

GALATIANS 3:19-20: A CRUX INTERPRETUM FOR PAUL'S VIEW OF THE LAW*

DANIEL B. WALLACE

I. Introduction

1. Paul's View of the Law in Recent Discussions

H. J. Schoeps begins his chapter on "Paul's Teaching about the Law" in his highly acclaimed work, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*, with the remark that "the Pauline understanding of the law [is] the most intricate doctrinal issue in his theology."¹ It deserves this accolade, according to Peter Stuhlmacher, "not only because Paul's terminology is highly nuanced but also because the development of his teaching about the law is diversely accented."² This is putting it mildly! Paul's treatment of the law has sorely exercised the most competent of NT scholars,³ and has flaunted itself as something beyond the grasp of the rest of us who have been graced with less generous mental capacities. The problems and apparent contradictions in Paul's view of the law are legion.⁴ Such Pauline tensions have created over the years a plethora of diverse interpretations, so much so that "Paul has been evaluated as almost everything from antinomian through schizophrenic to Pharisee on this issue."⁵

Thanks are due to Drs. Buist M. Fanning, Harold W. Hoehner, Douglas Moo, Thomas R. Schreiner, and Moises Silva for examining a preliminary draft of this paper and making many helpful suggestions.

¹ H. J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961) 168.

² P. Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation, Law and Righteousness: Essays in Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 125.

³ F. F. Bruce's comment is representative: "To gain a clear understanding of Paul's attitude to the law is notoriously difficult, and the difficulty arises in some measure from the ambivalence in his thinking and language on this subject" ("Paul and the Law of Moses," *BJRL* 57 [1975] 260).

⁴ For a helpful and brief overview of these problems, cf. J. M. G. Barclay, "Paul and the Law: Observations on Some recent Debates," *Themelios* 12 (1986) 5, and J. A. Sanders, "Torah and Paul," in *God's Christ and His People: Studies in Honor of Nils Alstrup Dahl* (ed. J. Jervell and W. A. Meeks; Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977) 132-33.

⁵ J. Fischer, "Paul in His Jewish Context," *EvQ* 57 (1985) 211. Cf. also F. Prat, *The Theology of Saint Paul* (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1956) 1.182: "The opinions of St Paul concerning the Mosaic Law are, at first sight, contradictory. Sometimes he extols it to the skies, at other times he seems to bring it down below the natural law." Somewhat cynically, and in a

Most recently, five monographs have been produced which threaten to accost even the minimal stable core of scholarly consensus over Paul's understanding of the law. The volume which broke "the mould into which descriptions of Paul's work and thought have regularly been poured for many decades"⁶ is the tome by E. P. Sanders entitled *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.⁷ The basic thesis of Sanders' volume is that the picture of first century Judaism that NT scholars have drawn from the Pauline homologoumena is historically false: in Sanders' view, the Judaism of Paul's day was not one of legalistic works-righteousness.⁸ J. D. G. Dunn, who has adopted Sanders' viewpoint, suggests that "to a remarkable and indeed alarming degree, throughout this century the standard depiction of the Judaism which Paul rejected has been the reflex of Lutheran hermeneutic."⁹ Space does not permit a detailed discussion of Sanders' study, which in any event is ancillary to our present purposes. But suffice it to say here that Sanders' work has provided a major impetus to deflect NT scholarship from other long-standing pursuits in favor of once again pondering the thought and theology of the apostle to the Gentiles.

Closely on the heels of Sanders' seminal study was Hans Hubner's *Das Gesetz bei Paulus: Ein Beitrag zum Werden der paulinischen Theologie*,¹⁰ which appeared one year after *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* and is now clothed in English dress.¹¹ Hubner's main argument is that there is development in Paul's thinking over the law. Hubner concentrates on Galatians and Romans, attempting to demonstrate not just development, but disagreement. That is, in Romans Paul changes his view of the law which he previously held in Galatians: ". . . between the time when Galatians was written and the writing of Romans, there lies a far from trivial process of reflection and development in Paul the theologian."¹²

slightly different connection, one writer opined that "usually one learns more about the theological stance of the writers of these books than about the real Paul" (S. Grayzel, "Paul: Jew and Christian," *Gratz College Annual of Jewish Studies* 3 [1974] 49).

⁶ J. D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," *BJRL* 65 (1983) 97.

⁷ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 33-59.

⁹ Dunn, "New Perspective," 98-99. Though Sanders' basic thesis is gaining many adherents, there are more than a few dissidents, most notably R. H. Gundry ("Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul," *Bib* 66 [1985] 1-38), K. T. Cooper ("Paul and Rabbinic Theology: A Review Article," *WTJ* 44 [1982] 123-39), D. H. King ("Paul and the Tannaim: A Study in Galatians," *WTJ* 45 [1983] 340-70, esp. 340 n. 1), T. R. Schreiner ("Paul and Perfect. Obedience to the Law: An Evaluation of the View of E. P. Sanders," *WTJ* 47 [1985] 245-78), and S. Westerholm ("Torah, Nomos, and Law: A Question of 'Meaning,'" *SR* 15 [1986] 327-36). On the other side of the ledger, besides Dunn, are T. F. Best ("The Apostle Paul and E. P. Sanders: The Significance of Paul and Palestinian Judaism," *RestQ* 25 [1982] 65-74) and, though more reservedly, J. M. G. Barclay ("Paul and the Law," 5-15).

¹⁰ Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978.

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

¹² *Ibid.*, 54. All references are to the English translation.

In 1983 Heikki Raisanen put forth his views in *Paul and the Law*.¹³ J. M. G. Barclay considers this study to be "the fullest and most provocative treatment of the subject" of Paul's view of the law.¹⁴ (I would concur with Barclay, for not only does Raisanen ask all the right questions, but he has the most complete bibliography on the topic that I have yet to come across [28 pages of small print].) Barclay adds that "this is a hefty book, interacting in great detail with a vast range of scholarly works, but its basic thesis can be summed up very simply: Paul's discussion of the law is wholly inconsistent and self-contradictory."¹⁵ The difference between Hubner and Raisanen, put simply, is that the former sees Pauline contradiction (through development) between Galatians and Romans while the latter sees Pauline contradiction within each of these two *Hauptbriefe*.

In the same year, E. P. Sanders published a sequel to his *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* which he labeled *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*.¹⁶ This second book, in a sense, reenters the fray which Sanders started in the first place. That is, in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* Sanders spends most of his time on Judaism; in the sequel he spends most of his time on Paul and his view of the law—thus contributing to the specific discussion for which his first volume was a general catalyst.

Finally, brief mention should be made of Francis Watson's recent contribution, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach*.¹⁷ Watson's argument, as the title implies, is that the bottom-line reason for Paul's critique of the law is sociological (i.e., related to the Gentile mission on a pragmatic level) rather than theological (i.e., related to the essence of the gospel). Sanders' fingerprints are easily detected in this approach.

2. *The Place of Gal 3:19-20 in the Current Debate*

In these recent studies there are, to be sure, many focal points in the Pauline corpus, though the heaviest concentration is in Romans and Galatians. This is quite natural: Paul uses *νόμος* more in Romans and Galatians (approximately 74 and 32 times respectively, depending on textual variants) than in all the rest of his letters (14 times, including the "deutero-Pauline" epistles).¹⁸ One such focal point is Gal 3:19-20. In Hubner's de-

¹³ Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr. The edition used for this paper is that of Fortress Press (Philadelphia, 1986).

¹⁴ Barclay, "Paul and the Law," 9.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983.

¹⁷ Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. Though originally his D.Phil. thesis at Oxford in 1984, this study nevertheless builds significantly on both volumes by Sanders.

¹⁸ Eight of these are in 1 Corinthians; six are scattered among Ephesians (1), Philippians (3), and 1 Timothy (2) (Hebrews has it 14 times). Since the major concentration of the use of the term is to be found in the Pauline *Hauptbriefe*, this is one area of investigation in which conservatives and liberals can engage in profitable dialogue without letting their presuppositions regarding authenticity intrude too much. Nevertheless, three points should be added

developmental hypothesis, this is a significant crux interpretum; in fact, it may not be saying too much to state that if Hubner's exegesis of this text is wrong, a major pillar for his whole thesis collapses.¹⁹ Raisanen, too, finds in Gal 3:19-20 a crux for his views. He reacts against Hubner's exegesis,²⁰ yet finds *within* this text internal contradictions.²¹ Moreover, "when it comes to the origin and purpose of the law, Galatians 3:19 is at variance with other Pauline passages."²² For Sanders, Gal 3:19ff. is the central passage to be considered with reference to Paul's statements about the *purpose* of the law.²³ In Sanders' view, Paul is internally coherent, though not systematic. He thus disagrees with both Hubner and Raisanen.²⁴

Others, too, have pointed out the central place of Gal 3:19-20 in Paul's reflections on the law. In his catalogue of Pauline tensions over the law, Barclay concludes, "And most fundamentally of all, if the law is the holy law of God (Rom 7:10-14; 9:4) how could Paul regard it as responsible for sin, curse and death (Rom. 7:5; 2 Cor. 3:6-9; Gal. 3:10-13), and how could he play down its significance because it was 'ordained by angels through an intermediary' (Gal. 3:19)?"²⁵ Cranfield points out that "Gal. 3.15-25 . . . -- perhaps more than any other single passage—has encouraged readers of St. Paul to assume that he believed that the law is done away by Christ." And

here: (1) The comments on the law in Eph 2:15 and in 1 Tim 1:9 do make significant contributions to the overall discussion; without entering into debates over authenticity, a reasonable approach seems to be to consider these epistles to be Pauline at least in their basic thought. (2) Though Hebrews is almost universally considered to be not Pauline (except on a popular level in some circles), most would agree that the author was still very much of the Pauline school. And the fact that νόμος occurs as much here (14 times) as in all of the corpus Paulinum outside of Romans and Galatians may suggest something as to its *raison d'être* is it not possible that the author is attempting a refinement of Paul's statements about the law (especially with regard to the abrogation of its cultic aspect by the death of Christ)? Though it is obvious that the author's thoughts on the law are more neatly articulated than are Paul's, what seems to escape most is that this might be an intentional vindication of Pauline Christianity. As such, the development of thought between Romans-Galatians and Hebrews is a topic worth pursuing—especially when it is viewed as an archetype for the patristic (and even Reformation) attempts at dogmatic/systematic theology. (3) Finally, in light of the heavy concentration of νόμος in the Pauline homologoumena (including 1 Corinthians and Philipians), it is all the more remarkable that no broad consensus exists for Paul's view of the law.

¹⁹ His primary exegesis of this text is on pp. 25-30 of *Law in Paul's Thought*, though he refers to the passage another twenty times. On p. 30 he concludes his argument as follows: "Thus Paul's entire argument in Gal 3 can be shown to be without inner contradictions by making use of that threefold distinction: God's intention, the immanent or intrinsic intention of the Law and the intention of the Law-givers. The basis for this interpretation of course remains *a fortiori* our exposition of 3:19ff."

²⁰ Raisanen's primary exegesis of the passage is found on pp. 128-33 of *Paul and the Law*.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 132.

²² Barclay, "Paul and the Law," 9.

²³ Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, 65-70.

²⁴ We will not discuss Watson here because in Watson's essay Gal 3:19ff. receives only a passing note (pp. 70-71)—a point which nevertheless seems a bit curious since in this text Paul is bringing to bear as many *theological* (not just sociological) arguments as he can muster.

²⁵ Barclay, "Paul and the Law," 5.

he adds that "it is verses 19 and 20 which contain what G. S. Duncan has called Paul's 'depreciatory account of the Law'."²⁶ Finally Otfried Hofius, in commenting on the significance of the question with which Paul begins v. 19 (τί οὖν ὁ νόμος), states that "diese Frage stellte sich grundsätzlich; sie wollte and musste auch grundsätzlich beantwortet sein."²⁷

In brief, Gal 3:19-20 is a *crux interpretum* for the origination and purpose of the law in Paul's thought. It is central to Hubner's thesis of disjunctive development and to Raisanen's view of self-contradiction; it provides a major hurdle to Cranfield's idea of the law's continuing validity as well as, to some degree, Sanders' thesis of covenantal nomism. Yet, there is a wide diversity of opinion about the text. In fact, v. 20 alone has been the victim of literally hundreds of different interpretations—some say as high as 430²⁸—rendering it arguably the most diversely interpreted verse in the NT.²⁹

Our purpose in this paper, therefore, is to interpret Gal 3:19-20 in light of the current debate over Paul's view of the law. The critical role this text plays in Paul's thought (and, hence, in recent discussions) has already been established; we believe that our topic is, therefore, not too narrowly conceived. Yet, when one considers the vast plethora of views on v. 20 in particular, he might consider our topic to be too broad for such a short paper! Indeed, I have yet to arrive at a fully satisfactory view of v. 20 (especially 20b). Nevertheless, v. 19 functions as very much of a "quality control" over v. 20 (hence, at least a negative assessment of several currently popular treatments of v. 20 will be ventured). It is our prime objective, therefore, to arrive at an understanding of v. 19 through detailed exegesis and, secondly, to offer a critique of alternate approaches in light of our reconstruction of the apostle's meaning.

II. Gal 3:19-20 in Context

The context into which Gal 3:19-20 falls is pretty clear with respect to its parameters and overall thrust. Callan suggests:

²⁶ C. E. B. Cranfield, "St. Paul and the Law," *SJT* 17 (1964) 60.

²⁷ O. Hofius, "Das Gesetz des Mose and das Gesetz Christi," *ZTK* 80 (1983) 264.

²⁸ The suggestion of 430 apparently was first mentioned by A. Oepke, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater* (3d ed.; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1973), ad loc.. More than likely this is slightly hyperbolic language (reflecting a facetiously rabbinic-like treatment in light of v. 17). Yet, most commentators recognize the existence of at least 250-300 different interpretations on the text, some even as high as 400 (see the note in H. D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches of Galatia* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979] 171 n. 78). For an almost exhaustive treatment of these interpretations, see T. D. Callan, Jr., "The Law and the Mediator: Ga 3:19b-20" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1976). More accessible, though considerably less recent, is H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1873) 178-96.

²⁹ Callan, "The Law and the Mediator," 3.

The larger section of which Ga 3:19b-20 is a part is 3:1-4:7. Paul's intention in this section is fairly clear. In 3:1-18 he opposes his readers' apparent inclination to take the Jewish law upon themselves by arguing that justification comes through faith, not through the law. Then, in 3:19-4:7 he supports his argument that justification is not the purpose of the law by explaining what its purpose was.

Paul's argument in 3:1-18 falls into three sections:

1) in v 1-5 he appeals to the experience of his readers, recalling to their minds that the spirit came to them through faith rather than through works of the law;

2) in v 6-14 Paul appeals to the figure of Abraham, arguing that he was justified by faith and that those who are of faith are his sons and the heirs of the promise made to him, but that the law brings only a curse;

3) and in v 15-18 Paul meets two possible objections to what he has just said, arguing first that the law is not the fulfillment of the promise, since the promise is made to the one seed, Christ, and only through him to others (v 16), and second, that the law does not invalidate the promise (v 17-18).³⁰

This is a fairly representative statement.³¹ The basic gist of chap. 3, up to vv. 19ff., is that (1) the Spirit was received by faith, not by works of the law (3:1-5); (2) the example of Abraham illustrates that one is justified by faith, not by works of the law (3:6-14); (3) the law, which came 430 years after God's covenant with Abraham, cannot invalidate the promise (3:15-18). The question of v. 19 (τί οὖν ὁ νόμος;) is especially to be seen as a response to the problem created by Paul's argument in vv. 15-18. Again, there is fairly universal agreement on this point.³²

III. Exegesis of Gal 3:19-20

We begin our exegesis of Gal 3:19-20 with two assumptions: (1) as was just mentioned, the question Paul is answering in v. 19 is somehow in response to the problem he "created" for the law's *raison d'etre* in at least and

³⁰ Ibid., 1.

³¹ C. H. Cosgrove argues that "though the rhetoric of Galatians is rough, the logic is clear and compelling" ("The Mosaic Law Preaches Faith: A Study in Galatians 3," *WTJ* 41 [1978] 147). Cf. his outline of the relevant sections in Galatians (p. 148). For similar constructs, cf. W. E. Hull, "A Teaching Outline of Galatians," *RevExp* 55 (1973) 430; P. R. Jones, "Exegesis of Galatians 3 and 4," *RevExp* 55 (1973) 472-80; Betz, *Galatians*, 128-60.

³² R. B. Hays' statement is representative: "The promises antedated the Law; consequently, the Law cannot impose ex post facto conditions or limitations on the fulfillment of the promises" (*The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* [SBLDS 56; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983] 225). So also is H. C. Schenck's view that in vv. 15-18 Paul argues that the law is subordinate to the promise in time and fulfillment ("The Limitation of the Law as Moral Power in Paul and Selected Jewish Writings" [Th.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1963] 125-35). What is debatable here is not that for Paul justification comes by faith but whether the law is abrogated by the death of Christ (so D. E. H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St. Paul* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964] 83-86; differently, Cranfield, "St. Paul and the Law," 54-65, and Cosgrove, "The Mosaic Law Preaches Faith," 146-64).

especially vv. 15-18; (2) Galatians was written *before* Romans.³³ Virtually every phrase in these two verses has fairly self-contained exegetical problems. Consequently, we propose to handle the text phrase by phrase—in spite of the superficial affinity that such an approach will have with atomistic exegesis.

1. Τί οὖν ὁ νόμος;

Two basic questions confront us here: (1) is τί to be taken pronominally ("what then [is] the law?") or adverbially ("why then the law?" or perhaps "why then [was] the law [given]?");³⁴ and (2) why does Paul feel constrained to bring up this question at this juncture?

Smyth points out that in interrogative questions, "τίς asks a question concerning the class, τί concerning the nature of a thing."³⁵ Thus, if τί is taken pronominally, the idea would be "what is the nature [or essence] of the law?" Perhaps "essence" can be expanded to "significance,"³⁶ though this may be begging the question some. Contextually, it seems doubtful that Paul is asking so general a question as, "What is the nature of the law?" His argument, *prima facie*, seems much tighter than that.

Taken adverbially, Paul would be inquiring as to the purpose of the law. Some have objected on grammatical grounds ("τί is not for διὰ τί"),³⁷ but such an objection is unwarranted in that τί without an accompanying preposition often bears an adverbial nuance.³⁸ The stylistic objection ap-

³³ Again, there is virtually universal agreement on this point—in spite of whether one adopts the north Galatian hypothesis or the south Galatian hypothesis.

³⁴ The addition of "given" is perhaps permissible. Cf. John 7:39 (οὐπω γὰρ ἦν πνεῦμα, "for the Spirit was not yet [given]") and Acts 19:2 (οὐδ' εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἔστιν ἠκούσαμεν, "we have not heard whether the Holy Spirit was [given]"). Three factors, however, render the addition of "given" (or "added") in Gal 3:19 improbable: (1) even if we grant that "given" is implied in John 7:39 and Acts 19:2, both are dealing with the Spirit, not the law, perhaps reflecting an idiomatic expression; (2) in both John 7:39 and Acts 19:2, the copula is present (not so in Gal 3:19); (3) the implied "given" in the John and Acts texts is not an exegetical certainty (note the variant δεδομένον in John 7:39 [which is supported by B et al.] and a different translation/interpretation of Acts 19:2 by D. B. Wallace, "The Relation of Adjective to Noun in Anarthrous Constructions in the New Testament," *NovT* 26 [1984] 157). If then, is to be adverbially nuanced, it seems best to render the question elliptically (as, in any case, Paul has done) so as to retain the original rhetorical effect: "why then the law?"

³⁵ H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (rev. G. Messing; Cambridge: Harvard, 1956) 310 (§1265). So also B. L. Gildersleeve, *Syntax of Classical Greek from Homer to Demosthenes* (New York: American, 1900) 59 (§130); A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (4th ed.; Nashville: Broadman, 1934) 736.

³⁶ So E. D. Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921) 187.

³⁷ C. J. Ellicott, *A Commentary, Critical and Grammatical on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1860) 80; identically, J. Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1869) 262.

³⁸ In the Pauline corpus, cf. Rom 3:7; 14:10; 1 Cor 4:7; 10:30; Gal 5:11; Col 2:20. For other examples, cf. BAGD, 819 (§3.a).

pears stronger ("Paul frequently uses $\tau\acute{\iota}$ adverbially . . . , yet never elsewhere in the phrase $\tau\acute{\iota}$ οὖν"),³⁹ but even here the case is weakened by the fact that Paul rarely, if ever, uses $\tau\acute{\iota}$ οὖν in the sense of "what then is the essence." Hence, this argument cuts both ways.⁴¹

In sum, there are no real grammatical or stylistic arguments against an adverbial $\tau\acute{\iota}$ and the context is particularly in favor of it. Hence, the question should be read, "Why then the law?"⁴² In this opening query, Paul is therefore raising the issue of the law's purpose.

But why does Paul raise this question here? It is evident that, in his diatribe toward the Judaizers, he must somehow sense that he has argued effectively against the law's *raison d'être*. Now νόμος did not explicitly enter the picture until v. 10 and Paul's argument clearly reached a peak in vv. 15-18: the law, which came after the promise, cannot alter the promise. And if believers are justified by faith—as Abraham was—then they share in the promise (vv. 16, 29). The argument thus far seems to render the Mosaic law as having no soteriological value. Indeed, in the back of Paul's mind might be the retort, "Well, if obedience to the law is unnecessary for salvation, why then did God give it?"

The answer which Paul gives to this question has tremendous ramifications. Before we consider it we would do well to note two things: (1) Paul is here restricting his discussion to the purpose of the law in relation to soteriology;⁴³ (2) Paul's argument—here, as well as in the rest of Galatians—though obviously emotionally charged is nevertheless quite logically structured.⁴⁴ In other words, it is begging the question to think that Paul

³⁹ Burton, *Galatians*, 187.

⁴⁰ Burton (*ibid.*) lists several places where the idea of $\tau\acute{\iota}$ οὖν is "what then" (Rom 3:1; 4:1; 6:1, 15), but admits that in none of these is the thought "what then is the essence" (or, in his words, "what signifies") found. His one Pauline passage for that idiom is 1 Cor 3:5 ($\tau\acute{\iota}$ οὖν ἔστιν Ἐπολλῶς), but several important MSS here read $\tau\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ (P^{46vid} κ^2 C D F G Byz syr).

⁴¹ Yet Paul does use $\tau\acute{\iota}$ καί in the sense of "why indeed" (1 Cor 15:29b, 30), approximating the idiom of $\tau\acute{\iota}$ οὖν as "why then."

⁴² Similarly, F. Prat, *The Theology of Saint Paul* (1.183 n. 1). For our rejection of the translation "why then [was] the law [given/added]?" see n. 34 above.

⁴³ As opposed to its theocratic purposes, in particular. Calvin aptly remarks that "the law has manifold uses, but Paul [here] confines himself to that which bears on his present subject" (*Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948] 99). For a brief overview of the purposes of the law see J. D. Pentecost, "The Purpose of the Law," *BSac* 128 (1971) 227-33.

⁴⁴ Though not all will agree with Betz's reconstruction of Galatians along Greek rhetorical lines (cf. especially *Galatians*, 14-25, and Betz's essay, "The Literary Composition and Function of Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *NTS* 21 [1975] 353-79), the very fact that he can see such an intricately structured argument in Galatians—even in 3:19-20—implies that the apostle's emotional state did not have a significant bearing on the essence of his argument (though it certainly did on his style!). More recently, J. Hall ("Paul, the Lawyer, on Law," *Journal of Law and Religion* 3 [1986] 353), a professor of law, has argued that "It was in his letter to the Galatians that Paul was the lawyer par excellence, refuting and attacking his adversaries and, in his affirmative case, making use of analogy, precedents, and history. . . . He knew how to win his case; he won it!"

let his emotions get the better of him here, causing him to say what in a calmer moment he would not affirm.⁴⁵

2. τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη

Each term here deserves some attention; we will consider them chiastically (which befits most English translations). But first the textual problems need to be addressed. Most mss have τῶν παραβάσεων after νόμος; D*, however, has παραδόσεων ("traditions, commandments").⁴⁶ The two-letter difference probably points to a scribal blunder (for D*'s reading makes little sense, whether taken with νόμος or χάριν). A more serious contender is τῶν πράξεων ("of deeds") instead of τῶν παραβάσεων found in P⁴⁶ F G it^{dfg} Ir^{lat} Ambst Spec. In all but P⁴⁶ (too early for punctuation) the witnesses regard πράξεων as going with νόμος (thus, "why then the law of deeds?"). Such an expression is un-Pauline and superfluous; it was most certainly added by some early "Western" scribe(s) to soften the blow of Paul's statement.⁴⁷

Several mss, again of the "Western" strand, have ἐτέθη ("was established") in place of προσετέθη (D* F G it^{dfg} Ir^{lat} Ambst Spec). As well, many of these same witnesses (as we have seen) replace παραβάσεων with πράξεων. The overall thrust of v. 19 then could well be a very positive assessment of the law.⁴⁸

The lack of a verb in P46 and the verb of the Western uncials, "was established," makes interpretation of the law as an insignificant, parenthetical after-thought less likely, if not impossible. Deletion of the verb "was added" also makes this passage more in harmony with 3:15, which states, "no one annuls even a man's will, or adds to it."⁴⁹

Obviously, if the "Western" reading here were adopted, virtually all of the exegetical work done on this text would have to be scrapped—or at least significantly retooled. But there are compelling reasons for rejecting this reading. Externally, it is provincial and relatively late.⁵⁰ Internally, (a)

⁴⁵ As Hubner (*Law in Paul's Thought*, 136-37), Cranfield ("St. Paul and the Law," 62), and Raisanen (*Paul and the Law*, 132-33) seem to assume.

⁴⁶ BAGD, 615.

⁴⁷ H. Eshbaugh ("Theological Variants in the Western Text of the Pauline Corpus" [Ph.D. dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 1975]) points out that (1) although the "Western" text is generally "anti-Judaic," it is not so in the Pauline corpus (pp. 169-70) and (2) in Gal 3:19 "the western shows that the purpose of the law is to bring about good deeds" (p. 172; Eshbaugh is apparently reading πράξεων with χάριν [in all but P⁴⁶ which omits χάριν] rather than with νόμος).

⁴⁸ Again, see Eshbaugh ("Theological Variants," 171-72), and his article, "Textual Variants and Theology: A Study of the Galatians Text of Papyrus 46," *JSNT* 3 (1979) 62-63, 68.

⁴⁹ Eshbaugh, "Papyrus 46," 63.

⁵⁰ Although P⁴⁶ is early, its overall reading (νόμος τῶν πράξεων [omitting χάριν (προσ)ετέθη]) is singular (hence, not shared by the "Western" Mss). Perhaps the shared

there seems to be a much higher transcriptional probability that a scribe would try to smooth over Paul's harsh saying here about the law than vice versa; (b) intrinsically, (i) Paul has already argued that the law came after the promise (vv. 15-18), indicating, more than likely, its temporary nature (in any case, Paul in v. 19 is building on his argument of vv. 15-18 rather than advancing a new argument); (ii) the verb "was added" in v. 19 (προσέτεθη) is different from the verb in v. 15 (ἐπιδιατάσσεται); virtually all exegetes recognize this as an intentional linguistic shift on Paul's part in order not to contradict his statement in v. 15 (canceling out Eshbaugh's argument of disharmony);⁵¹ (iii) the temper of 3:1-4:7 is very much against a decidedly positive statement about the Torah's role in *Heilsgeschichte*. We must conclude, therefore, that the reading of UBSGNT³ (=NA²⁶) viz., τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσέτεθη, is the original.

(1) προσέτεθη. Paul's comment that the law "was added" "is not in contradiction with vv. 15ff., because the law in the apostle's thought forms no part of the covenant, is a thing distinct from it in no way modifying its provisions."⁵² The problem, of course, is that Paul does not tell us to what the law was added. *Prima facie*, it would seem to be to the promise, or perhaps, in a broader context, to God's dealings with Israel. Whatever Paul has in mind, it is self-evident that he does not wish to imply that the law placed any kind of restriction on the promise, or that it was amended to it so as to alter the initial covenant.⁵³ Nevertheless, his choice of words is peculiar, and may be due to one of at least two reasons: (a) he has deliberately chosen a term which sounds like a contradiction with the statement in v. 15 (for even though the verbs are different, προστίθημι can nevertheless refer to a legal amendment),⁵⁴ primarily for a rhetorical effect;⁵⁵ or (b) he had not thought through his lexical options, knowing that, nevertheless, he wanted to use a different (though not decidedly weaker) term from the one he employed in v. 15. If this latter possibility is correct, then

reading of πράξεων is coincidental; as H. Schlier remarked, the scribe of P⁴⁶ may have an anti-Marcionite axe to grind (*Der Brief an die Galater* [MeyerK; 12th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951] 151). Although the lateness/"localness" of this reading would not affect thoroughgoing eclecticists such as G. D. Kilpatrick and J. K. Elliott, most textual critics today would take the history of transmission more seriously (cf. G. D. Fee, "Rigorous or Reasoned Eclecticism—Which?" in *Studies in New Testament Language and Text: Essays in Honour of George D. Kilpatrick on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* [ed. J. K. Elliott; Leiden: Brill, 1976] 174-97).

⁵¹ Eshbaugh, "Papyrus 46," 63.

⁵² Burton, *Galatians*, 188.

⁵³ By way of contrast, G. Delling renders ἐπιδιατάσσεται of v. 15 as "to make further decrees supplementary to those already given" (*TDNT* 8.35).

⁵⁴ C. Maurer, *TDNT* 8.167-68; cf. also *Ep. Arist.* 26; *Jos. Ant.* 1.17; Polybius 21.42.27.

⁵⁵ In so doing, Paul would be employing "reverse psychology"—i.e., after he has established his case that no amendment can be added to a (unilateral) covenant—a point with which his audience would be compelled to agree, he then plays "devil's advocate," setting the Galatians up to adopt the implications of his argument of vv. 15-18 which he lays out in vv. 19-20.

on this score Paul's thought *did* develop between the writing of Galatians and Romans. This is so because in Rom 5:20 Paul refers to the law as "slipping in, coming in as a side issue" (παρεισῆλθεν).⁵⁶ Such development, however, cannot harmonize with Hubner's thesis (viz., that Paul's estimate of the law improves between Galatians and Romans), for the term used in Rom 5.20 is decidedly weaker (i.e., it makes a less flattering pronouncement) than the one used either in Gal 3:15 or 3:19.⁵⁷

Two other comments about προσετέθη are in order here. (a) The passive voice implies an agent, but whom? Hubner believes the answer is given to us in the last clause of v. 19: διαταγείς δι' ἀγγέλων.⁵⁸ Central to his view is the idea at least that these angelic beings acted against God's will—in fact, "the angels are now to be understood as demonic beings."⁵⁹ Of course, the crux of his argument is in the phrase διαταγείς δι' ἀγγέλων rather than προσετέθη. Nevertheless, even before we meet the angels in this verse explicitly, there are four objections to Hubner's thesis: (i) If Paul had meant to argue that angels were ultimately responsible for giving the law, why do they show up in a syntactically subordinate construction? That is to say, would we not expect them to be mentioned with the main verb (e.g., προσετέθη δι' [or, better, ὑπ'] ἀγγέλων)? It is hard to escape the conclusion that just as διαταγείς is subordinate to προσετέθη, so are the angels subordinate to the implied agent of the main verb. (ii) Paul may well have wished to leave God's name out of the picture because to do otherwise would detract from his argument as to the law's inferiority.⁶⁰ (iii) In the following clause another passive verb (ἐπήγγελται)⁶¹ is used, which must imply God as the agent. (iv) Finally, the intervening clause (ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθη τὸ σπέρμα ᾧ ἐπήγγελται) is, like διαταγείς, grammatically subordinate to the main verb and, hence, to its implied subject. By transforming the grammar, the subject of προσετέθη and of ἐπήγγελται are seen to be the same. Only the explicit mention of intermediate agents (δι' ἀγγέλων) in 19c is able to break this chain. For these reasons we cannot fail to see God as the one who "adds the law" in v. 19.

⁵⁶ BAGD, 624.

⁵⁷ Further, the fact that παρεισέρχομαι is a much rarer term than προστίθημι seems to support the second option as to Paul's choice of words. (There is, however, also the possibility that Paul did not use παρεισέρχομαι in v. 19 because of his earlier use of the cognate word, τταρτααίρος ["smuggled in" (BAGD, 624) in 2:4], to describe the Judaizers. He may have wished to refrain from such an implicit parallel which in his mind would speak quite pejoratively of the law!)

⁵⁸ *Law in Paul's Thought*, 26-27, 82-83, and passim.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Paul does seem to be fond of what we might call the "theological passive" elsewhere (cf., e.g., 1 Cor 12:13); for other NT writers, see M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples* (Rome: Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963) 76 (§236).

⁶¹ So N. Turner in J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek. Vol. III: Syntax* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963) 58; BAGD, 281.

(b) The very statement that the law "was added" *may* have run counter to typical Jewish thought current in Paul's day. Several rabbinic sources indicate that *Abraham* knew and kept the law.⁶² And some Targumim suggest that the law was kept even by Adam.⁶³ Nevertheless, since the traditions in the Targumim are notoriously difficult to date,⁶⁴ and the rabbinic data seem to be somewhat defensive over Abraham's knowledge of Torah,⁶⁵ it is perhaps better to grant that Paul's statement—harking back to v. 17—was a point of relative agreement.

(2) *χάριν*. Paul introduces the reason for the law's existence with *χάριν*, an improper preposition which can indicate either the goal or the reason.⁶⁶ That is, Paul may be viewing the law's relation to transgressions (*τῶν παραβάσεων*) prospectively ("for the purpose of transgressions") or retrospectively ("because of transgressions"). The ultimate decision cannot, therefore, be based on grammar, but on usage in this context. For that, we must turn to "the transgressions."

(3) *τῶν παραβάσεων*. Paul's statement that the law was added *τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν* is reminiscent of Rom 4:15—"where there is no law, neither is there transgression." Although Hubner's argument that we must not interpret Galatians in light of Romans I find in general to be valid (the Galatians certainly did not have that luxury), this parallel seems to be an exception: Paul in Rom 4:15 is defining *παραβάσις*. He does this so "matter-of-factly" that the statement looks very much like a rather vanilla dictionary entry with which no one could quarrel. Indeed, both Pauline usage and the meaning of *παραβάσις* in Koine Greek in general confirm the idea of "a violation of a known law"⁶⁷ Hence, primarily for the reason that a "transgression" against a known law (whether written or oral; cf. Rom 5:14) could not occur until that law came into existence, we are compelled to recognize *χάριν* prospectively: "for the purpose of transgressions."⁶⁸ A sec-

⁶² See references in Str-B 3.204-6.

⁶³ Frg. Tg. Gen 2:15; Gen 3:24. Cf. also F. Pereira, "The Galatian Controversy in the Light of the Targums," *Indian Journal of Theology* 20 (1971) 18-19.

⁶⁴ See the discussion in A. D. York, "The Dating of Targumic Literature," *JSJ* 5 (1974) 49-62; R. Le Deaut, "The Current State of Targumic Studies," *BTB* 4 (1974) 22-24; M. McNamara, *Palestinian Judaism and the New Testament* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1983) 211-17.

⁶⁵ Cf., e.g. *Mek. Exod.* 20,18 (78b); *Gen. Rabb.* 44 (27d); see also Betz's discussion (*Galatians*, 158).

⁶⁶ BAGD, 877. The second sense, though rarer, does occur (cf. Luke 7:47; 1 John 3:12).

⁶⁷ BAGD, 611-12; J. Schneider, *TDNT* 5.739-40.

⁶⁸ This is the overwhelming consensus of the commentators. But remarkably, there are still one or two who view *χάριν* causally, ignoring in our judgment the force of *παραβάσεων*: P. Crowley ("Justification by Faith in St Paul," *Ser* 18 [1966] 97-111), who confuses "sin" with "transgression": "the Law was added because of sin (Gal. 3,19)" (p. 105); M. C. Tenney (*Galatians: The Charter of Christian Liberty* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950] 126), and, most credibly, D. J. Lull ("The Law was our Pedagogue": A Study in Galatians 3:10-25," *JBL* 105 [1986] 482-85). Lull's Achilles' heel is his statement that Rom 5:20 could "lend support to the view that Gal 3:19 means that the Mosaic Law was given to deal with 'the transgressions which

and reason is often adduced to show this, viz., Paul's statements in Rom 5:13, 20; 7:7ff.; 8:3, which demonstrate that the law not only identified sin as sin, but even became a weapon to promote sin.⁶⁹ I cannot adopt this second argument in its entirety, however, for it implies that Paul's sometimes enigmatic statements in Galatians would be clearly understood by his audience in the light of another (and later!) epistle which they did not possess. It is far easier to posit development between Galatians and Romans as regards Paul's thinking and articulation on the issue at hand. In this, I agree with Hubner.⁷⁰ After all, it does seem methodologically improper to assume, on the one hand, that Paul could not have refined his views and, on the other hand, that the later statements (in Romans) can be conveniently poured, in all their clarity and without regard to date or audience, into the more embryonic statements of an earlier epistle. Those who take such an approach would be on surer ground if Romans had been written first.⁷¹

In broad principle, then, I agree with Hubner. But in practice, I believe his view backfires right here. Even if we take for granted the *almost* universal agreement that *χάρις* in v. 19 is prospective, the *real* debate is whether Paul is thinking of the law's function of *identifying* sin as transgression or whether he views the law as *provoking* sin. That many, if not most, commentators take the second option is hardly surprising.⁷² After all, with the clear statements in Romans at hand to the same effect,⁷³ it is difficult to resist the temptation of seeing provocation in Gal 3:19 as well. What is surprising, however, is that Hubner belongs to this camp: "the purpose of the Law is thus to provoke sinful deeds!"⁷⁴ How is Hubner able to read provocation into the rather enigmatic *τῶν παραβάσεων χάρις* of v. 19 without glancing at Romans? He seems to advance two arguments: (a) He does look to Romans, but focuses on a verse which does not speak of provocation, only identification ("the theologoumenon expressed in Romans 3.20, 'knowledge of sin occurs because of the Law, *ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας*; . . .' is not to be found

had occurred before this Law existed' " (p. 484), for it flounders at the feet of Paul's clear statement in Rom 4:15—viz., there can be no transgression before the law existed.

⁶⁹ So Schneider (TDNT 5.740): "The words *τῶν παραβάσεων χάρις* are a crisp formulation of what he says elsewhere ... about the Law and transgression."

⁷⁰ Where I think Hubner has overstated his case is in thinking that Paul's argument in Romans indicates a disjunctive development.

⁷¹ I am not here suggesting that we *must a priori* see theological development in Paul; nor again—and it needs to be stressed—development to the extent and in the direction in which Hubner takes it. Moreover, we would be on shaky ground to make *too* much of Pauline development for as F. F. Bruce points out, after discussing the date of Galatians, "Even on this early dating, Paul has been a Christian for at least fifteen years, and the main outlines of his understanding of the gospel would have been as well defined by then as ever they were likely to be" ("Galatian Problems: 4. The Date of the Epistle," *BJRL* 54 [1972] 267).

⁷² Cf., e.g., F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) 175; Betz, *Galatians*, 165.

⁷³ Rom 5:13, 20; 7:7ff.; 8:3.

⁷⁴ Hubner, *Law in Paul's Thought*, 26.

here!"). He then *assumes* that Gal 3:19 must be rendering a stronger verdict.⁷⁵ In other words, since Hubner's presupposition is that Paul tones down in Romans the negative assessment of the law he had made in Galatians, it would be damaging to Hubner's thesis to find Paul in Romans making a more negative assessment of the law than he did in Galatians. If he can find a fairly bland statement in Romans (e.g., 3:20), then he can argue—and does—that Gal 3:19 is far more damaging. (b) To be sure, Hubner does touch on one of the "provocative" passages in Romans (5:20), but he cavalierly dismisses its standard interpretation.⁷⁶ We would, therefore, argue that Hubner has read Romans into Galatians, but without giving due credit.

In our approach, however, we find no compelling reason to see provocation in the seemingly enigmatic phrase "for the purpose of transgressions." Paul may here simply mean "for the purpose of identifying transgressions"⁷⁷ or he may have in mind "for the purpose of provoking transgressions." Without recourse to Romans, we simply cannot tell which of these two options he must mean here. I doubt that the Galatians had any better feel for it either. It is, in fact, quite possible that Paul is ambiguous here because he did not have a precise idea himself. This is not to say that his meaning was up for grabs (for it certainly had to rest somewhere between the two options of identity and provocation). But his elliptical wording may simply reflect the fact that he had not yet sharpened his thinking beyond this initial, broad statement. If this hypothesis is correct (though admittedly we have not at all demonstrated this), then (1) we can see development between Galatians and Romans, but the development, once again, is in the direction of more refined articulation, not contradiction;⁷⁸ (2) the development between these two epistles certainly is not going the route Hubner believes; as I see it, Romans moves in both directions concerning the law--i.e., it speaks more positively of the law and more negatively.⁷⁹

One final note on τῶν παραβάσεων χάρις is in order. Paul's assessment of the law here is in stark contrast to the Judaism of his day.⁸⁰ Rather than restraining sin, the law revealed it (and perhaps provoked it). In what sense, then, is this phrase any kind of an answer to the opening question, "why then the law?" Again, pointing back to vv. 15-18 as the "prompt" for the

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ In spite of the objections of Meyer (*Galatians*, 171-72).

⁷⁸ It must be stressed that I can find no essential disharmony between the enigmatic, generalizing statement of Gal 3:19 and the finely-tuned statements in Romans, for in Romans Paul affirms both that the law brings knowledge of sin and that it is used to provoke sin.

⁷⁹ Paul in Romans 7, in particular, makes very glowing comments side-by-side with highly critical comments. Space does not permit an interaction with Raisanen here, but suffice it to say that whereas Raisanen sees contradictions within one epistle, I see different emphases, as well as multidirectional development, between Galatians and Romans.

⁸⁰ Cf. the references in Betz, *Galatians*, 165.

question, we can see the role the law was intended to play in *Heilsgeschichte*. Paul had argued that faith justifies—and hence the Abrahamic covenant was all that was necessary in the OT soteriological scheme. Why then the law? The force of the answer seems to be—in light of Paul's soteriologically restricted discussion (he is not speaking theocratically)—that it was given to remind/warn the people that a works-righteousness was thoroughly inadequate, for the law constantly labeled (at least) sin as transgressions, dismantling any pretense of salvation by works. In other words, the soteriological purpose of the law was to point to the gravity of sin and the inadequacy of the sinner. If our reconstruction of Paul's meaning here is correct, then Sanders' thesis that Paul did not view the law as impossible to obey⁸¹ is severely damaged.⁸²

3. ἄχρις οὗ τὸ σπέρμα ᾧ ἐπήγγελεται

We have already touched on this clause with reference to the passive voice of ἐπήγγελεται, as well as the implied agent of the promise being God. Happily, the meaning of this clause is rather straightforward in comparison with the rest of vv. 19-20. The seed, obviously, is Christ (cf. v. 16).⁸³ More than this may be implied, however, for Paul concludes the chapter by pointing out that those who believe in Christ become heirs of the promise and are, by virtue of their union with him, also "the seed of Abraham" (v. 29). Hence, the concept of corporate solidarity with the specifically Pauline application of the "body of Christ" motif is perhaps seen in "seed" form here.

The real issue in this clause has to do with the force of "until." That is, does Paul mean that the law served a purpose until the Messiah came and thus, with his advent, was no longer necessary in the soteriological scheme of things?⁸⁴ Or does he mean that the law's task of pointing out sin would have no corresponding positive soteriological value until the Messiah arrived on the scene (which would imply its continued validity)?⁸⁵ It is our understanding that the first view is to be understood, viz., that Paul meant that the law was in some sense abrogated with respect to the community of believers (cf. Rom 10:4). There are two considerations which lead us in this direction.

⁸¹ *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, 43-44 and passim.

⁸² Our critique of Sanders on his view that Paul did not consider the law as impossible to obey is not new (see especially Schreiner, "Paul and Perfect Obedience to the Law," 245-78). What is new, however, is the introduction of Gal 3:19 as bearing directly on the question.

⁸³ N. A. Dahl ("Widersprüche in der Bibel, ein altes hermeneutisches Problem," *ST* 25 [1971] 14) argues that this clause is reminiscent of Gen 49:10.

⁸⁴ This is the standard view found in the commentaries.

⁸⁵ Such is the view, more or less, of Cranfield, Cosgrove, Calvin, et al.

(1) There is some evidence of an early Jewish doctrine that when the Messiah came, the law would end.⁸⁶ Baeck writes that "if the 'Days of the Messiah' have commenced, those of the Torah came to their close. On the other hand, if the Law, the Torah, still retained its validity, it was proclaimed thereby that the Messiah had not yet arrived."⁸⁷ This point could be overstated however. Bruce soberly cautions that "the question of Paul's earlier instruction on this subject is of minor importance: the logic, which impelled him to the conviction that Christ had displaced the Torah was the logic of his Damascus-road conversion."⁸⁸ At the same time, since Paul seems to be arguing here with his Judaizing opponents, it is possible that he meant to employ an argument which was drawn from their traditions. Either way, it seems probable that the apostle was arguing that the law was, in some sense, put away.

(2) Internally, this is one in a series of temporal markers in 3:15-4:7 to indicate the limited duration of the law (note vv. 17, 23, 24-25, et al.). It would be difficult to imagine Paul using such strong language if he meant less than abrogation. Nevertheless, if Paul is here arguing that the law is now abolished, we would be rash to think that he is speaking in absolute terms, for, as Schreiner points out, "Certain texts in Paul suggest that since the coming of Christ the law is now abolished (Gal. 3.15-4.7; Rom. 6.14; 7.1-6; 10.4; 2 Cor. 3.4-18 . . .). On the other hand, Paul also speaks positively about fulfilling the law (Gal. 5.14; 1 Cor. 7.19; Rom. 2.25f1; 3.31; 8.4; 13.8-10)."⁸⁹ Such Pauline tensions cannot be eliminated by appealing exclusively either to the "abolition" texts or to the "fulfillment" texts (unless we adopt Raisanen's view of internal contradictions in Paul!). But since a careful nuancing of Paul's meaning here is quite beyond the scope of this paper, suffice it to say that Paul seems to regard the law in some sense to be abolished.

4. διαταγῆς δι' ἀγγέλων

It would not be too great an exaggeration to say that this clause is the kingpin in Hubner's entire argument about disjunctive development between Galatians and Romans. His view rests on several assumptions: (1) that "the emphasis lies plainly on God's lack of involvement in the event of the

⁸⁶ For a thorough treatment of the subject, see W. D. Davies, *Torah in the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come* (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1952). Cf. also Schoeps, *Paul The Theology of the Apostle*, 171f1: Apparently, the Targumim present a different tradition, viz., that the Messiah would establish the law (see Pereira, "The Galatian Controversy in the Light of the Targums," 22-26).

⁸⁷ L. Baeck, "The Faith of Paul," *JJS* 3 (1952) 106.

⁸⁸ Bruce, *Galatians*, 176.

⁸⁹ T. R. Schreiner, "The Abolition and Fulfillment of the Law in Paul," *JSNT* 35 (1989) 47. Schreiner's article (pp. 47-74) is quite helpful both in canvassing current approaches to the problem and in offering another solution. His view entails its own set of problems, however, though they are much less severe than the problems involved in the other views.

Law-giving";⁹⁰ (2) that *διὰ* here must have the force of *ὑπό*, making the angels the originators of the law; (3) that "the angels are now to be understood as demonic beings";⁹¹ (4) that the implied agent of *προσέτεθη* is different from the agent of *ἐπήγγελαται*;⁹² and (5) that Paul has a total disregard not only for his former religion, but also for its sacred book, the OT, for he must jettison as false not only all of OT revelation but also all of OT history.⁹³ We will attempt to answer these arguments *seriatim*.

(1) We have already argued that though God is not explicitly mentioned in this text, he must be the implied agent of *ἐπήγγελαται*, as even Hubner would admit, and hence, the unspecified agent of *προσέτεθη*.

(2) Although it is possible for *διὰ* (which normally expresses intermediate agency) to bear the nuance usually reserved for *ὑπό*,⁹⁴ such a case is rare. Hubner is clearly involved in question-begging here. Further, if Paul had wanted to express this idea clearly, why did he not use *ὑπό*—the far more natural choice for ultimate agency?

(3) For the idea that the angels in view are demonic beings, Hubner is relying on two pillars: (a) the gnostic demiurge idea and (b) the interpretation that Paul, in referring to the "elementary things of the world" (4:3, 9), has these demonic beings in mind. The first pillar can be dismissed quite readily since it has yet to be demonstrated that gnosticism antedated Christianity;⁹⁵ clearly, this approach then is another instance of *petitio principii*. The second pillar seems to partake of the first one, to some degree. However, it bears the weight better, for it is not dependent on gnosticism for its strength. Nevertheless, the equation is highly questionable and although

⁹⁰ Hubner, *Law in Paul's Thought*, 127.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Hubner's justification is as follows (*Law in Paul's Thought*, 28): "Since however Paul, as is well known, does at times overload what he says as to content, and as we sometimes find in his statements an accumulation of perspectives, we must in this concrete instance allow for various intentions finding their linguistic expression in abrupt juxtaposition to each other. Of course Paul, in dictating, did not consciously wish to switch from one intention or purpose to another, but we may—and must—ask what the presuppositions were behind the formulation of individual components of a sentence in any instance."

⁹³ Hubner also gives another argument, which he considers his trump card (*Law in Paul's Thought*, 28-29): "The main justification for our line of argument is however the question in verse 21a, which may perhaps be paraphrased as follows: if the Law was added to the promises of God to provoke sinful deeds, does not the angelic Law therefore stand opposed to the divine promises? This question at once becomes comprehensible and indeed even necessary if our exegesis so far is correct." There is no need to deal with this specific argument for (1) we have already demonstrated the great probability that the implied agent of *προσέτεθη* is God and (2) as Hubner admits, v. 21a is more a result of his exegesis than a proof of it; hence if we can demonstrate that his "exegesis so far" is incorrect, then nothing else needs to be said on the matter.

⁹⁴ BAGD, 180 (§III.2.b).

⁹⁵ Cf. E. M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of Proposed Evidences* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983); and R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968).

some good scholars have argued the case,⁹⁶ an equally impressive case (in my mind, much better) can be made against the connection.⁹⁷ In any case, even if such an identification were assumed, it would still not prove that wicked angels are in view in 3:19. Positively, we can speak of the well-worn Jewish tradition of good angels attending the giving of the law as antedating Christianity (cf. in the NT Acts 7:53; Heb 2:2).⁹⁸ Since Paul has already made use of rabbinic arguments in this chapter (e.g., "seed" not "seeds" in v. 16; and perhaps the Messiah-law motif earlier in this verse), it is almost inconceivable that he could be thinking of anything else with his expression "ordained through angels."

(4) We have already dealt with Hubner's argument about the different agents of the first two verbs of this verse. We can add here, however, two further points: (a) as we mentioned earlier, Paul's argument in Galatians is well-structured (as Betz and Hall have ably pointed out); one stands on rather tenuous ground, then, to suggest that in the critical section over the law's purpose, Paul got sloppy in his thinking, let his emotions overrule his debate skills, or did not bother to check his amanuensis' work; (b) in my mind, Hubner's argument here is so weak that it in effect is something of a backdoor admission that he has lost his case. If Hubner really wanted to press the idea that Paul's syntactical skills were this shoddy,⁹⁹ then a Pandora's box is opened for virtually any passage with which one has a disagreement.¹⁰⁰

(5) Finally, the larger question of Paul's view of the OT in general comes into focus. Though Paul argues strongly for the termination of the law, he never does so by treating the OT as less than the Word of God. Throughout his epistles he can freely interchange "God says" with "Scripture says," "he/it says," even "Moses says." There is no hint that he treated—either in Galatians or elsewhere—the OT as less than the very Word of God. In fact, even in the immediate context, Paul appeals to "the scripture" (v. 22). All of this is to say that Paul must have agreed with the OT teaching that the law was given by God. He certainly holds forth this understanding elsewhere (cf. Rom 7)—and such an elementary understanding could hardly

⁹⁶ Most notably, B. Reicke, "The Law and this World according to Paul: Some Thoughts concerning Gal 4[:]1-11," *JBL* 70 (1951) 259-76.

⁹⁷ Cf. A. J. Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World: An Exegetical Study in Aspects of Paul's Teaching* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1964) 149-68; L. L. Belleville, "Under Law": Structural Analysis and the Pauline Concept of Law in Galatians 3.21-4.11," *JSNT* 26 (1986) 64-69.

⁹⁸ T. Callan, "Pauline Midrash: The Exegetical Background of Gal 3:19b," *JBL* 99 (1980) 549-67.

⁹⁹ Significantly, Hubner gives no references when he argues that "Paul, as is well known, does at times overload what he says as to content" (*Law in Paul's Thought*, 28). It seems to be a convenient scapegoat to charge the biblical author with saying something he did not mean to say at the very point where one's exegesis hangs in the balance. Hermeneutics loses all objectivity when we choose to play the exegetical "game" our way and change the rules at our whim.

¹⁰⁰ Similar, though much less extreme, is Cranfield's argument against abrogation of the law ("St Paul and the Law," 62).

be due to years of reflection and "development" from Galatians to Romans. It was his starting presupposition—which he had as a Jew and retained as a Christian.

5. ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου

The last phrase in v. 19 is now almost universally recognized as referring to Moses. If it had not been for Origen's influence on the link of this text with 1 Tim 2:5 (where μεσίτης is also used), few would have ever entertained the thought that the intermediary mentioned here is Christ. The real issue here, in my mind, is whether ἐν χειρὶ is to be taken literally (and thus referring to Moses' descent from Mt. Sinai with the ten commandments in his hands) or figuratively (with the idea of "by means of"). Though Callan takes great pains to argue for the literal sense,¹⁰¹ such a view is self-destructive: if Paul is arguing that the angels were more than "official eyewitnesses" (as διαταγείς most certainly implies),¹⁰² then he is telling us that they functioned as perhaps some kind of go-between between Moses and YHWH in the giving of the law. If so, then Paul cannot be thinking of the giving of the ten commandments primarily because there was direct contact between Moses and YHWH on that occasion.

To sum up our understanding of Gal 3:19: the purpose of the law with regard to soteriology was a negative one: it was added (by God) in order to identify (and provoke?) sins as transgressions. But the law's function was only for a season; it would be abrogated (in some sense) when the Messiah appeared. Further, it was necessarily of inferior status to the promise for the bulk of it was administered through angels as God's representatives and through them to an intermediary. The law, therefore, is inferior to the promise (and, hence, to faith-righteousness) because of its temporary duration, its negative soteriological function, and its indirect relation to God. In all this, there is not a hint that Paul is condemning the law; he is simply speaking of its limited "glory" (cf. 2 Corinthians 3!).

6. ὁ δὲ μεσίτης ἐνὸς οὐκ ἔστιν, ὁ δὲ θεὸς εἷς ἔστιν

We can only touch on v. 20 here. And certainly we will not make a positive contribution to the meaning of the text. Nevertheless, three things can be said at the outset: (1) v. 19 is the real crux for the purpose of the law; (2) most of the 300 or so interpretations of this verse can be tossed once a particular view of v. 19 is adopted—hence, v. 19 does function as a sort of "quality control" over v. 20; (3) our few suggestions will be merely negative observations, in hopes of spurring someone else on to a proper interpretation of this text.

¹⁰¹ Callan, "The Law and the Mediator," 177-95.

¹⁰² BAGD, 189.

T. D. Callan's dissertation contains the most complete survey of views on v. 20 available (though not published). We will therefore refer the reader to that volume for a detailed treatment. For our purposes, we simply wish to point out a few tension points which need to be addressed for a proper exegesis of this text. (1) Most exegetes today treat both $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ and $\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ as indicating numerical "oneness" (as opposed to moral or spiritual oneness). The argument generally is that since $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$ is numerical, $\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ must be as well. Yet there is the possibility that Paul is thinking of "one God" in the same way he thought of "one seed"—i.e., as primarily indicating an individual, but encompassing something of a universal scope as well (it is to be noted that the other references to God being one in Paul seem to imply his universal reign over Jew and Gentile).¹⁰³ (2) The consistency with which exegetes face "one" is quietly dropped when they consider "intermediary." Again, most would regard $\mu\epsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\tau\eta\varsigma$ in v. 19 as referring to Moses, while in v. 20 it becomes generic. What seems most compelling against this view, however, is that the article is used with the word in v. 20 (after an anarthrous first-mention of the term in 19), suggesting, *prima facie*, that Paul is speaking anaphorically. In any event, I have not found any authors to be consistent about both "one" and "intermediary." Perhaps that very tension is a clue to Paul's meaning here. (3) Finally, "but God is one" in v. 20b is, by all accounts, the real problem in this text. Why does Paul add this? How does it in any way contribute to his argument? At first blush, one might feel that this was merely a rabbinic genuflection on his part, since he just wrote "an intermediary is not of one." But he surely is doing something more than that here. Such a "solution" is hardly better than to treat v. 20b as a scribal gloss! Nevertheless, in light of Paul's rabbinic approach already seen in this chapter, it seems that there may be something of the same thing going on here. More than likely, it is a subtle argument which has been lost to us. Yet, I am inclined to think that a part of his argument has to do with the *Shema* (Deut 6:4ff.). It may be significant that Paul uses the very soul of the Pentateuch (Torah), in a highly rhetorical and subtly nuanced sort of way, to point to something greater than the Torah itself; the affirmation that God is one somehow spells out the inferiority of the law with its own hand!

7. Conclusion

In this study we have attempted to interact with current scholarship over the meaning of Gal 3:19-20. As was soon obvious, our primary bone of contention was with Hans Hubner. Yet, our exegesis touched on issues raised also by E. P. Sanders, H. Raisanen, C. E. B. Cranfield, et al. With reference to these scholars, we are now in a position to suggest four tentative conclusions derived from our exegesis of Gal 3:19-20. These four "conclusions" are, at this stage, to be regarded as little more than hypotheses which

¹⁰³ C. H. Giblin, "Three Monotheistic Texts," *CBQ* 37 (1975) 527-47.

need to be tested more exhaustively by a comprehensive exegesis of the *corpus Paulinum*.¹⁰⁴ (1) there seem to be traces of theological development between Galatians and Romans, though not at all in the direction (nor extent) which Hubner believes it is going—that is to say, Romans is a refinement and articulation of the seminal thought of Galatians, but is not in conflict with Galatians; (2) Paul presents a coherent picture (*contra* Raisanen), though not one which is always easy to grasp; (3) Paul did view the law as impossible to obey (*contra* Sanders) and as something brought in precisely to cause the nation to reflect on the total inadequacy of a works-righteousness; and (4) for the believer at least (cf. Rom 10:4; 1 Tim 1:9), the law in some sense has apparently been done away by the coming of the Messiah (*contra* Cranfield, Cosgrove).

¹⁰⁴ Along these lines, see the two very recent studies by Douglas Moo ("The Law of Moses or the Law of Christ," unpublished paper read at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, December 1987, at Gordon-Conwell Seminary) and Schreiner ("The Abolition and Fulfillment of the Law in Paul," 47-74).

Dallas Theological Seminary
3909 Swiss Avenue
Dallas, TX 75204

This material is cited with gracious permission from: x
Westminster Theological Seminary
2960 W. Church Rd.
Glenside, PA 19038
www.wts.edu

Please report any errors to Ted Hildebrandt at: thildebrandt@gordon.edu