, p. 107; cf. Fung, *Galatians*, p. 164.

37 Cf. Moo, *Romans*, pp. 388-89.

of the phrase 'under the law' in the context of Galatians. This is a legitimate order of interpretation. In my opinion, it is wrong to adopt the approach followed by a number of interpreters,³⁸ that is, to consider first the role of the metaphors 'pedagogue' (3:24-25) and 'guardian and steward' (4:2) in the Graeco-Roman social context in order to understand the phrase 'under the law'. I regard it as essential to determine the significance of the metaphors by first examining what Paul is trying to say by 'under the law', *not vice versa*.

The peculiar phrase 'under the law' first appears in 3:23. It is accompanied by the verb 'were held' (*ephrouroumetha*) and the participle 'being shut up' (*synkleiomenoi*),³⁹ and thus refers to the condition of the Jews⁴⁰ before the coming of faith.

A number of interpreters these days understand the Jewish situation under the law in a positive or neutral light. Gordon regards the function of

the law as that of guarding or protecting Israel from the profane idolatry of the Gentiles.⁴¹ Similar in some respects is Young's view that the law's function was to prevent Israel from free association with the Gentiles.⁴² Longenecker thinks Paul's places emphasis on the supervisory role of the law until Christ.⁴³ Lull argues that the primary purpose of the law was to curb the desires of the flesh.⁴⁴ According to Kruger, the law functioned like walls which protected until the Spirit came.⁴⁵ Dunn claims that the role of the law was a protective and disciplining role.⁴⁶ Belleville thinks the function of the law was that of a custodian who closely regulated and supervised God's people in a period of spiritual minority.⁴⁷

At first glance these interpretations seem to be in harmony with the functions of pedagogue (3:25) and guardian and steward (4:2) in the Graeco-Roman society. They, however, fail to take into consideration seriously the parallelism of 'under sin' in 3:22 and 'under the law' in 3:23. In my opinion, if being 'under sin' refers to the slavery of the evil power of sin, as interpreted above, then we are not permitted to see any positive element in being under the law. Further, the negative function of the law to provoke transgressions as

38 E.g. Longenecker, 'The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7', pp. 53-61; Belleville, 'Under Law', pp. 59ff.; Young, 'Paidagōgos', pp. 150-76; cf. Lull, 'The Law Was Our Pedagogue', pp. 481-98.

39 Lull ('The Law Was Our Pedagogue', pp. 487-88) takes the present participle *synkleiomenoi* as a substitute for an imperfect which indicates a continued action prior to that of the main verb, mainly in order to justify his mistaken interpretation of 3:19b that the law was added because of the transgressions that had occurred. But it is more natural to see the present participle as denoting the same action which is expressed by the principal verb. E.D. Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1894), §120; Burton, *Galatians*, p. 199; Young, 'paidagōgos', p. 170.

40 See above; cf. L. Gaston, 'Paul and the Torah', in A.T. Davies (ed.), *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 62-3.

41 Gordon, 'A Note on *paidagōgos* in Galatians 3:24-25', pp. 150-54.

42 Young, 'Paidagōgos', pp. 150-76.

43 Longenecker, 'The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7', pp. 53-61.

44 Lull, 'The Law Was Our Pedagogue', pp. 486-98.

45 Kruger, 'Law and Promise in Galatians', pp. 317-25.

46 Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, pp. 137-43.

47 Belleville, 'Under Law', pp. 55-70.

expressed in 3:19b⁴⁸ clearly speaks against any attempt to perceive the function of the law in 3:23 as a positive one.

What, then, is the exact nature of existence under the law? Note again that being 'under the law' in 3:23 is parallel to being 'under sin' in v. 22 and that the same verb *synkleiō* is used in connection with both existences. Here we see that the law, like sin, is also depicted as a jailer. It holds its prisoners in jail with a view to *suppression*, not protection. For this reason the verb *phroureō* used besides *synkleiō* in association with the phrase 'under the law' in v. 23 is to be taken in the sense of a restrictive confinement, though it is elsewhere employed in the sense of a protective guarding (2 Cor. 11:32; Philp. 4:7; 1 Pet. 1:5). Why were God's people confined under the law? The simple answer is because all people, even God's people, were under the power of the sin already and their transgressions of the law made clear to them that they were the slaves of sin.⁴⁹

We now turn to the passage in 4:4b-5a, where the expression 'under the law' occurs twice, in order to give a further clarification of the character of the bondage of the law: 'God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order that he might redeem (*eksagorasē*) those who were under the law.' Here, too, being 'under the law' is described as a bondage, as suggested by the term *eksagorazō* which has a connotation

of deliverance or liberation.

It is common to regard being under the law here as being under obligation to keep the law.⁵⁰ To my mind, however, it is absurd to think that being under such an obligation is a desperate (or non-exit) situation from which Christ redeemed his people. We should not forget what Paul says in 3:13a: 'Christ redeemed (*eksēgorasen*) us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.' Note that the same verb *eksagorazō* is employed here as in 4:5. In fact, 3:13a and 4:4b-5a are 'the only christological instances of that verb in the New Testament',⁵¹ forming a parallelism. The first person plural pronouns in the quotation of 3:13a refer to the Jews only.⁵² According to 3:10, they were 'under a curse' (*hypo kataran*) because of their failure to fulfil the law. We can now change the structure (not the meaning!) of 3:13a so as to make its correspondence to 4:4b-5a more striking: Christ became a curse in order to redeem his people who were under the curse of the law. Note the parallelism between the two statements.

This parallelism makes it clear that those 'under the law' in 4:5a are the Jews under the curse of the law. What naturally follows then is that existence under the law in 4:4b-5a means existence under the curse of

48 See above.

49 Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, p. 266.

50 Fung, *Galatians*, p. 182 n. 73; Louw and Nida, et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, I, 37.7.

51 Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 408.

52 E.g. Dunn, *Galatians*, p. 216; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, p. 288.

the law.⁵³ This understanding is reinforced in Galatians 5:16-21. According to 5:21b, being captive to the desires of the flesh will result in eternal condemnation (see also 6:8a). As implied in the parallel between 5:16 and 5:18, this subjection to the flesh is equal to being 'under the law'. In this connection it is noteworthy that in 2 Corinthians 3 the Mosaic covenant is described as 'the ministry of death' (3:7) and 'the ministry of condemnation' (3:9).

It is perplexing that Paul employs the metaphor of pedagogue in Galatians 3:24-25 (cf. 1 Cor. 4:15) to describe the bondage of the law, that is, existence under the curse of the law. The figure of pedagogue was widely known in Graeco-Roman society.⁵⁴ He was not a teacher (*didaskalos*) but a household-slave who accompanied the free-born boy wherever he went, especially to school. His task consisted of protection of the boy from all kinds of dangers and supervision of his general conduct which involved reproach and punishment for his bad manners. The pedagogue kept the lad under his control and restricted his liberty until he reached the age of

puberty.⁵⁵

According to Lull and Young,⁵⁶ however, there was a big gap between the ideal and the actual. It was quite common to put old and decrepit slaves in charge of children while appointing fit and young slaves to manage more demanding works such as financial affairs. Plutarch lamented this practice of using the most useless slaves for the important early discipline of the children (*Mor.* 4A-B). The pedagogues were supposed to assist their charges to realize and achieve virtue, but many, if not most of them, were not educated but rough and abusive men. They often failed to advise well or to provide a good example to be followed. What they taught best were 'petty and childish duties' (Plutarch, *Mor.* 439F). Yet this teaching was often accompanied by threats of whipping. It is not surprising, then, that the pedagogues gained a bad reputation for being rude and harsh and were often depicted with a cane, a whip or a rod. It is true, however, that there were some good pedagogues who attracted respect and affection.⁵⁷

What, then, is Paul's point in using the pedagogue metaphor for the law? To be sure, the primary task of the pedagogue was to protect children from all sorts of harm and to teach them proper manners. But there is no indication in the context of 3:24-25 that the law played such

53 Cf. H.N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), p. 156; Betz, *Galatians*, p. 176; Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 196; B.C. Lategan, 'Formulas in the Language of Paul: A Study of Prepositional Phrases in Galatians', *Neotestamentica* 25 (1991), pp. 82, 85.

54 See Longenecker, 'The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7', pp. 53-6; Belleville, 'Under Law', pp. 59-60; Lull, 'The Law Was Our Pedagogue', pp. 489-94; Young, 'Paidagōgos', pp. 150-69; cf. A.T. Hanson, 'The Origin of Paul's Use of *paidagōgos* for the Law', *JSNT* 34 (1988), pp. 71-6.

55 Plato was of the opinion that a child should be treated as a slave during his minority (*Leg.* 7.810E).

56 Lull, 'The Law Was Our Pedagogue', p. 493; Young, 'Paidagōgos', p. 159.

57 See Lull, 'The Law Was Our Pedagogue', p. 490; Young, 'Paidagōgos', pp. 165-68.

a protective and educative role, as observed above. The context rather suggests that the unpleasant restraint of the pedagogue is the force of the analogy.⁵⁸ It should be noted that the comparison of the law with the pedagogue in v. 24 is motivated by the situation depicted in v. 23: 'before faith came we were confined under the law, kept under restraint...so that (*hōste*) the law has become our pedagogue...' This demonstrates that Paul employs the pedagogue metaphor in order to describe vividly the enslavement of the law. For Paul, subjection under the pedagogue amounts to imprisonment, that is, lack of freedom, and thus is comparable to slavery under the law, the plight of the Jews before (or outside) Christ.

In this connection some construe the dominion of the law in an existential way. Taking the preposition *eis* in the phrase *eis Christon* (3:24) to express the goal, they think of the enslaving function of the law as oppressing individuals and creating a growing passion for liberty in Christ.⁵⁹ However, the *eis* must be taken in a temporal sense in the light of many temporal references in 3:19-25: 'until' (v. 19), 'before' (v.

23), 'until faith should be revealed' (v. 23), 'now that faith has come' (v. 25), 'no longer' (v. 25). This understanding is further substantiated by the fact that in 4:1-7 also Paul uses different images to stress the temporal limits of the law's subjugation (see below). Thus it is clear that Paul here speaks of a non-exit situation of people under the law before the coming of Christ in terms of salvation history, not in terms of subjective psychology.⁶⁰

In Galatians 4:2 Paul sets forth another analogy of bondage under the law: being 'under guardians and stewards' (*hypo epitropous kai oikonomous*).⁶¹ There has been much discussion on the precise meaning of the two titles and the legal system behind them which Paul has in mind.⁶² In general, however, *epitropos* is a legal term for the guardian, appointed by the father or by the court, who oversaw the person and education of a minor and

58 F. Thielman, *Paul and the Law: A Contextual Approach* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1994), pp. 132f.; Young, 'Paidagōgos', pp. 170-71; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, p. 266; cf. Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith*, p. 196.

59 M. Luther, *A Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, [1891] 1979), pp. 340-41; Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, p. 146; R.A. Cole, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians: An Introduction and Commentary* (INTC; Leicester: IVP, [1965] 1983), p. 108; cf. C.B. Cousar, *Galatians* (Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), p. 79.

60 E.g. Burton, *Galatians*, p. 200; Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, I, p. 266; Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, p. 55; Fung, *Galatians*, p. 169; Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith*, p. 196.

61 The basic thought of Galatians 3:23-29, that is, the antithesis between slavery under the law and freedom in Christ, is repeated in 4:1-7, though with some elaboration. This is implied in the opening words *legō de* in 4:1 (cf. 3:17; 5:16; Rom. 15:8; 1 Cor. 1:12) which may be rendered as 'this is what I mean' (NEB) or 'let me put it this way' (Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 192).

62 E.g. W.M. Ramsay, *A Historical Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1900), pp. 391-93; Burton, *Galatians*, pp. 212-15; J.D. Hester, 'The "Heir" and Heilsgeschichte: A Study of Galatians 4:1ff.', in F. Christ (ed.), *Oikonomia: Heilsgeschichte als Thema der Theologie: Festschrift für O. Cullmann* (Hamburg: Herbert Reich Evangelischer Verlag, 1967), pp. 119-22; Belleville, 'Under Law', pp. 60-3.

managed the inheritance in his interest until he attained his majority. On the other hand, *oikonomos* usually means a steward who administered the estate of his master (cf. Lk. 12:42; 16:1, 8; Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10). We should note, however, that there is no clear instance of the use of *oikonomos* for one who has charge of the person or estate of a minor heir.⁶³

It is puzzling that here the administrative term *oikonomos* occurs in association with the legal term *epitropos*. It is unlikely that in combining the two terms Paul has in mind the Roman law which stipulates that a minor is to be under a *tutor* (*epitropos*) until the age of 14, and thereafter under a *curator* (*kouratōr*) until the age of 25.⁶⁴ For if Paul had been thinking of this law, he could have used the phrase *epitropos kai kuratōr* instead of *epitropos kai oikonomos*.

Moreover, it does not seem that Paul has a historical succession of guardians in mind. The single preposition *hypo* and connective *kai* (*hypo epitropous kai oikonomous*) implies that the minor is *at the same time* 'under guardians and stewards'.⁶⁵ It is possible, however, that the combination of the two terms takes place because of the references to slavery in 4:1 and 3, since *oikonomos* can be the one who superintends the slaves of his mas-

ter.⁶⁶ It is also plausible that Paul in his use of the two titles is merely referring to those who had effective control of the person and estate of a child. In some cases the *epitropos* might delegate some of his responsibilities to the *oikonomos*.⁶⁷

Whatever the case, the point of the analogy is clear: as Paul explicitly states in 4:1, the minor heir does not differ at all from a slave as long as he is put under the restricting power of guardians and stewards. Although he is theoretically the owner and master, he is in reality without control over his life and possessions. By the same token, the Jews under the curse of the law have no capacity for self-determination and freedom, though they have received the promise to inherit the eschatological land.

Further, Paul equates slavery under the law with bondage 'under the *stoicheia* of the world' in 4:3ff. The phrase under 'the *stoicheia* of the world' here is simply 'the *stoicheia*' in 4:9. This implies that the emphasis within the phrase is placed on the ideas conveyed by 'the *stoicheia*' rather than 'of the world'.⁶⁸ The word *stoicheion* basically means a member or component of a row or series, probably being derived from *stoichos*, 'a row', 'a series', 'a line'. In Hellenistic and Classical literature the plural, 'the *stoicheia*', is princi-

66 Betz, *Galatians*, p. 204; cf. Longenecker, 'The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7', p. 56.

67 Belleville, 'Under Law', p. 63; cf. Burton, *Galatians*, pp. 213-14; O. Michel, *TDNT*, V, p. 150; Longenecker, 'The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7', p. 56.

68 Burton, *Galatians*, p. 516; cf. Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World*, pp. 541ff.

63 Burton, *Galatians*, p. 212.

64 Cf. Ramsay, *Galatians*, pp. 392-93.

65 Belleville, 'Under Law', p. 62.

pally used in two senses: either (a) elements of knowledge or fundamental principles (e.g. Plato, *Leg.* 7.790C; Xenophon, *Mem.* 2.1.1; Plutarch, *Lib. Ed.* 16.2; Heb. 5:12), or (b) the physical elements of the universe such as earth, water, air, and fire (e.g. Plato, *Tim.* 48B; Diogenes Laertius 7.134-35; 4 *Macc.* 12:13; Philo, *Dec.* 31; *Op. Mund.* 146; Hermas, *Vis.* 3.13; Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 62.2; 2 Pet. 3:10, 12).

As the references in brackets show, however, this second sense is predominant in Jewish and Christian literature of the NT period. In the second century CE another meaning of *stoicheia* appears. Justin Martyr in his *Second Apol.* 5.2 employs the word to refer to heavenly bodies, especially the sun, the moon, and other planets which influence seasonal events in nature (see also *Dial.* 23.3; Theophilus of Antioch, *Autol.* 1.6, 2.35). We also find the word denoting spiritual beings such as demons and spirits in the *T. Sol.* (8:1-2; 18:1-2) which may not be earlier than the third or fourth century CE.⁶⁹

How, then, does Paul understand 'the *stoicheia* of the world' in Galatians (cf. Col. 2:8, 20)? Paul's understanding of the phrase is one of the most debated issues in Pauline studies. In my opinion, there are five major solutions.

1. Assuming the inclusion of the law in the *stoicheia*, many scholars interpret the phrase as elementary

principles or teachings by which people lived prior to Christ.⁷⁰

2. Howard and Martyn take up the most frequent meaning of *stoicheia* in the first century CE, and propose that 'the *stoicheia* of the world' refer to the elements of the cosmos which the Gentiles worshipped as gods.⁷¹

3. Schlier, appealing to 4:10, understands the *stoicheia* to refer to stars which were revered as spiritual beings, in spite of the lack of any pre-Pauline attestation of the usage.⁷²

4. Betz thinks that the *stoicheia* include both the physical elements and the heavenly bodies which were thought of as exerting their control over people.⁷³

5. Finally, other interpreters offer a somewhat loose understanding of the *stoicheia*. Observing that both Judaism and paganism are forms of bondage to the *stoicheia*, they consider the *stoicheia* as covering all the things which people serve as their

70 J.B. Lightfoot, *St Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Macmillan, 1880), p. 167; Burton, *Galatians*, pp. 510-18; Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, p. 154; W. Carr, *Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning and Development of the Pauline Phrase 'hai archai kai hai exousiai'* (SNTSMS; Cambridge: CUP, 1981), p. 75; Belleville, 'Under Law', pp. 67-9; Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 166; Matera, *Galatians*, p. 150; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, pp. 284-87.

71 G. Howard, *Paul: Crisis in Galatia: A Study in Early Christian Theology* (SNTSMS; Cambridge: CUP, 1979), pp. 66-7; Martyn, *Galatians*, pp. 393ff.; cf. W. Wink, 'The "Elements of the Universe" in Biblical and Scientific Perspective', *Zygon* 13 (1978), pp. 225-48.

72 H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), p. 192.

73 Betz, *Galatians*, pp. 204-205; cf. Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*, p. 33.

69 For the history of the use of *stoicheion*, see Burton, *Galatians*, pp. 510-14; G. Delling, *TDNT*, VII, pp. 670-83.

gods, including the Jewish law.⁷⁴

In order to decide which one of these various solutions is most plausible, we should take the following points into consideration. First of all, it is important to note that in 4:3-5 *bondage* under the law is parallel to *bondage* 'under the *stoicheia* of the world'. This does not necessarily mean that the law is identical to the *stoicheia* or that the law is included in the *stoicheia*. As observed above, in 3:22-23 Paul equates being under sin with being under the law. However, he never asserts that the law is sin (see e.g. Rom. 7:7). The same can be said for his comparison of the law to pedagogue in 3:24-25 and to guardian and steward in 4:1-2.

Secondly, the description of the Galatians' past in 4:8 suggests that the *stoicheia* were regarded by pagans as gods. Verse 8 reads: 'at that time, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those who in nature are not gods.' The expression, 'those who in nature are not gods' reminds us of a typical Jewish polemic against Gentile polytheism (Is. 37:19; Jer. 2:11; 5:7; 16:20; Epistle of Jeremiah 14, 22, 28, 49, 50, 64, 68, 71).⁷⁵ For Paul as a Christian Jew, pagan gods are not really 'gods' at all. The close conjunction in thought between vv. 8 and 9 shows that these counterfeit gods are identical with the *stoicheia* in v. 9. In this connection it is note-

worthy that the *stoicheia* are described as being 'weak and beggarly'.

Thirdly, we should notice the connection between the Galatians' attempt to return to the slavery of the *stoicheia* in 4:9 and the calendar observances in 4:10 (cf. Gen. 1:14) which were usually associated with star worship.⁷⁶ It was not uncommon to regard the stars as living beings in the ancient world. The problem here is, however, that the use of *stoicheia* for the stars does not appear before the second century CE. Nevertheless, we cannot simply ignore the suggestion of 4:10. Lastly, it is well known that the use of the *stoicheia* for the elements of the universe was predominant in the religious literature of antiquity, and that the elements as well as the stars were conceived as divine beings in the Gentile world of Paul's time (Wis. 13:1-5; 7:17; Philo, *Vit. Cont.* 3-5).⁷⁷

All these considerations compel us to adopt Betz's view that *stoicheia* include both the elements of the universe and the heavenly bodies which were worshipped as gods in paganism. For Paul, they represent *demonic forces* which dominate 'this present evil age' in view of his eschatological understanding of the redemptive work of Christ in Galatians 1:4 and 6:14,⁷⁸ and which enslave not only the Gentiles but also

74 Dellling, *TNDT*, VII, pp. 684-85; H.H. Esser, *NIDNTT*, II, p. 453; Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 204; Fung, *Galatians*, p. 191; Dunn, *Galatians*, p. 213.

75 Howard, *Paul*, pp. 67, 98 n. 224; Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 201; cf. Betz, *Galatians*, pp. 214-15.

76 Cf. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater*, p. 206.

77 See Martyn, *Galatians*, pp. 398-400.

78 Cf. Romans 8:38; 16:20; 1 Corinthians 2:6, 8; 5:5; 7:5; 8:5; 10:19-20; 15:24; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 4:4; 11:14; Ephesians 6:12; Col. 1:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 3:5.

the Jews before and outside Christ.⁷⁹ Thus we can understand Paul's reason for equating slavery under the *stoicheia* with slavery under the law; both the *stoicheia* and the law are enslaving powers which constitute and dominate this evil world. Being under these powers means absence of freedom and subjection to oppression.

Finally, we should observe that Paul relates existence under the law to subjection to the flesh in 5:16-18. Verse 18 reads: 'If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.' This statement is a reinforcement of that in v. 16: 'Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.' The correspondence between these two statements implies that submission to the flesh is tantamount to being under the law.

This association of the law with the flesh is not new. It has already taken place in 3:2-3 and 4:21-31. In the former place the flesh seems to refer to the circumcised flesh; in the latter it denotes the basis of natural procreation. The flesh in 5:16ff. including 5:13 is, however, viewed from quite a different perspective. It is presented as a *personified power* which stands in dualistic antithesis to the Spirit, the enabling power of the new era. It 'sets its desires against the Spirit' (5:17) and produces its works against the fruit of the Spirit (5:19-21).

79 The 'we' who were held in bondage under the *stoicheia* in Galatians 4:3 primarily refers to the Jews, since the first person plural certainly means the same as 'those who were under the law' in 4:5; on the other hand, the 'you' who are about to turn back again to the *stoicheia* by accepting the Jewish law without doubt refers to the Galatian Gentiles.

For Paul the flesh is also an enslaving power of the old age, just like the law. Subordination to the rule of this power leads helpless people to transgress the law and thereby brings them under the curse of the law.⁸⁰ That is why Paul says that a life corrupted by the flesh cannot 'inherit the kingdom of God' (5:21b) and that the end of the sower who sows 'into his flesh' will be eternal 'corruption' (6:8a).⁸¹ Thus it can be said that subjection to the flesh is equivalent to slavery under the law.

In short, for Paul the law was given in addition to the promise in order to provoke transgressions. The consequence is that the law imprisoned all the transgressors under its curse. Paul compares this imprisonment to being under the restrictive supervision of a pedagogue (3:25) and under the power of guardians and stewards (4:2). Further, he connects this confinement with the enslavement to other powers in the old age (1:4; 6:14): sin (3:22), the demonic forces (4:3, 9), and flesh (5:13, 16ff.).

Bondage under the law is the main characterization of the existence of the Jews before the coming of

80 Most of interpreters think that being 'under the law' in 5:18 refers to being under the guidance of the law before the coming of Christ. But this view is mistaken. We should remember, as argued above, that 'under the law' means 'under the curse of the law'. Cf. Fung, *Galatians*, p. 252; T.R. Schreiner, *The Law & Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), p. 81.

81 Martyn (*Galatians*, p. 553) states: 'To sow to one's own flesh is to be circumcised, under the illusion that...circumcision of one's flesh is the antidote to the enslaving power called Flesh. To sow to one's flesh is then also to fall victim to the Flesh, precisely because nomistic circumcision of the flesh is impotent to curb the Flesh.'

Christ. This particular slavery represents the universal human plight under sin, demonic powers and flesh.⁸² It is, however, the prologue to the redemption of Christ.

3. Freedom from the Slavery of the Law

After comparing being 'under the law' with being 'under a pedagogue', Paul declares in Galatians 3:25 that with the coming of Christ, the dominion of the law was brought to an end: 'But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a pedagogue.' The coming of faith here corresponds to the coming of Christ in 3:19c, 24 and 4:4.

How Christ came is described in 4:4b: 'God sent (*eksapesteilen*) His Son.' This statement probably refers to God's act of sending his Son out of his previous state into this world. Although the verb *eksapesteilen* does not necessarily assume the pre-existence of the Son,⁸³ the idea may well have been in Paul's mind in writing the verse. There are several reasons for this.

First of all, Paul believed in the idea (1 Cor. 8:6b; 10:4; Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:15-17), then pre-existence is alluded to in Romans 8:3 which is a parallel to Galatians 4:4-5⁸⁴ and finally, it seems that Paul here, as in 1 Corinthians 1:30 and 10:4, applied Jewish Wisdom ideas to Christ including ideas of pre-existence (Wis.

9:10-17).⁸⁵

Some suppose that the statement in 4:4b is part of pre-Pauline material.⁸⁶ Even if this is so, it is highly probable that the notion of the Son's pre-existence was still present when Paul wrote the verse, in view of the fact that the idea is not unique to Paul but popular in the early Christian community (cf. Jn. 1:1ff.; Heb. 1:2; Rev. 3:14).

Verse 4b further describes the manner of the appearance of the Son: 'born (*genomenon*) of a woman, born (*genomenon*) under the law.' The former phrase clearly refers to his birth out of a woman, since the *ginomai* in it is used as 'a quasi-passive of *gennaō*' (cf. 1 Esd. 4:16; Tob. 8:6; Wis. 7:3; Sir. 44:9; Jn. 8:58).⁸⁷ The aorist participle *genomenon* indicates that the events of God's sending his Son and of the Son's birth from a woman were coincident (cf. Philp. 2:7).⁸⁸ Here it is emphasized that Christ was born in the normal human manner and at his birth assumed normal human nature and thus became a *real* human being (cf. Jn. 1:14). This indicates 'the descent to the level of those whom he came to redeem'.⁸⁹

The latter phrase is somewhat per-

85 B. Witherington, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), pp. 295ff.; cf. E. Schweizer, 'Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund der "Sendungsformel"', Gal. 4.4f., Rm. 8.3f., Joh. 3.16f., 1 Joh. 4.9', ZNW 57 (1966), pp. 199-210.

86 E. Schweizer, TDNT, VIII, p. 374.

87 Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 195.

88 In Philipians 2:7 also the same aorist participle (*genomenos*) has coincidental force.

89 Burton, *Galatians*, p. 217; cf. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, p. 155; Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 171.

82 See Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, pp. 83-4.

83 K.H. Rengstorff, TDNT, I, p. 406.

84 E.g. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, pp. 484-85; Moo, *Romans*, pp. 478-79; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, p. 288.

plexing. Burton views it as 'made subject to law' rather than 'born under the law'.⁹⁰ However, the participle *genomenon* here, as in the former phrase, probably denotes an action coinciding with that of the main verb *eksapesteilen*. So it is more sensible to understand the phrase to mean 'born under the law'. Many interpreters see it as referring to Christ's birth in the Jewish people who were subject to all the requirements of the law.⁹¹ However, we should remember my preceding argument that 'under the law' in the given context means 'under the curse of the law'. If this assumption is correct, what Paul means here is that at his birth Christ took upon himself the curse which the Jews had incurred because of their non-fulfilment of the law.⁹² To my mind this points to the *deep condescension* of his incarnation (cf. Phil. 2:7).

This humiliating incarnation is the first significant step of Christ's redemptive work. It led him to be subject to all human weaknesses, to be misunderstood, despised, rejected, to suffer, and eventually to die on the cross. On the cross he was completely forsaken by God. In this way Christ carried the curse of the law and exhausted it on behalf of his people. He thereby redeemed his people from the curse (3:13).⁹³ This particu-

lar redemption of the Jews brought about a universal consequence, namely the redemption of all people from sin, demonic forces and flesh, for the Jewish plight served as the representative sample of the universal human plight, as seen above. In fact, in his incarnation, suffering and death Christ fully identified himself with the Gentiles as well as with the Jews.

In the second part of his speech to Cephas (2:18-21), which corresponds to 3:23-4:7,⁹⁴ Paul speaks from the standpoint of the beneficiary of the redemptive work of Christ: 'For through the law I died to the law (*nomō*), that (*hina*) I might live to God (*theō*)' (2:19a; cf. Rom. 7:4). This statement is made against Cephas's falling back into the bondage of the law by his withdrawal from table fellowship with the Gentile Christians in Antioch (2:11ff.).

The first person singular 'I' is not used to refer to Paul himself alone, but primarily to represent the Jewish Christians in general. This means that what Paul is talking about here is not so much his own personal experience as something that is true of any Jewish believer.⁹⁵ The law in 2:19a as in 3:23-4:7 refers to a power of the old age, as the antithesis between 'law' and 'God' indicates. It is to this law that the Christians died, as they died to sin (Rom. 6:11) and died to the world (Gal. 6:14). This means their complete *separation*

90 Burton, *Galatians*, p. 218; cf. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater*, p. 196; Betz, *Galatians*, p. 207.

91 Burton, *Galatians*, p. 218; Cole, *Galatians*, pp. 115-16; cf. Fung, *Galatians*, p. 182.

92 Martyn (*Galatians*, p. 408) states: 'Christ's being sent by God was his being born under the Law (4:4), specifically the event of his birth under the Law's power to pronounce its universal curse (3:10).'

93 Cf. Cousar, *Galatians*, pp. 94-5.

94 See Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, p. 71.

95 Cf. Burton, *Galatians*, p. 132.

from the power of the law.⁹⁶ The consequence is that the law no longer has any claim on or control over them.

The death took place 'through the law'. How should we understand this? We should notice that the main clause of 2:19a is rephrased in 2:19b: 'I have been crucified with Christ.' Here we see the close link between the death to the law 'through the law' and the crucifixion of Christ. As seen above, the law played a role in the death of Christ. The curse of the law caused Christ to descend to this world in a human form and to die on the cross for his people. In this sense it can be said that Christ died 'through the law'.⁹⁷

By virtue of their participation in the death of Christ by faith, the believers also died 'through the law' (cf. Rom. 6:6; 7:4).⁹⁸ Thereby they have been freed from the condemnation of the law and its dominion. For Paul this release from the power of the law is an eschatological transfer from the old aeon to the new aeon (cf. 1:4; 6:14). It follows that the release is at the same time the release from other old powers such as sin, demonic forces and flesh.

This release opened up a new possibility for all the believers to 'live to God', as the *hina* clause expresses. Living to God is an eschatological reality (cf. Rom. 6:10-11). This new life to God has been customarily

understood as life in the service of God, taking the dative *theō* as a dative of advantage.⁹⁹ This sense may not be entirely excluded here. But I do not believe that it is what Paul really has in mind. It is to be noted that in 2:19a living to God is in direct contrast with dying to the law, an old power. This implies that the new life means life which is intimately related to the power of God and surrendered to his sovereign control.¹⁰⁰ To put it simply, it is life under the rule of God, the new Master. 2:20a describes this life as life lived and controlled by Christ dwelling in the believers, the Lord of the new era. In 5:25 the life is further characterized as living by the Spirit, the enabling power of God (cf. Rom. 8:10). This life by the Spirit 'shall reap eternal life' (Gal. 6:8b; cf. 5:23b).

Conclusion

For Paul, the law functions as an enslaving power, seen from the perspective of the history of salvation. The law, in addition to the promise, was given by God in order to produce or provoke transgressions (Gal. 3:19; cf. Rom. 5:20) by providing an operational base for sin to kindle man's sinful passions (Rom. 7:5ff.). In consequence, all people were imprisoned under the power of sin (Gal. 3:22). More particularly, all the transgressors were kept in jail under the law (3:23). 'Under the law' here

96 The dative *nomō* as *theō* is a dative of relation (cf. Rom. 6:10-11).

97 Cf. Burton, *Galatians*, p. 134.

98 Cf. Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 118; T. Zahn, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater* (KNT; Leipzig: Deichert, 1907), p. 113; Burton, *Galatians*, pp. 132-34.

99 E.g. Burton, *Galatians*, p. 134; Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, p. 103; Fung, *Galatians*, p. 123.

100 Ebeling, *The Truth of the Gospel*, p. 138; cf. Guthrie, *Galatians*, pp. 89-90.

means 'under the curse of the law' in view of the statements in 3:10, 13 and 4:4-5.

Paul compares this bondage of the law with being under a pedagogue (3:25), being under guardians and stewards (4:2), and being under the elemental spirits of the world (4:3, 9). The point of comparison here is lack of freedom, absence of self-determination, and subordination to foreign control. Further, Paul relates the existence under the law to subjection to the flesh in 5:16-18 which stands in opposition to the Spirit.

However, with the coming of Christ the slavery of the law was brought to an end (3:25). At his birth Christ took upon himself the curse of the law, and carried it during his whole life on earth and eventually exhausted it on the cross on behalf of his people (3:13; 4:4). By virtue of their participation in the death of Christ by faith, the believers died in relation to the enslaving power of the law (2:19). Thereby they were liberated from it (5:1, 13) and now live under the sovereign rule of God, the new Master (2:19; cf. 2:20; 5:25).

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ISBN 1-84227-133-4 / 229x145 / p/b / 184pp / £12.99



Paternoster Press, PO Box 300, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 0QS, UK