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ADOPTION AND THE FORMATION OF ESCHATOLOGICAL  
IDENTITY: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF HUIOTHESIA

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
Christopher Frederick Wehrle

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**APPROVAL SHEET**

ADOPTION AND THE FORMATION OF ESCHATOLOGICAL  
IDENTITY: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF HUIOTHESIA

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1 En.	1 Enoch
1 Macc	1 Maccabees
4QFlor	Florilegium
Ambrosiaster, <i>Ep. Rom.</i>	Ambrosiaster, <i>Epistulum ad Romanos</i>
Apoc. Ab.	Apocalypse of Abraham
Aristides, <i>Apol.</i>	Aristides, <i>Apology</i>
Aristotle, <i>Pol.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Politica</i>
Athanasius, <i>C. Ar.</i>	Athanasius, <i>Orationes contra Arianos</i>
Barn.	Epistle of Barnabas
BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BDF	Blass, Friedrich, Albert Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk. <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961
CD	Damascus Document
Clement, <i>Strom.</i>	Clement of Alexandria, <i>Stromateis</i>
<i>Corp. Herm.</i>	<i>Corpus Hermeticum</i>
Dio Cassius, <i>Hist. Rom.</i>	Dio Cassius, <i>Historia Romana</i>
Diogn.	Epistle to Diognetus
Epictetus, <i>Diatr.</i>	Epictetus, <i>Diatribai (Dissertationes)</i>

Gen. Rab.	Genesis Rabbah
Irenaeus, <i>Haer.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Against Heresies</i>
Josephus, <i>Ant.</i>	Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
Josephus, <i>Ag. Ap.</i>	Josephus, <i>Against Apion</i>
Jub.	Jubilees
L&N	Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene A. Nida, eds. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains</i> . 2nd ed. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989
m. Ned.	Nedarim
m. Quidd.	Quiddushin
m. Šabb.	Shabbat
Mart. Pol.	Martyrdom of Polycarp
NA <sup>28</sup>	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland, 28th ed.
<i>NIDNTTE</i>	Silva, Moisés, ed. <i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> . 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014
Orosius, <i>Hist. Adv. Pag.</i>	Orosius, <i>Historia Adversus Paganos</i>
Pesiq. Rab.	Pesiqta Rabbati
Philo, <i>Abr.</i>	Philo, <i>de Abrahamo</i>
Philo, <i>Conf.</i>	Philo, <i>De confusione linguarum</i>
Philo, <i>Deus</i>	Philo, <i>Quod Deus sit immutabilis</i>
Philo, <i>Mos.</i>	Philo, <i>De vita Mosis</i>
Philo, <i>Mut.</i>	Philo, <i>De mutatione nominum</i>
Philo, <i>Somn.</i>	Philo, <i>De somniis</i>
Pre. Pet.	Preaching of Peter
Ps.-Cyp, <i>Pasch Comp.</i>	Pseudo-Cyprian, <i>de Pascha Computus</i>

Pss. Sol.	Psalms of Solomon
SBLGNT	<i>The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition</i>
Sir	Sirach
Suetonius, <i>Claud.</i>	Suetonius, <i>Divus Claudius</i>
t. Ber.	Tractate Berakhot
T. Ben.	Testament of Benjamin
T. Jud.	Testament of Judah
T. Levi	Testament of Levi
T. Mos.	Testament of Moses (Assumption of Moses)
Tanh. B.	Midrash Tanhuma
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976
Tertullian, <i>Adv. Jud.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Adversus Judaeos</i>
Tertullian, <i>Nat.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Ad Nationes</i>
Tertullian, <i>Scorp.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Scorpiace</i>
Tob	Tobit
UBS <sup>5</sup>	<i>The Greek New Testament</i> , United Bible Societies, 5th ed.

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## PREFACE

It seems unfair, now that I have arrived at the conclusion of my doctoral studies, for my name alone to appear on the title page of this project. The cliché bears repeating that, apart from a host of supporters, this goal would never have been attained.

I want to begin by thanking the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention, who have not only built and supported the great seminary which I have had the pleasure of attending, but also have supported and guided me in my spiritual development from elementary school up to the present day. I think especially of Dripping Springs Baptist Church in Seymour, Tennessee; Salem Baptist Church in Halls, Tennessee; and Sojourn Community Church here in Louisville, Kentucky. In addition, the formative influence of Camp Ba-Yo-Ca in my life cannot be overstated. To the men in these places who shaped me with their guidance, discipline, wisdom, generosity, and patience—Lloyd Powell, Curt Franklin, Chris Morton, John Lewis, Phil Young, and Chris Henry, among others—thank you.

Significant academic influences in my life have been numerous. Beginning with my studies at Johnson Bible College, I remember being especially encouraged by the passion, integrity, and care of Professors Carl Bridges, David “Doc” Reece, Mark Young, and President David Eubanks. The faculty of Southern Seminary have been hugely influential in my academic development. Although I could with good reason name the entire New Testament department, especially formative and supportive have been Mark Seifrid, my doctoral adviser, and Professor Rob Plummer. There are, of course, a whole

host of scholars whom I have never met in person, but whose excellent work has helped form my thought. The best way I can honor them is by joining the discussion, and thus their names and influence upon my research will appear constantly in the pages of this dissertation.

Finally, and most importantly, I must thank my family, apart from whom this would have proven impossible: for Mom and Dad, who taught me to do my best, who counseled me to pursue my dreams, and who never stopped believing in me; for Michael and Tasha, whose generosity is boundless; and for Amy, there are no words to describe what you mean to me. Your love, sacrifice, support, encouragement, faith, humor, patience, and cookies keep me going. To you, of course, I dedicate this work (even though you still refuse to let me teach you Greek). Last, but not least, for Magdalene and Cyrus, I simply pray that you both come to know the adoptive love of God, so that you also may one day cry out, “Abba, Father.”

Chris Wehrle

Louisville, Kentucky  
December 2016

## CHAPTER 1

### ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ IN SCHOLARSHIP AND EARLY CHRISTIAN SOCIAL IDENTITY

Of the many images Paul employs to portray the church, perhaps the most recurrent is the picture of the household. The Pauline correspondence abounds with familial nomenclature as a descriptor for the eschatological people of God. Paul speaks, for example, of God as Father, and of believers as his children. Believers in Jesus Christ are sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters one to another, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ, who is himself the Son *par excellence*. It is no surprise, therefore, to discover that Paul uses adoptive terminology as a means of describing how God brings people into his household. Paul depicts incorporation into the *familia Dei* as υιοθεσία, the adoption of believers as God's sons.<sup>1</sup>

The term υιοθεσία appears only five times in the biblical literature.<sup>2</sup> All five of

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<sup>1</sup>Although Paul was capable of referring to female believers as “daughters” (see 2 Cor 6:18, θυγατέρας), his adoptive terminology (υιοθεσία, which derives from τίθεσθαι and υιός) speaks of being made a son (υιός). The concept of inheritance almost certainly played into his decision to use a gender-specific term. Because in Paul's day rights of inheritance were generally limited to sons, and adoption of females was almost unheard of, Paul's use of gendered terminology is unsurprising. It is also probable that Paul chose to use υιοθεσία rather than one of the other adoption terms available to him because he viewed believers' adoption as transpiring via union with Christ, who can only be described as “Son.” That Paul is also capable of describing recipients of υιοθεσία with the gender-neutral lexeme τεκνόν (Rom 8:16) should alert us to the fact that such speech is neither exclusive nor sexist (see Gal 3:28). For the sake of consistency with Pauline practice, this study will regularly refer to υιοθεσία via masculine terminology, but with no intention of excluding or alienating females through the use of such language.

<sup>2</sup>A textual variant in Rom 8:23 omits υιοθεσίαν, yet the evidence in support of its inclusion is impressive (κ, A, B, C, Ψ, along with a bevy of minuscules). Furthermore, its omission can be explained by a scribe's discomfort with the ostensible tension between a present and a future υιοθεσία within the space of nine verses. For the purposes of this study, it will be considered original.



these occurrences reside in the “Pauline” corpus (Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5).<sup>3</sup> Therefore, adoption (used as a theological metaphor) appears to derive from the nascent “Christian”<sup>4</sup> movement, specifically the writings of Paul the apostle.<sup>5</sup> But from where did Paul get this adoption term, and for what purpose did he use it? Does υιοθεσία carry the same connotations in all five canonical appearances? This dissertation aims, through an exegetical study of υιοθεσία, to seek solutions to these and other related questions.

Recent years have witnessed a steady increase of research on υιοθεσία.

However, scholarship on this Pauline theme still significantly lags behind the work being

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<sup>3</sup>While a sizable contingent of scholars regards Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Ephesians as dubious, the majority would recognize at least that the letter is in some sense “Pauline.” A. T. Lincoln's comments are representative: “By its inclusion within the Pauline corpus, Ephesians is already part of the 'canonical' Paul, whatever its relation to the 'historical' Paul” (Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary 42 [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1990], lxxiii). Because scholars continue to class Ephesians among the Pauline corpus (often with the caveat that its authorship is disputed, or derives from a “follower” of Paul), and because the letter itself claims a Pauline provenance, this study will treat it as “Pauline,” without taking a position on the extent of the Apostle's responsibility for the epistle. To untangle the knotty issues associated with the question of this letter's authorship does not constitute one of the goals of this study. Therefore, this matter will be left to the side. Furthermore, whether or not Paul was ultimately responsible for Ephesians does not impact the veracity of the thesis argued here.

<sup>4</sup>Numerous scholars have noted the dangers of using the terms “Christianity” and “Christians” to refer to the first-century movement of believers in Jesus. Doubtless, there is a risk of anachronistically importing later meanings into the term (so rightly, William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* [London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2008], 12; Anders Runesson, “Inventing Christian Identity: Paul, Ignatius, and Theodosius 1,” in *Exploring Christian Identity*, ed. Bengt Holmberg [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], 71, Magnus Zetterholm, “Jews, Christians, and Gentiles: Rethinking the Categorization within the Early Jesus Movement,” in *Reading Paul in Context: Explorations in Identity Formation: Essays in Honour of William S. Campbell*, ed. Kathy Ehrensperger and J. Brian Tucker [London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013], 252-53; Paul S. Trebilco, *Self-Designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012], 3-4). However, for lack of a better term, and due to a complete dearth of consensus among scholars as to which nomenclature is sufficient for reference to the nascent movement, this study will at times employ the traditional terminology, if only because it is less awkward than the many circumlocutions proposed by recent scholarship. One hopes that the reader will be responsible enough to recognize that, within the context of this study, unless otherwise noted, “Christianity” refers to the budding movement of Christ-followers in the middle of the first century C.E., and not to the more developed forms of Christianity of say, the fourth, or even twenty-first centuries.

<sup>5</sup>James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ in the Pauline Corpus* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1992), 16, avers that “Paul seems to be the first to use the term [uiothesia] in a theological context.” Once again, on the question of the authorship of Ephesians, if Paul was not actually responsible for this epistle, at the very least, most scholars would agree that the author incorporated the υιοθεσία terminology in conscious imitation of the Pauline precedents in Galatians and Romans.

accomplished in other areas. Furthermore, much of the discussion on υιοθεσία remains mired in the question of background.<sup>6</sup> Given the present state of scholarship, it appears that the academy has largely missed a pertinent aspect of υιοθεσία, namely, its regular use in contexts wherein ethnicity and social identity are central topics of discussion. The present investigation aims to remedy this lacuna.

### **The Present State of Υιοθεσία Scholarship**

Over the past fifty years, several scholars have contributed beneficial studies on υιοθεσία. The following survey will evaluate the most important offerings.

#### **Brendan Byrne**

'*Sons of God*' – '*Seed of Abraham*' is Brendan Byrne's doctoral thesis, written at Oxford University under Morna Hooker.<sup>7</sup> This study aims to demonstrate that the Pauline conception that Christians are all “sons of God” stems from Paul's Jewish background. Inasmuch as υιοθεσία plays such a prominent role in the divine sonship motif, Byrne focuses a significant amount of attention on this term. Because Romans 9:4 appears to make υιοθεσία a historically Jewish privilege, Byrne believes that the appropriate place to begin an investigation of the concept of adoption is within the writings of Israel.

Thus, Byrne begins his study of sonship by surveying the Jewish corpus to determine what those authors have to say concerning this topic. After assessing the Jewish materials, Byrne notes that the early Christians featured the theme of divine sonship with

<sup>6</sup>Trevor J. Burke, *Adopted into God's Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 30, notes the consequence of such a narrow focus: “the majority of Pauline commentators confine their remarks on the adoption pericopae to the issue of background and little else, as if this were the only matter relevant to adoption. Undoubtedly, background is important, but other vital and fascinating aspects of adoption remain largely untapped and overlooked.”

<sup>7</sup>Brendan Byrne, '*Sons of God*' – '*Seed of Abraham*': *A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979).

much more prominence than did the Jewish tradition.<sup>8</sup> However, by means of a thorough summary of the Old Testament evidence, the intertestamental literature, and a small sampling of the rabbinic literature and targums, Byrne demonstrates that the concept of the people of God as “sons” was common enough in early Judaism to inspire its use by the Christian community.<sup>9</sup> Further, Byrne's analysis shows that the extant Jewish writings evince some common patterns when they broach the topic of divine sonship. First, sonship of God is a privilege reserved solely for the Israelite people, stemming from their election by God. As a result, the phrase “sons of God” functioned in their literature “virtually as a synonym for the 'People of God.'” Second, the theme of sonship regularly occurs in eschatological contexts, “suggesting that it was an epithet felt to be particularly applicable to the ideal Israel of the end-time.”<sup>10</sup>

After completing his survey of the Jewish authors, Byrne proceeds to a detailed study of the most relevant Pauline texts: Romans 8-9 and Galatians 3-4.<sup>11</sup> Byrne's exegesis of these texts leads him to conclude that Paul is not departing from Jewish tradition when he uses adoption terminology. In fact, Paul's use of the concept coheres well with the results Byrne derived from his analysis of the Jewish use of the sonship motif. Paul capitalizes on the eschatological nature of the theme, and appropriates this

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<sup>8</sup>Byrne, *Sons of God – Seed of Abraham*, 221.

<sup>9</sup>Because Byrne argues that υιοθεσία can also be translated as “sonship” and is not constrained to the meaning of “adoption” (ibid., 80) he is able to maintain a connection between the Pauline terminology and the Jewish writings.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 62-63.

<sup>11</sup>Byrne also includes brief discussions of Phil 2:15 and 2 Cor 6:18, but in nothing approaching the rigor with which he handles the other texts. Sadly, he only devotes half a page (126-27) to the fifth υιοθεσία passage, Eph 1:5. Given the title of his work, it is perhaps surprising that he does not deal with Rom 4.

eschatological stance to warrant the inclusion of Gentiles within the people of God.<sup>12</sup>

Although Paul remained within the Jewish conceptual framework by using Jewish categories, terminology, and Scriptures, he did depart sharply from Judaism in a “radical rethinking of Jewish theology with respect to righteousness.” Paul regarded faith in Christ as the sole determinant of a righteous status and inclusion in the people of God. By contrast, the Jewish Law only served to condemn, and therefore “by 'levelling' Jews down to the status of 'Gentile-sinners' it enabled all to become heirs on the basis of faith.”<sup>13</sup>

Thus, Byrne concludes, Paul's Jewish monotheism drove him to the conviction that “God deals with Jews and Gentiles in the same way.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Allen Mawhinney**

“ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ in the Pauline Epistles: Its Background, Use and Implications” is Mawhinney's PhD thesis completed at Baylor University. As indicated by the title, Mawhinney's first objective is to determine the background for Paul's adoption language. He begins by examining the Greek and Roman socio-legal backgrounds for the practice of adoption. Next, he canvasses the early Jewish literature, searching specifically for any evidence that Jews practiced adoption. He concludes that while several cases of adoption are to be found in the Old Testament, it is impossible to determine that a genuinely “Jewish” concept of adoption existed prior the New Testament era. Instead, the adoptions that took place in the OT and early Jewish tradition were probably all influenced by the

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<sup>12</sup>Byrne, *Sons of God – Seed of Abraham*, 216.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 220.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 226.

practices of surrounding nations.<sup>15</sup>

Having found the search for early Jewish adoptive practice to be inconclusive, Mawhinney turns to the Old Testament conception of divine sonship as a potential backdrop for Paul's use. As Byrne before him, Mawhinney points out three primary groups who were viewed as “sons of God” in the Jewish Scriptures: the nation of Israel, the king of Israel, and faithful individuals within the people of God.<sup>16</sup>

Next, Mawhinney turns to the Pauline evidence, since “the determination of which form of the God as father background exerted the greatest influence upon the Pauline use of the adoption metaphor must be delayed until after the Pauline texts have been studied.” Unlike other researchers, Mawhinney is “almost embarrassed by the wealth of possible sources of the imagery.”<sup>17</sup> Mawhinney conducts a theological, rather than exegetical survey, and he arrives at several notable conclusions. First, the adoption of believers is redemptive-historical; it represents an “epochal transfer” that transpires “when the time had fully come.” The time of Law, slavery, and bondage has passed, and believers transfer into “life as sons” inasmuch as they “participate in the experience of Christ.”<sup>18</sup> For Mawhinney, this participation of believers in the experience of Christ is rooted in Jesus’ “resurrection/adoption,” since his resurrection from the dead to become the “son of God in power” (Rom 1:4) is equivalent to his own adoption.<sup>19</sup>

Another notable conclusion for Mawhinney is that the connection of the

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<sup>15</sup>Allen Mawhinney, “Huiiothesia in the Pauline Epistles: Its Background, Use and Implications” (PhD diss., Baylor University, 1982), 38-49.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 77.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 118.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 157.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 151.

concept of inheritance with adoption does not derive from the Old Testament data. Rather, this correlation derives partially from the connection between adoption and inheritance in Roman legal practice, and primarily “from [Paul’s] own religious experience.”<sup>20</sup>

Mawhinney also explores the integral connection of adoption and ethics. In fact, Mawhinney argues that Paul regularly introduces the adoption concept as a direct result of his intent to discuss ethics: “υιοθεσία denotes not only the rights, but also the responsibilities, of sonship.” The imperative of Christian ethics proceeds from the indicative of adoption.<sup>21</sup>

Having explored the Pauline υιοθεσία materials, Mawhinney concludes that the most likely background for Paul’s usage of this imagery is the Roman socio-legal custom of adoption. However, Mawhinney is careful to note that this nexus of Roman backdrop and Pauline theology cannot adequately explain all of the Pauline emphases related to adoption. Thus, he adds further that “those additional aspects of Paul’s use of υιοθεσία derive from his Jewish heritage and Christian experience.”<sup>22</sup>

## **James Scott**

*In Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ in the Pauline Corpus,*<sup>23</sup> James M. Scott seeks to answer two major

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<sup>20</sup>Mawhinney, “Huiiothesia in the Pauline Epistles,” 176.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 183-86, 224-35; quote taken from 186. Mawhinney argues that in Ephesians, it was Paul’s mention of “being holy and blameless” which led him to use the adoption metaphor. Additionally, Paul intends the readers to contrast adopted sonship with being “sons of disobedience” and “children of wrath.” Acting “as beloved children” is the manner in which believers become “imitators of God” (184). Similarly, in Rom 8, being led by the “Spirit of adoption” enables believers to “put to death the deeds of the body” (185).

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 217.

<sup>23</sup>Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*. This is the published version of Scott’s dissertation, completed for the Universität Tübingen, under Peter Stuhlmacher.

questions. The first question relates to the meaning of the term υιοθεσία. Can it refer simply to the status of sonship, or must it always mean “adoption as a son”? The second question strives to determine the conceptual background for Paul's use of υιοθεσία. Should one read the terminology against the backdrop of the Greco-Roman legal institution, or do the Old Testament Scriptures supply the appropriate context for interpreting this Pauline language?

Scott begins his study by performing a thorough analysis of υιοθεσία and other Greek adoptive terminology.<sup>24</sup> He concludes that the term υιοθεσία always denotes the action, “adoption as son.”<sup>25</sup> He notes further that “Paul's religious use of υιοθεσία is unparalleled.”<sup>26</sup> Scott then proceeds to seek whether the concept of adoption can be found in the Old Testament. He concludes that the Old Testament Scriptures contain at least three valid instances of adoption: Ephraim and Manasseh, Moses, and Esther.<sup>27</sup> Scott then scouts the Old Testament for a potential source of Paul's adoption term, zeroing in on 2 Samuel 7:14, which he regards as God's “adoption” of the regal descendant.<sup>28</sup> Positing a “2 Samuel 7:14 tradition” which incorporates three non-canonical texts (4QFlor 1:11; *Jub* 1:24; *T. Jud.* 24:3), Scott concludes that this “tradition” supplies the best explanation for Paul's use of adoptive terminology. The general idea of this tradition is an expectation that the broken covenant between God and Israel would be repaired at a future time when the

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<sup>24</sup>The word groups he investigates are the following: εισποιεῖν, ἐκποιεῖν, τίθεσθαι, ποιεῖσθαι, υιοποιεῖσθαι, and υιοθετεῖν. The search also included nominal and adjectival derivations from the verbal stems.

<sup>25</sup>Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, 55.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 55-56. Both Byrne and Mawhinney had already reached this conclusion before Scott.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 100.

Davidic monarchy was re-established.

Scott goes on to exegete the Pauline passages which contain υιοθεσία against his proposed backdrop of the 2 Samuel 7:14 tradition.<sup>29</sup> In his exegesis of Galatians 4:1-7, he proposes that 4:1-2 are not, as scholars have traditionally argued, an illustration. Rather, they are a description of Israel's bondage in Egypt preceding the exodus. Israel's experience thus serves as a type, to which the antitype is “the eschatological redemption and υιοθεσία expected in the messianic time.”<sup>30</sup> Finally, Scott interprets the adoption nomenclature in Romans 8 through the lens of Romans 1:4, arguing that τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υιοῦ θεοῦ “is a circumlocution for the Adoption Formula in 2 Sam. 7:14a.”<sup>31</sup> Therefore, Jesus himself is adopted before believers receive their own adoption through “participation in the messianic Son by means of the Spirit.”<sup>32</sup>

### **Trevor Burke**

Through his extensive contributions, Trevor Burke has advanced υιοθεσία studies more than any other scholar in recent years. *Adopted into God's Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor* epitomizes his work in this regard.<sup>33</sup> Burke's analysis of υιοθεσία advances the discussion beyond the arguments regarding background, and seeks

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<sup>29</sup>He does not discuss Eph 1:5, presumably under the assumption that Ephesians is not Pauline. The discussion of Rom 9:4 is limited to a very brief excursus (Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, 148-49).

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 149.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 242.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 244.

<sup>33</sup>Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*. In addition to the work under discussion, Burke has authored a number of scholarly articles on adoption. He has also produced a biblical theology on the broader theme of sonship, and his PhD dissertation discussed the use of familial terminology in 1 Thessalonians.



to determine “the theological importance of the adoption metaphor.”<sup>34</sup> While Burke does address the question of background,<sup>35</sup> it does not encapsulate the primary focus of his work. He swiftly relinquishes this discussion and pursues the concept of adoption as a soteriological metaphor which derives its potency from the surrounding socio-historical context. He argues that υιοθεσία deserves much more scholarly attention than has historically been the case, for it serves as “an organizing metaphor for salvation” in Paul's writings.<sup>36</sup> Further, υιοθεσία “adds nuances of meaning absent from other salvation terms and is indisputably the most intimate of Paul's metaphors.”<sup>37</sup>

Burke sees a Trinitarian nature in “adoption.” He notes that “each member—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—has a unique and vital part to play in a person's being adopted into the family of God.”<sup>38</sup> Therefore, Burke structures the three central chapters of his work around his analysis of the roles of God the Father, Son, and Spirit in the work of adoption. The chapter on the role of the Father centers on the sovereign and predetermined nature of God's adoption of believers, the honor that accrues as a result of being a member of God's family, and the adopted believer's privilege of inheritance. The chapter on the Son's role in adoption focuses on Jesus as the agent through whom God effects the adoption of believers. Through the work of Jesus the Son, believers obtain redemption from slavery and adoption into God's family. The believer's adoption is

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<sup>34</sup>Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 29.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 68-70. He concludes that the most important background material for understanding υιοθεσία is the Roman institution of *adoptio*, while at the same time not ruling out that the “general notion” of Israel's sonship to YHWH which flavors the OT Scriptures bolsters the metaphor.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 41.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 45.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 72.

always derivative, that is, it depends upon union with the Son. In speaking of the derivative nature of believers' adoption, Burke challenges Scott's thesis that Jesus was adopted, noting that the term υιοθεσία is reserved for believers. In addressing the Spirit's role in adoption, Burke targets the eschatological nature of the Holy Spirit's work. He demonstrates that the Spirit's work of adoption regularly occurs against the backdrop of the Law, "because the Law, in accordance with Jewish hopes in the Old Testament and intertestamental periods would be fulfilled and eclipsed by the eschatological Spirit and sonship."<sup>39</sup> Burke also notes how the presence of the "Spirit of adoption" empowers believers for moral living, enabling them to "kill off the deeds of the body" (Rom 8:13).

### **Edward W. Watson**

*Paul, His Roman Audience, and the Adopted People of God: Understanding the Pauline Metaphor of Adoption in Romans as Authorial Audience* investigates the filial language in the Epistle to the Romans from the perspective of the original recipients.<sup>40</sup> His thesis states that "none have asked how the [adoption] metaphor shapes the act of reading as authorial audience. The present study suggests that the authorial audience would have used crucial features related to their socio-cultural perspectives of reality to interpret Paul's adoption metaphor."<sup>41</sup> Or, to put it more simply, how would the original recipients of Romans have understood Paul's use of adoption terminology? Essentially, Watson is applying "ancient audience criticism," a sub-category of reader-response

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<sup>39</sup>Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 151.

<sup>40</sup>Edward W. Watson, *Paul, His Roman Audience, and the Adopted People of God: Understanding the Pauline Metaphor of Adoption in Romans as Authorial Audience* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008).

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 7.

criticism, to the text of Romans.<sup>42</sup>

In addition, Watson applies metaphor theory, arguing that Paul uses the adoption motif as a metaphor in order to explicate “a truth that was wholly or partly unknown by likening it to something that was known by the audience.” Paul used the rhetoric of metaphor “to offer new insight into otherwise unknowable truths.”<sup>43</sup>

Watson then applies his method to Romans, beginning with the working presupposition that the Roman audience was comprised of both Jews and Gentiles.<sup>44</sup> He searches each text (Rom 1:4; 8:14-29; 9:4) for insight into the sonship motif, reading it first through a Jewish grid, and then against a Greco-Roman matrix. For each of the passages, he concludes that pertinent contextual clues indicate both a Jewish and a Greco-Roman thought world. He summarizes as follows: “Several features of Romans 8-9 suggest that the text contains language that would have triggered a conceptual field that included both Jewish and Greco-Roman notions of adoption.”<sup>45</sup> Watson criticizes scholars who search for an exclusive backdrop from a single milieu, whether Jewish or Greco-Roman.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Watson, *Paul, His Roman Audience, and the Adopted People of God*, 12.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 174.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 67-79. He specifically characterizes Byrne and Scott in such a manner, although at important points he misrepresents Byrne's work, which recognizes from the onset that *υιοθεσία* is an “image from the surrounding culture” (Byrne, *Sons of God – Seed of Abraham*, 1). Watson lambastes Byrne for presuming that a predominantly Gentile audience could “have derived the totality of the meaning of *υιοθεσία* from the texts of an alien culture in which neither the word nor the practice appears.” Not many pages later, however, he states that the “adoption/election of Israel is apparent” in the Old Testament, and must be factored in to the way in which the Roman audience interpreted the motif (Watson, *Paul, His Roman Audience, and the Adopted People of God*, 89). Watson fails to recognize that Byrne's work focuses specifically on the Jewish theological background, and not on the Greco-Roman derivation of the adoption metaphor, while his own study encompasses both aspects. He ends up inaccurately profiling Byrne's work as a wholesale rejection of any Greco-Roman contribution to *υιοθεσία*.

Several conclusions from Watson's exegesis are worth noting. First, he recognizes a connection between Romans 1:4 and the sonship theme in chapter 8. However, he does not follow Mawhinney and Scott in finding a divine adoption of Jesus in 1:4, with its implication that the adoption of believers follows a Christological pattern.<sup>47</sup> He does follow Scott's reading which views Romans 8 against an Exodus backdrop. In addition, he recognizes several features of believers' adoption in Romans 8 which mirror the Greco-Roman institution of *adoptio*.<sup>48</sup> Finally, Watson agrees with Scott's claim that *υιοθεσία* should only be translated as "adoption," and never as "sonship."<sup>49</sup>

### **Caroline Johnson Hodge**

*If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* represents an approach to adoption and ethnicity from the "radical New Perspective."<sup>50</sup> Hodge readily identifies with the two-covenant approach popularized by Lloyd Gaston and John Gager, and thus essentially finds two distinct roads to membership in God's people, depending upon whether one is a Jew or a Gentile. In typical "New Perspective" fashion, she describes her work as "an attempt to extricate Paul from Augustinian and Lutheran readings: rescuing him from Christians, rather than for Christians."<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup>Watson, *Paul, His Roman Audience, and the Adopted People of God*, 147.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 192-99. Most of these parallels were recognized by previous scholars, for example, Trevor J. Burke, "Adoption and the Spirit in Romans 8," *Evangelical Quarterly* 70 (1998): 311-24.

<sup>49</sup>Watson, *Paul, His Roman Audience, and the Adopted People of God*, 74.

<sup>50</sup>Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 153, emphasis original. In this, Hodge shows deference to the influential movement initiated at least in part by Krister Stendahl's famous essay, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," in *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 78-96. Stendahl argued that Western Christians have fundamentally misunderstood Paul's teaching

The starting block of Hodge's thesis is that Paul did not preach a “de-ethnicized Christianity.” Instead, “the categories of kinship and ethnicity shape the relationships between Jews and their God, between Paul and his gentile audience, between Paul and his fellow *Ioudaioi*.” Building upon this affirmation of the centrality of ethnic specificity for Paul, Hodge concludes that “the central theological problem” for Paul is the alienation of Gentiles from the God of Israel.<sup>52</sup> Paul proposes adoption through baptism into Christ as the solution to this conundrum: “gentiles have been adopted as sons and made into a *laos* of the God of Israel, a position previously occupied by the Israelites alone.”<sup>53</sup> Paul makes a way for Gentiles “to be made right with the God of Israel” by formulating a new means of connection to Israel, the historical people of God. No longer would a Gentile have to forsake his status as a non-Jew by becoming a proselyte, but a Gentile can partake of the blessings of Israel's God by means of “kinship creation,” in which “gentiles are made descendants of Abraham.” Paul “uses the discourses of kinship and ethnicity to construct a myth of origins for gentile followers of Christ.”<sup>54</sup>

But how is Paul able to create a place for Gentiles in the people of God in which “gentiles-in-Christ and Jews are separate but related lineages of Abraham”?<sup>55</sup>

Hodge avers that Paul approached kinship and ethnicity constructs not as “fixed,

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on justification as a result of reading his letters anachronistically through an introspective Western lens. Stendahl and his “New Perspective” followers emphasized that Paul's main concern in penning his letters was not necessarily in describing “justification by faith,” or how individuals can be saved, but rather to deal with pressing issues regarding the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the church.

<sup>52</sup>Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 4.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 3. Hodge, along with many others, prefers not to capitalize the term “gentile.” The arguments both for and against capitalization appear equally compelling. The capitalized form, “Gentile,” which appears to remain the preference among a majority of scholars, will be employed in this study.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

immutable aspects of identity,” but rather as “dynamic discourses which incorporate both fixed and fluid components” in which “relationship was open to change and negotiation.” Kinship, as a social construction, could be established not only by means of physical descent, but also through “common practices, language, religion, or geographical region.” Thus, according to this paradigm, “religious ritual authorizes the creation of kinship.”<sup>56</sup> In short, Paul capitalized upon the “strategic use of kinship metaphors,” a strategy which was apparently ubiquitous in the Ancient Near East, to supply a means for Gentiles also to be a people of Israel's God. Finally, because “Paul's kinship logic derives primarily from the ideology of patrilineal descent,”<sup>57</sup> making Gentiles “seed of Abraham” through adoption was an eminently reasonable way to establish such a connection.

### **Critical Evaluation of Existing Ἰουθεσία Investigations**

Several valuable studies on Ἰουθεσία have appeared over the last half-century. It will be beneficial to provide a brief critique of the existing studies before presenting the thesis of the current investigation. Thus, this section will first examine the highlights of previous scholarship, illuminating areas where helpful contributions have been made, drawing attention to areas where the discussion is still in flux and no particular view has gained ascendancy, and summarizing conclusions where the dust of scholarly dialogue has settled. Then, it will highlight some vital weaknesses and omissions in the present state of Ἰουθεσία scholarship.

#### **Contributions made by previous scholarship.** Ἰουθεσία scholars have

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<sup>56</sup>Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 16.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

accomplished much in advancing our knowledge of this intriguing New Testament motif. For example, the excellent studies by Byrne and Mawhinney rightly highlight the eschatological nature of υιοθεσία, while both Mawhinney and Burke accentuate the ethical ramifications of membership in God's family. Scott's careful study has advanced our lexical understanding of υιοθεσία, as well as cemented a connection between the New Testament motif and the Jewish literature. Byrne, followed by Hodge, evaluates the important relationship in Galatians and Romans between adoption as sons of God and the believers' becoming "seed of Abraham." Finally, Burke and Watson have highlighted some of the socio-cultural implications of the term by explaining how first-century auditors would have understood it as a theological metaphor.

**Areas of uncertainty.** In at least three areas, the scholarly dialogue regarding υιοθεσία has yet to garner a consensus. First, it appears that scholars have yet to reach a firm conclusion on the question of the background of the term. The discussion has oscillated between those who locate the theme solely in the Hebrew Scriptures,<sup>58</sup> and those who argue for a Greek or Roman provenance.<sup>59</sup> However, it is not apparent that such an either-or approach is warranted; it is perfectly reasonable to conclude that the theological freight of the term derives from the Old Testament, while its metaphorical and

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<sup>58</sup>This group includes both those who search for evidence of the legal institution of adoption in the Hebrew Scriptures, and those who simply seek a theological background there. For example, Samuel I. Feigin, "Some Cases of Adoption in Israel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 50 (1931): 186–200; William H. Rossell, "New Testament Adoption—Graeco-Roman or Semitic?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 71 (1952): 233–34; Daniel J. Theron, "'Adoption' in the Pauline Corpus," *Evangelical Quarterly* 28 (1956): 6–14; Harald-Martin Wahl, "Ester, Das Adoptierte Waisenkind: Zur Adoption Im Alten Testament," *Biblica* 80 (1999): 78–99; Scott, *Adoption as Sons*.

<sup>59</sup>W. M. Calder, "Adoption and Inheritance in Galatia," *Journal of Theological Studies* 31 (1930): 372–74; Francis Lyall, "Roman Law in the Writings of Paul: Adoption," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88 (1969): 458–66; idem, *Slaves, Citizens, Sons: Legal Metaphors in the Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1984), 82–88.

lexical value hails from the contemporary Greco-Roman society in which the first readers of Galatians, Romans, and Ephesians lived.<sup>60</sup> It appears that scholars have been talking past one another on this very point, not recognizing that while one is seeking the theological backdrop for the theme, another may be exploring the metaphorical, lexical, or cultural value of the actual Greek term. Recent scholarship from Trevor Burke and Edward Watson helpfully recognizes this dichotomy; perhaps their contributions will lead the way toward a consensus.<sup>61</sup>

A second area of persistent uncertainty is the quest for a definite antecedent within the Hebrew Scriptures. If it is granted that the theme of adoption derives from the Old Testament writings, how can one determine precisely to which part of the Scriptures it refers? The most common scholarly suggestions posit allusions to the exodus from Egypt (Exod 4:22), the oracle to David in 2 Samuel 7, or a combination of the two. Because the term *υιοθεσία* never appears in the Old Testament, and because Paul never specified a genesis for the motif, it may be the case that certainty regarding this question is unattainable. However, the lack of certainty regarding an exact referent should not dissuade us from pursuing an Old Testament background for *υιοθεσία*, for the most likely explanation is that Paul was building upon what he viewed to be a regular motif throughout the biblical narrative.

A final glaring conundrum that has haunted *υιοθεσία* scholarship is the desire to pinpoint an exact legal parallel from contemporaneous society. For many years,

<sup>60</sup>Ironically, James Scott's investigation devotes considerable time and space to his *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*-based investigation into the extant Greek evidence for the term, yet in the end he opts to ignore any Greco-Roman derivation for the Pauline usage, focusing exclusively on the Old Testament foundation instead.

<sup>61</sup>Following Burke, a recent article by Kyu Seop Kim also recognizes this important distinction. See Kyu Seop Kim, "Another Look at Adoption in Romans 8:15 in Light of Roman Social Practices and Legal Rules," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 44 (2014): 133-43.



researchers debated the precise legal derivation for Paul's use of the υιοθεσία concept.<sup>62</sup> The particular blend of attributes ascribed to υιοθεσία in Paul's teaching, however, appears to preclude harmony with any of the known forms of adoption from the first-century world. For now, scholarship has resigned itself to the conclusion that Paul need not comply in every detail with the exact legal requirements mandated by any particular form of adoption, but that he simply requires a broad conceptual match to make the metaphor effective.

**Areas of general consensus.** In at least two major areas, scholarly give-and-take has waned, suggesting that the discussion has largely been settled. As a result, this study will be able to build upon the foundation supplied by previous scholars. It will therefore be unnecessary to devote substantial time and effort to these two areas formerly marked by uncertainty and debate. The first conclusion relates to the meaning of the Greek term υιοθεσία. Until 1992, when James Scott's influential study on υιοθεσία was published, scholars had vacillated between two options for the meaning of the term: (1) the action of adoption to sonship, and (2) the status of sonship which is conferred upon someone by means of adoption. Scott concluded that υιοθεσία always denotes the action, "adoption as son."<sup>63</sup> Byrne, however, has noted that Scott's conclusions create undue confusion in readings of Romans 8:15-23. If it were the case that υιοθεσία always denotes the action of adoption, and never its resultant state, then Romans 8:15 and 23 would appear to teach two distinct adoptions for the same individuals (within the same pericope!). As an alternative, Byrne has suggested the gloss of υιοθεσία as "adoptive son-

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<sup>62</sup>See especially Lyall, "Roman Law in the Writings of Paul: Adoption"; idem, *Slaves, Citizens, Sons*; Calder, "Adoption and Inheritance in Galatia."

<sup>63</sup>Scott, *Adoption as Sons*, 55.

ship,” which communicates both the act and the resultant status. In light of the fact that the *act* of adoption always results in the *status* of sonship, Byrne's compromise seems reasonable.<sup>64</sup> At any rate, the term may have been flexible enough to communicate the action, the resultant status, or both at once.

A second area in which a solid foundation for future work has been laid is in Trevor Burke's insight into the false dichotomy of choosing between a Greco-Roman parallel and an Old Testament background as the motivation for Paul's choice of υιοθεσία.<sup>65</sup> As mentioned above, rather than positing an either-or situation, it is best to affirm a both-and scenario. Thus, both the first-century legal institution and a potential Old Testament theological influence served as the impulse for Paul's selection of υιοθεσία as a theological term.<sup>66</sup>

It is reasonable to conclude that the Hebrew Scriptures contributed to Paul's use of the adoption motif. First, it is common knowledge that Paul had a propensity for

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<sup>64</sup>Brendan J. Byrne, review of *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ in the Pauline Corpus*, by James M. Scott, *Journal of Theological Studies* 44 (1993): 291-93. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 425, aptly states, “The debate on whether the focus is on the act of adoption or the status of adoption is oversubtle. In either case the intention is to assert the *fact* of adoption for those who have received the Spirit.”

<sup>65</sup>Burke, *Adopted as Sons of God*, 264. See also Watson, *Paul, His Roman Audience, and the Adopted People of God*, 3. Of the various Greek and Roman legal options, the Roman institution of *adoptio* provides the best fit for the Pauline metaphor. See Lyall, *Slaves, Citizens, Sons*, 82-88; Burke, “Pauline Adoption: A Sociological Approach,” 128.

<sup>66</sup>Scholars debate whether a legal means existed by which Jewish people in the Old Testament could adopt or be adopted. There exists no evidence that Jewish legal means were provided for adoption. Lyall and Mawhinney note that in several purported instances of Jewish adoption in the Old Testament, the adoption transpires in a foreign milieu, and thus likely does not demonstrate a basis in Hebrew law. Other apparent adoptions turn out merely to be instances of fosterage. Furthermore, surrogacy and levirate marriages accomplished the primary role that adoption was usually intended to supply, that of supplying an heir to perpetuate the family line (Lyall, “Roman Law in the Writings of Paul: Adoption,” 459-62; Mawhinney, “Huiothesia in the Pauline Epistles,” 38-49). Therefore, Paul likely did not derive the legal aspect of his adoption motif from the Hebrew Scriptures or Jewish practice. However, it seems apparent that the Old Testament provides a theological and thematic seedbed from which Paul derived his concept of divine sonship.

grounding his theology in his readings of Scripture, and thus it would not be surprising to find such to be the case with υιοθεσία. Secondly, the monographs by Brendan Byrne and Caroline Johnson Hodge on υιοθεσία have demonstrated the clear coupling of Paul's adoption teaching with the Abraham narrative.<sup>67</sup> Third, Paul himself appears to make a connection between υιοθεσία and the Exodus in Romans 9:4.

At the same time, however, the evidence that Paul's υιοθεσία theme is a metaphor drawn from contemporary society is also compelling. Foremost among the factors supporting this conclusion is the fact that the term υιοθεσία itself never appears in the Septuagint. Secondly, one may assume that the first idea that would spring to the mind of the original audiences of Galatians, Romans, and Ephesians would be the common contemporary socio-legal institution of adoption,<sup>68</sup> an institution popularized and validated by the fact that multiple Roman emperors within recent memory had ascended to their positions of power by means of their own adoption. One may also note that the majority of the auditors of these epistles were Gentiles who probably lacked thorough training in the Hebrew Scriptures, and thus would be less likely to gather from υιοθεσία a subtle allusion to the Old Testament. The inability of modern scholarship to agree upon a specific Old Testament background for the motif should temper the presumption that Paul's original audience would have clearly seen that which has remained veiled to the eyes of modern scholarship. Nevertheless, Paul was more than capable of weaving such subtleties into his writing, in spite of the fact that such depths of meaning might be lost on

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<sup>67</sup>One might also add that James Scott's study supplies potential evidence of a linkage with both 2 Sam 7:14 and the Exodus tradition. The connection Scott attempts to demonstrate, however, is tenuous, and therefore his thesis does not enjoy widespread agreement among scholars.

<sup>68</sup>“The recipients of the epistles, and certainly their later readers, would have interpreted legal language by the law they knew” (Francis Lyall, “Legal Metaphors in the Epistles,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 32 [1981]: 82).

a large percentage of his original audience.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, this study will work with the fundamental presupposition that the theological concept which drives Paul's υιοθεσία motif derives from the Hebrew Scriptures, particularly from God's dealings with the nation of Israel (see esp. Exod 4:22; Hos 1:10; cf. Rom 9:4).<sup>70</sup> At the same time, it affirms that Paul capitalized upon the common societal familiarity with υιοθεσία as a legal institution, in order to formulate an effective metaphor for the inclusion of Christ-believers into a new, divine family.

**Weaknesses of υιοθεσία scholarship.** It is now time to identify a few of the weaknesses and shortcomings in υιοθεσία scholarship that stand in need of alleviation. Three major weakness within υιοθεσία studies are (1) two-covenant (*Sonderweg*) hypotheses, (2) a lack of situational readings, and (3) significant gaps in υιοθεσία scholarship.

More than fifty years ago, Krister Stendahl made a suggestion that has steadily gained traction in the academic world. Stendahl intimated that Paul may have envisioned two different paths to salvation, one for Jews and the other for Gentiles. Because Paul never explicitly states that Jews must place their faith in Jesus,<sup>71</sup> and because Paul does not name Jesus Christ a single time in Romans 10:17-11:36, Stendahl averred that the salvation of Israel spoken of in Romans 11:26 may not be based upon faith in Jesus as the

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<sup>69</sup>On the different types of auditors and the varying levels of understanding among the recipients of the Pauline correspondence, see Christopher D. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2004).

<sup>70</sup>Trevor J. Burke, *The Message of Sonship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 45. Scott, *Adopted as Sons of God*, also presents a strong argument that 2 Sam 7:14 should be included in the OT background of the υιοθεσία motif. He traces what he believes to be the Jewish reception history of what he dubs the “adoption formula” contained in this passage.

<sup>71</sup>This point is questionable, especially in light of Gal 2:16.

Messiah, as much previous scholarship had assumed.<sup>72</sup>

A number of subsequent scholars have embraced Stendahl's idea and fleshed it out in more detail, producing what has become known as the *Sonderweg* (German for “special path”) theory.<sup>73</sup> Essentially, proponents of this hypothesis aver that Israel's salvation does not depend upon the work of Jesus or faith in him: Jesus is *not* “the climax of the history of God's dealing with Israel,”<sup>74</sup> and “Israel's salvation . . . does not take the form of embracing Christ.”<sup>75</sup> Instead, Jesus provides salvation for non-Jews, as “the fulfillment of God's promises concerning the Gentiles.”<sup>76</sup>

In addition to claiming that Jesus' work provides primarily for Gentiles, and not Jews, the Gaston/Gager approach also reaches some unique conclusions regarding the audiences of Paul's letters and the meaning of Paul's criticisms of the Law. First, with

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<sup>72</sup>Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, 4, says, “Paul's reference to God's mysterious plan is an affirmation of a God-willed coexistence between Judaism and Christianity in which the missionary urge to convert Israel is held in check.”

<sup>73</sup>This hypothesis has come to be identified with the work of Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), and John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), but other scholars have followed their lead as well, including Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), and Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*.

This perspective must not be confused, however, with the view of Franz Mußner, who also used the “*Sonderweg*” terminology, but referred to a *sola gratia, solus Christus* salvation for Israel upon the second coming of Christ. Mußner argued that God will not remove Israel's hardening until they visibly see Christ arrive and hear him proclaim the gospel. The distinctive feature of this view is that, although a very small minority of Jews will be saved through the evangelization of the church, this mission is “exceptional,” in contrast to the “normal” salvific work that will transpire only at the Parousia. It is only in this way that, according to Rom 11:26, “all Israel will be saved.” On this see Franz Mußner, *Tractate on the Jews* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 32-34. For a recent summary and criticism of Mußner's approach, see Michael G. Vanlaningham, “Should the Church Evangelize Israel? A Response to Franz Mussner and Other *Sonderweg* Proponents,” *Trinity Journal* 22 (2001): 197-217.

<sup>74</sup>Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 33.

<sup>75</sup>Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, 142.

<sup>76</sup>Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 33; Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, 146; Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 139. Some proponents of the *Sonderweg* theory maintain that a Jewish person could ostensibly obtain salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The point, however, is that because Jews were already members of God's chosen covenant community, Paul did not require or expect them to do so.

reference to the audiences of the Pauline epistles, Gaston and Gager assert that Paul's congregations “consisted entirely of Gentiles.”<sup>77</sup> While it is almost indisputable that a majority of the recipients were Gentiles, it is also difficult to deny that, at the very least, a minority of Jewish believers worshiped alongside the Gentiles in some of these congregations. This conclusion of the Gaston/Gager hypothesis runs roughshod over not only the secondary evidence from Acts, but also some important primary information within the Pauline correspondence. The Gentile-only audience hypothesis is dubious, at best.

In wrestling with the difficulties of Paul's language regarding “law,” Gaston and Gager once again conjure some controversial hypotheses. First, they conclude that the Pauline phrase ὑπὸ νόμον (“under law”) always and only refers to Gentiles.<sup>78</sup> Gaston's and Gager's hermeneutical predisposition to avoid any readings which portray Paul as critical of Judaism or the Jewish people compels them to take this idiosyncratic stance. Because it is manifest that Paul's ὑπὸ νόμον phrase regularly carries a negative connotation, they are forced to the unlikely conclusion that the phrase, along with its unfavorable nuances, must refer to Gentiles alone.<sup>79</sup> This thesis has gained few adherents.

Gaston's struggle with Paul's variegated usage of νόμος leads him to postulate two different meanings for the term, in which the particular context is the sole determinant of which meaning is intended. For example, when Paul uses the term νόμος

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<sup>77</sup>Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, 78; Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 23. See also William J. Dalton, “The Meaning of ‘We’ in Galatians,” *Australian Biblical Review* 38 (1990): 36.

<sup>78</sup>Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 29-30; Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, 91-92; Dalton, “The Meaning of ‘We’ in Galatians,” 38-41.

<sup>79</sup>Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 43, suggests that the Gentiles were placed “under law” either at Creation or in Adam. Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, 91, believes the phrase refers to the status of the Galatian believers before their conversion, as “sympathizers loosely and ambiguously connected with Jewish synagogues.”

to refer to Jews (and Gentiles positioned within the covenant, i.e., proselytes), νόμος has a positive function. On the other hand, when νόμος is connected to Gentiles who are outside the Mosaic Law-covenant, it bears only a negative, oppressive character.<sup>80</sup>

Space does not permit a detailed assessment of the Gaston/Gager hypothesis here, but the exegesis portions of this study will provide significant opportunity to interact in particular with these three aspects of the *Sonderweg* approach.<sup>81</sup> Careful interpretation of the relevant texts will reveal that Paul had in mind a better path than the *Sonderweg*.

Thus far, the only νοθεσία scholar who has directly tied adoption to the *Sonderweg* approach is Caroline Johnson Hodge. Nevertheless, two-covenant hypotheses are a major weakness of νοθεσία scholarship, because many scholars accept as a foregone conclusion that Paul only applied adoption to Gentiles. Although the majority of scholarship has rejected the Gaston/Gager approach, many at the same time simply assume that νοθεσία functions as a proviso that allows the Gentiles, as Gentiles, to participate in the people of God.<sup>82</sup> The inherent assumption of such a conclusion would be that Gentiles and Jews, in the eschatological era, do indeed gain admittance into the covenant community via different roads.

A second weakness in current νοθεσία scholarship is a dearth of situational

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<sup>80</sup>Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 29-32.

<sup>81</sup>Frank Thielman, *From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul's View of the Law in Galatians and Romans* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 123-32, supplies a thorough critique of the Gaston/Gager approach.

<sup>82</sup>It is notable that the list of scholars who arrive at this conclusion runs the gamut from adherents of the so-called "New Perspective" on Paul to ardent opponents of that movement. What remains most interesting is that many scholars simply assert that adoption is only for Gentiles without even making their case for this position. A brief sampling includes Denise K. Buell and Caroline Johnson Hodge, "The Politics of Interpretation: The Rhetoric of Race and Ethnicity in Paul," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123 (2004): 246-47; William S. Campbell, *Paul's Gospel in an Intercultural Context: Jew and Gentile in the Letter to the Romans* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 63-64; A. Andrew Das, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 70; Runesson, "Inventing Christian Identity," 81; Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*, 130.

readings. The term “situational readings” refers to interpretations which factor in both the historical situations which warranted the penning of the letters, and a contextual focus on the function of the υιοθεσία passages within the argumentative flow of each epistle. Because earlier studies exerted tremendous effort in locating the background of Paul's adoption motif, they often neglected such readings. As noted above, researchers are beginning to shift the focus onto other, formerly neglected aspects of υιοθεσία. Edward Watson's study, using “ancient audience criticism,” has helpfully drawn attention back to the recipients of the Pauline missives, asking pertinent questions regarding the nature of the audience and how they would understand the adoption passages within the letter.<sup>83</sup> Watson presupposes a mixed audience of both Jews and Gentiles in Rome, and insightfully asks from both Jewish and Greco-Roman perspectives, how the recipients would receive the text. Because the adoption motif spans Galatians, Romans, and Ephesians, while Watson's book focuses exclusively on Romans, more work on υιοθεσία along these lines remains to be accomplished.

Additionally, a critical piece of the υιοθεσία puzzle has been missing, in that while seeking to exposit υιοθεσία, scholars have frequently overlooked the historical exigencies which called forth these three epistles. More careful attention to what is known of the historical circumstances among the initial recipients of Galatians, Romans, and Ephesians when these letters were penned is required. Such an application of the background of these letters will furnish a better, more accurate understanding of the authorial decision to use the adoption metaphor.

A final weakness of previous scholarship is the fact that it has, for the most

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<sup>83</sup>Watson, *Paul, His Roman Audience, and the Adopted People of God*. See above, “The Present State of Υιοθεσία Scholarship,” for a synopsis of Watson's study.



part, overlooked some important pieces of evidence. Acknowledging the connection that *υιοθεσία* consistently shares with the topics of ethnicity, social identity, and the Law will enrich scholars' understanding of this theme.

As mentioned above, the present state of *υιοθεσία* scholarship suffers from a lack of situational readings. That is, studies on the topic frequently overlook the exegetical context of the *υιοθεσία* pericopae within the argument and structure of the epistles, and they often neglect the historical situations that evoked these three letters. Even a cursory reading of Galatians, Romans, and Ephesians reveals that each of these missives exhibit a more than passing interest in the related themes of ethnicity and social identity (Jews, Gentiles, and membership in the eschatological people of God), and the relation of Christ-believers to the Mosaic law code. While most scholars recognize this fact, few have capitalized upon its importance for interpreting the *υιοθεσία* theme. This general situation of neglect becomes even more glaring when one notes the strategic location of the four appearances of *υιοθεσία* in Galatians and Romans. The epistolary context of each of these missives reveals that *υιοθεσία* recurs in letters burdened with the question of how Christ-believers relate to the Mosaic Law.<sup>84</sup> As for Ephesians, the prominent location of *υιοθεσία* at the head of the thematic introduction to the letter is indicative of its centrality to some of the major themes to be developed later in the epistle, including the central motifs of ethnicity, identity, and the Law.

### **Thesis of the Present Study**

The primary objective of this study is to determine how *υιοθεσία* functions within the argumentative context of Galatians, thereby establishing a foundation for future

<sup>84</sup>*Υιοθεσία* occurs in Gal 4:5 and Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4. Gal 3 and Rom 7 contain what are probably the two most comprehensive Pauline discussions of the relationship of Christians to the Law.

cross-canonical comparisons. The bulk of the discussion will focus on the role of υιοθεσία within Galatians. The concrete historical scenario which evoked the letter, Paul's response to this situation within the theological argument of the letter, and the role played by υιοθεσία within that argument, are all of primary importance to this study. After determining how υιοθεσία functions within Galatians, the study will conclude with a brief analysis of the four occurrences of υιοθεσία in Romans and Ephesians. A cross-canonical comparison of υιοθεσία within the historical exigencies that evoked the term's use will reveal a consistency not usually noted by scholars, and specifically that the common denominators in all five settings of υιοθεσία are the related topics of Christian identity, ethnicity, and the Mosaic Law.<sup>85</sup>

The thesis of this study is as follows: *Υιοθεσία is an eschatological event which establishes a new identity for believers in Jesus Christ and functions as a resolution to difficult questions regarding ethnicity and membership in the people of God.* This conclusion contains three primary components. First, identity formation is the purpose for the υιοθεσία motif. This means that in Christ, people of all nationalities gain a new identity as members of the eschatological people of God. This new identity is formed alongside other non-conflicting aspects of individuals' identity, and therefore does not necessarily supersede existing ethno-national identities. Second, υιοθεσία is an eschatological event which occurs only through union with Jesus the Messiah and the corresponding work of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the historical, ecclesiological, and

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<sup>85</sup>Although the question of background is important for a comprehensive understanding of υιοθεσία, this study will not attempt a foray into that particular aspect of the term. Byrne, Mawhinney, and Scott have supplied the most useful scholarly studies devoted to resolving this question. My conclusion, briefly stated, is that Paul derived the terminology and metaphorical import of υιοθεσία from the surrounding Greco-Roman culture, yet he infused it with theological meaning derived from OT descriptions of Israel and of David's offspring as God's "son." This he combined with his belief that the eschatological people of God are those who are united by faith with Jesus, who is the seed of Abraham, son of David, and Son of God *par excellence*.

practical function of υιοθεσία within the Pauline corpus is to supply a response for the challenging questions regarding ethnicity and requirements for membership in the people of God. Several lines of evidence will be proffered to demonstrate the validity of these three aspects of my thesis.

Among its five canonical appearances, υιοθεσία is not a monolithic term. That is, it is not used in exactly the same manner in all five of its occurrences. While the dictionary meaning for υιοθεσία is consistent with the English equivalent “adoption,” when used as a spiritual metaphor, the term gains an additional flexibility which enables it to serve unique roles within the arguments of each setting. Therefore, every appearance of υιοθεσία contributes to its individual context in a unique way. At the same time, careful exegesis of the five passages will reveal that some aspects of υιοθεσία persist through all five appearances of the term. Therefore, this study will argue that υιοθεσία demonstrates measures of both malleability and persistence. Three major areas of consistency will be highlighted across the five canonical occurrences of υιοθεσία. These areas of consistency constitute the major contribution that the adoption motif makes to the scholarly literature: new identity, eschatology, and ethnicity.

### **Defining the Problem: Ethnicity and Membership in the Covenant Community**

Christianity was not birthed in a vacuum, nor was it created *ex nihilo*. The Jewish heritage of the movement combined with Christianity's rapidly expanding mission to the Gentiles to forge a scenario in which social and ethnic tensions stressed the nascent group. The early church was fraught with difficulties borne of questions regarding ethnicity and membership within the covenant community.

In the first-century world, it was extremely difficult to sever national identity

from religious identity. In the case of the Jewish people, religion was very nearly coextensive with the Jewish nation. To be a member of the Jewish religion, one had either to be born into a Jewish family (κατὰ σάρκα), or to become a Jewish proselyte. Thus, full membership in the religion of the Jews was limited to those who were born into a family of Jewish descent, or those who had “Judaized” via the established means of proselytizing.<sup>86</sup>

This state of affairs clashed with the claims of early Christian proclamation, for Christianity not only claimed to be the eschatological fulfillment to the Jewish religion, but also opened wide the doors of inclusion to Gentiles. How could one possibly stake a claim to the privileges and promises of the historical Jewish people, all the while retaining his or her identity as a Gentile? This audacious claim created a nearly insoluble situation for early Christian evangelists.

Naturally, many Jewish members of the Jesus movement expected Gentile believers to become full proselytes (Acts 11:1-3; 15:1, 5). Others were willing to make some concessions (Acts 10:44-48; 11:17-18; 13:38-39; 15:7-11, 19-21). A key question, then, was “What should be required of the Gentiles who desire to be a part of the eschatological people of God?” Should they, by submitting to circumcision and Law-observance, become Jewish proselytes, thereby renouncing their former ethnic/national

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<sup>86</sup>While there is some varying evidence for the time period (see esp. the case of King Izates, as related by Josephus, *Ant.* 20.34-48), the minimal requirements for becoming a Jewish proselyte *usually* included circumcision (for males), observance of Kosher food laws, feast days, and adherence to the purity codes. See Christopher D. Stanley, “The Ethnic Context of Paul's Letters,” in *Christian Origins and Hellenistic Judaism: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 186: “Greeks' and Romans could become Ἰουδαῖοι by accepting circumcision (if they were males), embracing Jewish religious and social customs, and affiliating themselves with the local Jewish community.” John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 164, notes that there existed a “spectrum of different ways in which Judaism was presented to the gentiles.” This “spectrum” “presented a soft edge to the gentile world and was willing to recognize various degrees of attachment, and, by implication, of salvation” (Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 168).

identity? Or does the eschatological watershed marked by the coming of Christ signal an era in which Gentiles are to be welcomed into the covenant community *as Gentiles*? If so, what are the implications of this for Jewish-Christian identity? In the early years of the Jesus movement, the inseparability of nationality from religion within the Jewish identity collided with the international mission to the Gentiles. The result was an identity crisis which warranted a careful response from the early Christian leaders, foremost among them being Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles.

The resultant situation tended to create two scenarios, one in which tension was placed upon Gentile believers to “Judaize,”<sup>87</sup> and another situation in which Gentile believers were tempted to arrogantly question the ongoing validity of the Jewish people in God's plan. In the former case, early believers were asking, “Must Gentile believers become Jews in order to gain admittance into the people of God?”<sup>88</sup> The other situation flipped the script, asking, “Now that a new eschatological era has arrived in Jesus Christ, and salvation has extended to the Gentiles, has the role of the Jewish people in God's plan concluded?” Furthermore, this second scenario raised the all-important question of the continuing validity of the Mosaic Law.<sup>89</sup> The questions did not come with easy answers, and the *υιοθεσία* motif represents a part of the Pauline solution to this early Christian crisis of identity.

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<sup>87</sup>Properly speaking, “to Judaize” (Ἰουδαΐζειν) means “to live as a Jew, acc. to Jewish customs,” as in Gal 2:14 (BDAG, s.v. “Ἰουδαΐζω”). This study will use the term exclusively in this sense. Although some scholars use the term “Judaizer” to refer to those who attempted to compel Gentile believers to adopt Jewish practices, the practice of this study is to avoid the confusion such a use may cause.

<sup>88</sup>Acts 15 and the Epistle to the Galatians evince prominent examples of this situation.

<sup>89</sup>The situation which called forth Paul's Epistle to the Romans appears to match this scenario. It also appears as though a similar attitude may have evoked the Epistle to the Ephesians.

## **Ethnicity and Ὑιοθεσία**

Paul had to deal with what I have termed an “identity crisis” in the early decades of the Christ-movement. An early example of this challenge pertained to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God, and the requirements incumbent upon them for their reception. While there was a general consensus that the Gentile believers were included in the blessings of the covenant community, heated debate raged over whether the Gentile adherents should “Judaize” (Gk. Ἰουδαΐζειν, Gal 2:14) via circumcision and/or adherence to part or all of the Mosaic Law. In Galatians, the υιοθεσία pericope of 4:1-7 functions as a pivotal part of Paul's argument in response to such a situation. Here, Paul argues that to keep the Law is not required for believers in Christ—whether Jew or Gentile—to obtain salvation. Instead, “adoption” into God's eschatological family depends upon union with Jesus Christ, as evidenced by the possession of the Holy Spirit. In the eschatological era, for both Jews and Gentiles, to rely upon “works of the law” as a means of covenant membership represents a misunderstanding of the Law's role and engenders slavery rather than salvation.

Less than a decade later, Paul again had to alleviate a controversy regarding ethnicity and the Mosaic Law. Whereas the Galatian controversy revolved around the temptation to Judaize in order to participate in the historical people of God, the situation in Rome was nearly the opposite. This time, Gentile believers found themselves in a position of influence and power in the church, whereas the Jewish people appeared to be by and large rejecting (or rejected by!) the gospel. Rather than recognizing the ongoing rich spiritual heritage of Israel, the Gentiles in Rome were questioning whether or not God's history of blessing to Israel had exceeded its expiration date. Although the recipients and the situation had changed, the major components of Paul's response

remained the same. Paul would expatiate on the connection that Christ-believers maintain with Abraham, he would insist that the Mosaic law code is not requisite for those who are led by the Holy Spirit, and he would describe believers as the adopted children of God.

The fifth and final occurrence of υιοθεσία in Scripture appears in Ephesians. Although there exists little evidence regarding the situational details of this letter, one can deduce from the main arguments that the author was very concerned to elaborate on unity and peace within the church. The prime example of this harmony is the eschatological camaraderie enjoyed by Jewish and Gentile believers now that the “dividing wall of separation, the law” has been abolished (Eph 2:14-15). Thus, υιοθεσία once again appears in a context in which queries concerning ethnicity and Law appear to drive the discussion. As in Romans, it appears that the author goes to great lengths to emphasize the heritage, privileges, and blessings of historical Israel. Thus, one may tentatively conclude that a situation similar to Romans motivated the penning of Ephesians: Gentile believers were in danger of thinking too little of the Jewish heritage of their Christian faith.

### **Eschatology and Υιοθεσία**

The thesis of this study alleges that υιοθεσία is a distinctly eschatological event. This means that υιοθεσία occurs strictly in the new age inaugurated by the work of Jesus Christ (including his earthly life, death, resurrection, ascension, and current role at God the Father's right hand). This broader “eschatological” heading includes four specific implications. First, υιοθεσία is a part of the “new covenant” promised in the Hebrew Scriptures (Jer 31:31-34), and set into motion by the watershed events of Jesus' earthly life. Second, υιοθεσία is available not only to the Jewish nation (Israel κατὰ σάρκα), but is extended as well to Gentiles Third, υιοθεσία is accessible to both Jews and Gentiles

only through union with the person of Jesus Christ. Finally, υιοθεσία is conjoined with the arrival and work of the Holy Spirit (“the Spirit of adoption,” Rom 8:15), inasmuch as neither adoption nor the work of the Spirit transpires apart from the other.

As an element of the eschatological “new covenant,” υιοθεσία is offered to both Jews and Gentiles. This claim does not currently hold a status of scholarly consensus, and so its verification will be a focal point of this study. As mentioned above, many scholars assume that υιοθεσία is reserved particularly for Gentiles as their provision of entry into covenant membership. Broadly speaking, this conclusion takes two forms. The first of these is the aforementioned two-covenant theory, also known as the Gaston/Gager hypothesis. An alternative approach, less radical in form, is followed by more scholars. This approach maintains that, although both Jews and Gentiles in the new era obtain salvation “in Christ,” υιοθεσία still pertains solely to the manner of the Gentiles' inclusion.

My argument, however, maintains that Paul believed all humanity to be in the same state of slavery and accursedness. Although Paul affirmed the special historical advantage of Jews in that they were the chosen people of God who had received his oracles and a host of other privileges (Rom 3:2; 9:4-5), yet he saw Jewish people who had not believed in Christ to be under the same plight as unbelieving Gentiles. Their situation apart from Christ made them, in fact, the equivalent of “Gentile sinners” (Gal 2:15-17; Rom 3:19-20), just as Abraham was before he placed his faith in God “who justifies the ungodly” (Rom 4:5). Apart from Christ, all those who were under the Law were “accursed,” and “no different than a slave” (Gal 3:10; 4:1).<sup>90</sup> Those Jews who did not find

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<sup>90</sup>In Gal 4:1-3, 8-9, Paul equates the circumstances of Jews and Gentiles separated from Christ by describing both situations with the same terminology—slavery to the στοιχεῖα. On the meaning of στοιχεῖα, see the exegesis below, chap. 5.



God's proffered righteousness in Christ were unaware of the fact that righteousness by faith in Jesus is actually “attested by the law and the prophets,” and that such “faith upholds the law” (Rom 3:21-31). Only through faith-union with Jesus may anyone, Jew or Gentile, experience “redemption” and the “glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom 8:21-23; Gal 4:5).

As a result of this plight which Jews and Gentiles share in common, Jews and Gentiles also find their redemption in the same manner, through the adoption as sons which takes place only via union with Jesus Christ. Thus, I agree with scholars who maintain that salvation for all humanity depends upon a relationship with Christ. However, I also contend that the implication of this conclusion is that *υιοθεσία* is God's provision of salvation for all, Jew and Gentile alike.

### **Identity Formation and *Υιοθεσία***

In addition to arguing for *υιοθεσία* as both related to ethnicity discussions in Paul, and functioning as an eschatological theme, the thesis of this study avers that this motif functions in an identity-formative capacity. Faced with the early controversies regarding ethnicity and membership in the people of God, Paul used the metaphor of adoption as a means of explaining just how it is that people of every ethnic designation gain admittance into this group. This study will argue that through *υιοθεσία* Paul explains the new identity shared by all who are “in Christ,” whether Jew or Gentile. Moreover, *υιοθεσία* does not replace existing ethnic identities, but rather creates a new identity that functions alongside (or, to be more precise, above) individuals' ethnic designations.<sup>91</sup> In

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<sup>91</sup>There is a sense in which *υιοθεσία* does replace or transform some previously held identities. For example, previous affiliations with pagan religions dissolve when one is united with Christ. Former “sons of darkness” and “sons of wrath” transition to a new *patria potestas*, and no longer retain their old family ties. Additionally, those who are members of the Jewish people by physical descent experience a

order to do so, it will be necessary to explain what exactly is meant by the phrase “identity formation.” Thus, it is necessary briefly to turn to the field of sociology, in order to see how sociologists describe the process of identity construction. Then, the chapter will conclude by describing Paul's *νοιοθεσία* strategy. In the end, we will find that Paul's use of adoptive terminology functions to form a new eschatological identity for followers of Jesus Christ.

**The formation of social identity.** Modern sociology, and more specifically Social Identity Theory (SIT), provides an informative lens through which biblical scholars may view the documents affiliated with the formation of the early Christian movement. SIT, pioneered by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, attempts to provide a description of how individuals' self-conceptions are primarily created and impacted as a result of their social interactions and membership in social groups. Tajfel and Turner define “social identity” as “that *part* of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.”<sup>92</sup> Thus, according to this sociological paradigm, a person's self-understanding and valuation is primarily psychological, and derives largely from the social groups to which he or she is attached. This perspective on

transformation in certain aspects of their ethnic identity, inasmuch as their identity as a member of the Jewish people is nearly impossible to separate from their observance of the regulations of the Mosaic law code. While it does not appear that Paul explicitly proscribed most of such observance for those Jews who were “in Christ,” he was clearly suspicious that Law observance could easily be viewed as a corollary or supplement to the work of Christ. Some aspects of Jewish identity, however, had to be sacrificed. For example, Jewish purity laws which undermined fellowship with Gentile believers had to be compromised (Gal 2). For the Jew who had united with Christ, the part of their identity which was bound up with the Law had to undergo a significant transformation, for according to Paul, the Law brings wrath and contains no power to give life, a perspective which was at odds with prevailing Jewish thought.

<sup>92</sup>Henri Tajfel and John Turner, “An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict,” in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. Stephen Worchel and William G. Austin (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979), 63, italics original. See also Rupert Brown, *Group Processes: Dynamics within and between Groups* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 239.

identity corresponds with Peter Berger's and Thomas Luckman's influential “sociology of knowledge” theory, which Philip Esler describes well: “It is within society, and as a result of social processes, that the individual becomes a person and attains an identity.”<sup>93</sup>

Because identity derives from “the value and emotional significance attached to” group memberships, an unsurprising corollary of SIT is the fact that people naturally tend to seek out membership within groups that they imagine to be better, or otherwise they tend to seek ways to increase the perceived value of membership in their current groups by applying a change in perspective to those groups (a process referred to by Esler as “group differentiation through value inversion”).<sup>94</sup> Such changes serve to improve individuals' self-worth through the process of increasing the value of the groups with which one identifies.<sup>95</sup>

A second pertinent corollary of SIT is that each individual houses a plurality of “identities.” The sum total of a person's identity is comprised of all the different social sub-identities or “roles” played by that individual. Not every social sub-identity is in play all the time. Instead, different identities activate, or take the primary role, depending on the social situation. This concept is known primarily as “identity salience.”<sup>96</sup> The concept of “salience” describes how specific identities (or aspects of identity) rise to prominence

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<sup>93</sup>Philip Francis Esler, *The First Christians in Their Social Worlds: Social-scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1994), 7.

<sup>94</sup>Philip Francis Esler, “Group Boundaries and Intergroup Conflict in Galatians: A New Reading of Gal. 5:13-6:10,” in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark Brett (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 230.

<sup>95</sup>John C. Turner, *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 30, concludes that “people are motivated to establish positively valued distinctiveness for groups with which they identify” and “when social identity in terms of group membership is unsatisfactory, members will attempt to leave that group (psychologically or in reality) to join some more positively distinct group and/or to make their existing group more positively distinct.”

<sup>96</sup>As developed in many of the writings of Henri Tajfel. Bengt Holmberg (“Understanding the First Hundred Years of Christian Identity,” in *Exploring Christian Identity*, 28) refers to “nested identities.”

in particular situations. The aspect of identity which becomes dominant or primary in a given social situation is known as the “salient” identity, and usually corresponds to the individual's particular group identification which coheres best with that specific situation. Thus, individuals do not have a singular identity as such, but a multifaceted or manifold identity (often referred to as “multiple identities”), in correspondence with the plurality of groups of which one is a part. In fact, as long as different group memberships/identities are not mutually exclusive, an individual's total identity may possess a plethora of social sub-identities.<sup>97</sup>

Another key concept in SIT is the idea of a hierarchy of identities within an individual's total identity. Sociologists recognize that while each individual possesses a plethora of sub-identities, not all of these identities exist on the same plane of importance. Turner speaks of three distinct “levels of abstraction” by which individual aspects of identity are categorized: the “superordinate level of the self as human being,” “the intermediate level of ingroup-outgroup categorizations based on social similarities and differences between human beings that define one as a member of certain social groups and not others,” and “the subordinate level of personal self-categorizations based on differentiations between oneself as a unique individual and other ingroup members that define one as a specific individual person.”<sup>98</sup> If it is true that there exist “superordinate” and “subordinate” levels of identity, then it follows that the aspects of an individual's identity which fill the superordinate roles exercise a level of control and influence over

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<sup>97</sup>Anthony P. Cohen, *Symbolic Construction of Community* (New York: Routledge, 1985), 108-9, notes that each membership within a particular community or social group “gives to each [member] an additional referent for their identities.” Thus, every social position that an individual fills represents a discrete portion of their overall identity. See also Turner, *Rediscovering the Social Group*, 44.

<sup>98</sup>Turner, *Rediscovering the Social Group*, 45. It is easy to perceive that additional hierarchical divisions exist especially within the intermediate and subordinate categories.

the sub-identities and subordinate group memberships retained by that person.

Specifically, the particular superordinate identities to which a person commits may disallow previous lower-level identities which conflict with the superior subscription.

Alternatively, an individual may have to tailor or tweak his level of commitment to a subordinate categorization due to conflict between higher- and lower-level identities.

Therefore, according to prevailing sociological theory, social groups play the primary role in the formation of a person's identity. It is important to understand more about groups in order to perceive how they contribute to identity creation. Thus, a working description of a social group will be furnished, followed by a demonstration of the various roles that social groups play in defining identity.

Tajfel and Turner define a group as “a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category [and] share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves.”<sup>99</sup> Yet how is this “social category” to be distinguished as an existing entity? Sociologists have long defined social groups by their internal characteristics (i.e., the defining or stereotypical traits that all members of the group hold in common), but recent research demonstrates that groups are also to be defined negatively, by those areas in which they differ from outsiders. It is specifically in those areas where insiders and outsiders have the most interaction, yet persist in their distinctions, that a social group is defined and determined. Thus, Fredrik Barth points to the *boundaries*, those areas which distinguish ingroup members from those belonging to the outgroup, as the primary method of defining groups with precision. “If a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria for

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<sup>99</sup>Tajfel and Turner, “An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict,” 40.

determining membership and ways of signalling membership and exclusion.”<sup>100</sup> Cohen's remarks are apposite: “Boundaries are *relational* rather than absolute; that is, they mark the community *in relation to* other communities.”<sup>101</sup>

Two further aspects of boundaries need to be explored here. First, the boundaries of most social groups are permeable. This simply means that methods are often provided for one who was not formerly a member of a particular group to gain entry into this group.<sup>102</sup> Often, initiation rites (or “rites of passage”) are required as the method by which an individual transitions into group membership. Rupert Brown points out that these rituals play an important role for both the new member and the group. As far as the individual is concerned, participation in an initiation rite “helps in the process of identity transition” and “provide[s] a temporal reference point which allows the individual to say, 'I am not what I used to be.'” These rites also accomplish a needed function for the group as a whole in that they help the group to define its membership and boundaries.<sup>103</sup>

The second important attribute regarding boundaries is that they are ascribed, and therefore malleable. Social group boundaries are not fixed, but flexible. Barth, in opposition to the sociological view known as primordialism, argued for the theory of

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<sup>100</sup>Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), 14-15. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, 12, agrees: “The boundary encapsulates the identity of the community.” Barth's work focuses specifically upon ethnic groups, which is a subset of social groups. Although it does not follow that everything which applies to ethnic groups would also apply to the broader category of social groups, this aspect of his analysis can be effectively applied to social groups. So, e.g., Aaron Kuecker, “Ethnicity and Social Identity,” in *The T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014), 69: “Because ethnic identity is just one of many available layers of social identity within human societies, ethnicity can be helpfully described through the lens of social identity theory.”

<sup>101</sup>Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, 58, italics original.

<sup>102</sup>The process by which a Gentile may become a Jewish proselyte stands as a prime example of the permeability of a group which had a reputation for staunch exclusivity.

<sup>103</sup>Brown, *Group Processes*, 24.

“constructionism.” Barth viewed “ascription as the critical feature of ethnic groups.”<sup>104</sup> By ascription, Barth included both self-ascription and ascription by others. Thus, group identity is defined not by objective, unchangeable characteristics such as physical descent (as primordialists argue) or phenotype (the observable physical characteristics of an individual), but by the subjective definition (ascription) proffered by both ingroup and outgroup members.<sup>105</sup> In making ascription the “critical feature” of group definition, Barth demonstrates both the permeability and malleability of social groups.

Membership in various social groups plays a key role in defining an individual's identity. In addition to supplying the obvious benefits of acceptance and inclusion, membership within a group also carries the “value and emotional significance” that are perceived to inhere in that group. Groups often provide a sense of shared history or even a “myth” of common ancestry to their adherents. Members often gain the benefit of kinship with other constituents, whether real or fictive (think of the concept of a university fraternity, wherein members implicitly become “brothers”). A common behavioral expectation regularly attaches to membership within a group, and thus a group may have its own ethic or code of conduct (whether written or unwritten). All of these aspects of group membership contribute to the identity of the individuals who identify with the group.

Membership in a group also provides legitimation in various ways. For example, ingroup members may use unflattering stereotypes to describe outgroup

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<sup>104</sup>Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 14.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 13; Philip A. Harland, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians: Association, Judeans, and Cultural Minorities* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 6; Dennis C. Duling, “Ethnicity and Paul's Letter to the Romans,” in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*, ed. Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris (London: Routledge, 2010), 72.

members, thereby making membership within the ingroup seem more prestigious, appealing, and self-affirming. Additionally, ingroup members may intentionally differentiate themselves from outsiders through the process of value inversion, by which they identify with and overvalue a group characteristic that, from an outsider's perspective, may be perceived as having either no or even negative worth.<sup>106</sup>

An ongoing way in which groups create, re-create, and fortify their sense of identity is through their writings. Textual formation of identity plays a vital role in defining and legitimating the identity of a particular social group and its individual members. Several scholars have recognized that this is precisely what often transpired in the documents of the New Testament. For example, Warren Carter has argued that the gospels are documents specifically designed to shape the identity of their recipients. He points out four specific attributes of these writings that contribute to this identity-formative character. These attributes include the facts that they focus on a central figure, give instruction, provide a model to follow, and center on building community.<sup>107</sup>

Several other scholars have similarly pointed to the identity-formative nature of the early Christian documents. Mikael Tellbe notes the “key role” played by texts in constructing their readers' identity.<sup>108</sup> Judith M. Lieu argues that texts actually create group boundaries and self-understanding.<sup>109</sup> Paul S. Trebilco and J. Brian Tucker both

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<sup>106</sup>Groups often tend to identify with features that carry negative freight, thereby undermining outgroup stereotypes and inverting their value. An excellent example of this is how first-century believers adopted the term “Christian” as their own title in the face of the fact that the epithet had probably been coined by outsiders as a term of derogation.

<sup>107</sup>Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Socio-political and Religious Reading* (London: T & T Clark, 2000), 7-14.

<sup>108</sup>Mikael Tellbe, *Christ-Believers in Ephesus: A Textual Analysis of Early Christian Identity Formation in a Local Perspective* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 120.

<sup>109</sup>Judith M. Lieu, *Neither Jew nor Greek: Constructing Early Christianity* (New York, T & T



show that a dialectic takes place between texts and their recipients. “Language and identity are co-constructed,” argues Trebilco.<sup>110</sup> Tucker concurs: “texts and their readers/hearers share in the meaning-making endeavor.”<sup>111</sup> Thus, the interaction between a text (e.g., a Pauline letter) and the response of its audience (the churches) works in a reciprocal motion as the readers/hearers read the text, evaluate it, and formulate their conclusions regarding the text and its implications for who they are.<sup>112</sup> Lieu states, “textuality is not simply the articulation of identity, for some or for all, but is also the field of its contestation.”<sup>113</sup> Tellbe concludes, “The formation of early Christian identity is to a considerable extent, the result of the interpretation of its seminal texts.”<sup>114</sup> William S. Campbell maintains that, through his writings, “Paul was *consciously creating* and developing new communities of Christ-followers with a very strong solidarity and sense of belonging.”<sup>115</sup> This claim leads to the next part of my thesis—Paul’s strategy of early

Clark, 2002), 2-3.

<sup>110</sup>Trebilco, *Self-Designations and Group Identity*, 8-9. Trebilco notes in particular how the self-designations used by early Christians to express their identity “had the ongoing effect of further creating and reinforcing that identity.”

<sup>111</sup>J. Brian Tucker, *You Belong to Christ: Paul and the Formation of Social Identity in 1 Corinthians 1-4* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 31.

<sup>112</sup>Coleman A. Baker, “A Narrative-Identity Model for Biblical Interpretation,” in *The T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, 105-6, equates this process with Paul Ricoeur’s concept of “narrative identity.” According to Ricoeur, readers’ interaction with a text follows a three-stage process of “prefiguration, configuration, refiguration.”

<sup>113</sup>Judith M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 30. This important book assesses not only the documents which comprise the New Testament, but also Jewish and Christian writings preceding, contemporaneous to, and following the NT era.

<sup>114</sup>Tellbe, *Christ-Believers in Ephesus*, 119.

<sup>115</sup>Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity*, 86, italics mine. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World*, 24-25, however, prefers to remain agnostic on this aspect of textuality: “We are not necessarily uncovering a self-conscious process of self-definition; we shall prescind from determining whether . . . Paul thought of himself as establishing something separate.” In another place (*ibid.*, 10), however, she affirms that “It is the texts’ own presupposition that they will shape their audiences’ self-understanding.”

Christian identity formation.

**Paul's identity-formative  $\nu\iota\theta\epsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  strategy.** As mentioned above, many scholars recognize the identity-formative character of the early Christian documents, which of course include the writings of Paul. However, Paul's use of the  $\nu\iota\theta\epsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  motif has flown under the radar in discussions of early Christian identity formation. As explained above, this study builds upon those of previous scholars who have recognized the pivotal role of  $\nu\iota\theta\epsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  in the Apostle Paul's response to ethnicity questions. Additionally, I intend to demonstrate that Paul's use of the  $\nu\iota\theta\epsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  theme functioned as a deliberate means of articulating and reinforcing the unique identity of believers in Jesus. To that end, this study will seek to illuminate exactly how the adoption theme in Paul works to define early Christian identities, with specific attention devoted to its role in forming a Christian understanding of how ethnicity relates to membership in the eschatological people of God.

Theologically speaking, the gospel of the early Christian mission provided a solution to the question, "How does one gain admittance into the eschatological people of God?" Viewed from the perspective of sociology, however, the question might be rephrased, "How does one become a member of the desired 'ingroup?'" From this perspective, the "people of God" would be seen as the social group with which people aspire to identify. It is easy to understand why people would covet insider status in this group, for its benefits were obvious: the people of God were the heirs of God's promises to Abraham, enjoyed a covenant relationship with the one true God, received forgiveness of sin, and anticipated salvation in the end time. Thus, if it is true that one's social identity

derives from “the value and emotional significance attached to [group] membership,”<sup>116</sup> and if individuals naturally strive to improve the self-valuation of their own identity through membership in more highly-regarded groups,<sup>117</sup> then it makes perfect sense from a sociological perspective that individuals would seek the benefits of membership within this prestigious community.

The question, then, remains, how does one gain entry into this group?

Historically, the boundaries of this community were drawn strictly in terms of physical descent. Inclusion was coextensive with Jewishness. Even with such staunchly exclusive boundaries, though, there existed a measure of permeability, for the process of becoming a Jewish proselyte was available to those who desired membership. However, non-Jews who desired admittance within this people were forced to count the cost before “Judaizing,” for the process most often required the renunciation of former ethnic affiliations and the demanding observance of Jewish law codes, beginning with the circumcision requirement for males.

The Epistle to the Galatians makes clear, however, that Paul did not require Judaizing as an entrance criterion for membership within the people of God. In fact, he saw a fundamental danger in viewing conversion to the Jewish way of life as the means of entry. After the watershed events of Jesus' life, Paul and other missionaries proclaimed a gospel that offered membership within the people of God to non-Jews, and this without requiring the Gentile converts to Judaize. In sociological parlance, Paul was redefining the boundaries of the people of God. According to these newly described boundaries, ethnicity and Law-observance were no longer functional criteria for membership within

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<sup>116</sup>Tajfel and Turner, “An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict,” 63.

<sup>117</sup>Turner, *Rediscovering the Social Group*, 30.

the people of God. Although Paul maintained that ingroup members were still defined as descendants of Abraham and heirs of God's promises to him, the means by which Abrahamic descent is determined had been altered. In the eschatological era inaugurated by the earthly work of Jesus Christ, inclusion had become a matter of spiritual union with Christ rather than physical descent from the patriarchs. Because Jesus was the singular seed of Abraham *par excellence*, union with him was the decisive factor for membership.<sup>118</sup>

By redefining the boundaries which circumscribe the people of God, and thereby enabling Gentiles to enter *as Gentiles*, Paul was creating a new eschatological identity for his readers. While descent from Abraham was still a prerequisite for group membership, this descent was no longer defined in the traditional sense. What better way to describe this new spiritual reality than through the image of adoption? Those who “according to the flesh” were not descendants and heirs have now become so. Thus, Paul introduces the metaphor of *υιοθεσία* to describe the process by which people may gain entry into the *familia Dei*. Because descent from Abraham is defined spiritually rather than physically<sup>119</sup>, Paul necessarily includes those of Jewish descent within the adoption

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<sup>118</sup>The fact that Jesus was himself a descendant of both Abraham and David “according to the flesh” (Rom 1:3; Gal 3:16) means that Paul is not ignoring the promises made to Abraham and the nation of Israel. Salvation does indeed arrive by means of the Jewish Messiah (Rom 9:5).

<sup>119</sup>This is not to dismiss Paul's clear teaching that God has not rejected Israel according to the flesh (Rom 11:1-2). Paul affirms that God's promises to Israel have not failed (Rom 9:6; 11:29), that a chosen remnant will always persist (Rom 11:4-5), and that God retains a plan for the salvation of “all Israel” (Rom 11:26; cf. 11:12-16). At the same time, however, Paul can also, without contradiction, affirm that “not all those from Israel are Israel” (Rom 9:6).

This is the fundamental flaw in the two-covenant theory supported by Hodge. In her enthusiasm to affirm God's covenant promises to Israel *κατὰ σάρκα*, she neglects extensive evidence that Paul saw a division within Israel, or more precisely, an Israel within Israel, wherein some Israelites were members of a true, spiritual Israel (referred to by Paul as the “remnant,” see Rom 9:27; 11:5), and other Israelites are not “seed of Abraham” (Rom 9:6). Membership within the spiritual Israel was, according to Paul, determined by one's faith-stance toward Jesus (Rom 9:33; 10:3-4, 9-13). Thus, *υιοθεσία* was a spiritual benefit which inhered not solely to Gentiles, but also to Jewish believers in Christ. This discussion will be pursued in greater detail in the discussion of Gal 4:5 (see chap. 5, below).

motif.<sup>120</sup> Now, for all people, Jew or Gentile, family ties to Abraham depend upon union with Christ, who is the singular seed of Abraham (Gal 3:16). Adoption, therefore, requires union with Christ, and membership in the eschatological people of God depends entirely upon this union, and not at all upon physical descent.

What, then, comes of ethnicity? If physical descent from Abraham can not grant ingroup status, but spiritual descent by way of adoption through union with Christ does, then does national/ethnic affiliation cease to matter, giving way to a so-called “third race”?<sup>121</sup> By no means. Ὑιοθεσία does not eliminate one's ethnic identity. Here the sociological theory of multiple identities supplies a cogent explanation. Sociologists maintain that an individual's identity can contain many facets, as long as they are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, one may be both a member of the people of God and a member of the Greek, or Italian, or Jewish nation, etc. The eschatological identity as

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<sup>120</sup>Technically, Paul does not overlook physical descent from Abraham as a prerequisite for membership. He views the believers' union with Jesus Christ to be of such a nature that believers are imbued with Jesus' own physical descent from Abraham (Gal 3:26-29; Rom 9:5; cf. Rom 1:3). Additionally, Jewish claims to physical descent from Abraham are nullified based upon the fact that Jesus is the sole true seed of Abraham to whom the promises were spoken (Gal 3:16). Therefore, true Abrahamic descent can only come via union with Christ.

In one sense, the primordial view of ethnic identity against which Fredrik Barth argued can also function as an adequate descriptor here. For Paul, members of the people of God derive their identity from a (primordial) relationship to Abraham, but this relationship derives from their union with Christ. The eschatological “birthing” that transpires for believers initiates a relationship of direct descent to the primary forbears of their people group.

<sup>121</sup>The language of Christians as a so-called “third race,” although not biblical (cf. 1 Pet 2:9 for the closest biblical parallel), is common in the early centuries of Christianity. Perhaps the earliest extant use of the concept comes from Aristides, who argues that there are three (according to the Greek text; the Syriac adds a fourth) groups of people in the world, each deriving their genesis from a different religious source (Aristides, *Apol.* 2). Pseudo-Cyprian, *Pasch. Comp.* 17, flatly states “we [Christians] are the third race.” Tertullian (*Nat.* 1:8; *Scorp.* 10) responds to the phrase's use in a pejorative manner by non-Christians, and disproves of its use by Christians as a self-designation. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6:5 (quoting Pre. Pet.) says Christians worship “in a new way” (καινῶς) by a “third type” (γένει) of worship, thus this instance of the phrase does not refer to their “race.” See D. F. Wright, “A Race Apart? Jews, Gentiles, Christians,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160 (2003): 131-41.

Additionally, ancient authors refer to Christians as a “new race” (καινὸν γένος, Diogn. 1:1), the “new people” (τὸν λαὸν τὸν καινὸν, Barn. 5:7), the “race of the Christians” (γένος τῶν Χριστιανῶν, Mart. Pol. 3:2), or the “race of the righteous” (γένος τῶν δικαίων, Mart. Pol. 14:1; 17:1).

member of the people of God is a new spiritual or theological identity which is created and added when one is adopted through union with Christ and reception of the Holy Spirit.<sup>122</sup> It neither replaces nor abolishes existing national/ethnic affiliations, but instead exists alongside these other aspects of individual identity.<sup>123</sup>

### **The Approach Followed in this Study**

Ἰουθεσία appears five times in three New Testament writings, once each in Galatians and Ephesians, and thrice in Romans. Unfortunately, a comprehensive and detailed study of all five passages exceeds the scope of this project. Therefore, inasmuch as Galatians 4:5 constitutes the earliest extant Pauline use of Ἰουθεσία and was probably formative for his later use of the motif, the bulk of this study will be devoted to an investigation of Ἰουθεσία in Galatians. A later chapter will then evaluate the appearances of the term in Romans and Ephesians to determine how these subsequent uses compare and contrast with the initial one in Galatians.

The study will begin with a description of the historical scenario which necessitated the Epistle to the Galatians, focusing especially upon the social aspects of the situation. The historical circumstances will be analyzed using modern Social Identity Theory, in an effort to determine what exigencies prompted the Galatian “identity crisis.” A detailed contextual exegesis of several key passages within the letter will follow, seeking to learn precisely how Paul's argument functions to respond to this crisis. Finally,

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<sup>122</sup>So also Duling, “Ethnicity and Paul's Letter to the Romans,” 78.

<sup>123</sup>Erin Heim, “Light through a Prism: New Avenues of Inquiry for the Pauline Ἰουθεσία Metaphors” (PhD diss., University of Otago, 2014), 174. However, as mentioned earlier, certain aspects of ethnic/national identity would have to be relinquished inasmuch as they stood in conflict with this new, superior identity. This does not mean, however, that all traces of an individual's previous ethnic identity would be replaced by the new “in Christ” identity.

the study will summarize how Paul uses υιοθεσία in Galatians in an identity-formative capacity, in a manner consistent with theories of modern sociology.

Following the study of υιοθεσία in Galatians will be a focus on the term's recurrence in Romans and Ephesians. This will consist of a tentative reconstruction of the historical scenarios which evoked these two epistles, and an abbreviated analysis of υιοθεσία in these letters along lines similar to those used for Galatians. This final chapter will conclude with a summary of the major conclusions from each of the preceding chapters, and then seek to synthesize the most important findings. It will be helpful to view all five appearances of υιοθεσία together, in order to appreciate more fully the consistent use of the term as a response to questions about eschatological identity and ethnicity.

### **Contribution to Scholarship**

The following study will provide at least three valuable contributions to the scholarly dialogue. First, it will supply a specialized study that adds helpful dialogue to the ongoing discussion regarding ethnicity in the Pauline literature. The “New Perspective on Paul” has engendered lively debate for over thirty years now, yet the connection of the υιοθεσία passages to the early controversies regarding ethnicity and the Mosaic Law has been largely overlooked.

A second contribution that this study aims to provide is a corrective to a common misunderstanding of the biblical teaching regarding adoption. As noted above, several recent scholars maintain that υιοθεσία functions as a special path provided exclusively for Gentiles as a means of entry into the people of God. Additionally, many other scholars who do not follow this *Sonderweg* hypothesis still assume that υιοθεσία is

for Gentiles alone. This interpretation, however, does not make the best exegetical sense of the *υιοθεσία* passages. Thus, this study will aim to demonstrate through compelling exegesis how *υιοθεσία* (via faith-union with Christ) functions as the only way for anyone, whether Gentile or Jew, to partake in the eschatological people of God. In doing so, it will supply a rebuttal to the hypothesis that *υιοθεσία* is a secondary means of entry into God's eschatological people.

Finally, this new study will add to the developing field of New Testament research that applies sociological theories to the biblical texts in order to improve understanding of both the early Christian communities and the intentions of the apostolic authors who wrote to them. Thus, by viewing the *υιοθεσία* texts through the lens of identity formation, scholars will be able to learn more about the historical situations in which Galatians, Romans, and Ephesians were written. This study will also sharpen current understanding of the five pericopae which use the *υιοθεσία* motif.

Recent advances in scholarship demonstrate the fruitfulness of applying social theories regarding identity to the kinship terminology that permeates the New Testament.<sup>124</sup> To my knowledge, however, only one study makes a focused attempt to understand Paul's *υιοθεσία* term in this manner. This is the aforementioned work of Caroline Johnson Hodge. Hodge's intriguing book has much to commend it, especially in her accurate analysis of the manner in which fictive kinship metaphors function to create a new identity for believers in Christ. However, because Hodge presupposes the

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<sup>124</sup>See, for example, Reidar Aasgard, *My Beloved Brothers and Sisters: Christian Siblingship in Paul* (London: T & T Clark, 2004); Mary Katherine Birge, *The Language of Belonging: A Rhetorical Analysis of Kinship Language in First Corinthians* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002); Trevor Burke, *Family Matters: A Socio-Historical Study of Kinship Metaphors in 1 Thessalonians* (London: T & T Clark International, 2003); Abera Mengestu, *God as Father in Paul: Kinship Language and Identity Formation in Early Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013); Halvor Moxnes, ed., *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (London: Routledge, 1997); Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*.



*Sonderweg* hypothesis, some of her exegesis is fundamentally flawed. This study aims to dialogue with hers, offer correctives to some of her conclusions, and supplement the valuable contributions her study has made.

## CHAPTER 2

### SETTING THE CONTEXT FOR ADOPTION IN GALATIANS

The first known instance of *υιοθεσία* used as a theological term occurs in Paul's epistle to the churches of Galatia. Although Galatians does not provide all the necessary information to fill out a detailed back story, it certainly grants enough to supply a solid foundation for understanding this initial Pauline use of adoption terminology.

This chapter will function as an entrée into the discussion of Galatians and social identity, introducing the scenario and Paul's resolution to it. The ensuing chapters will supply a detailed exegesis and application of Social Identity Theory (SIT) to key passages in the epistle, which will ultimately prove to support the initial conclusions reached here. This chapter will begin by proposing a hypothetical historical scenario which best accounts for the evidence within this intriguing epistle. This will provide an explanation of the danger which threatened the Galatian believers. Then, it will conduct a brief foray into Galatians 2:15-21, which functions as a key to understanding the entire epistle. Finally, it will supply a surface-level analysis of the Galatian situation through the lens of SIT, demonstrating the ways in which the Galatian “crisis”<sup>1</sup> was truly a crisis of identity. Ultimately, it will conclude that *υιοθεσία* plays a significant role in the apostolic response to the situation in Galatia.

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<sup>1</sup>The term “crisis” derives from George E. Howard's well-known study on Galatians, *Paul: Crisis in Galatia: A Study in Early Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Frank J. Matera, *Galatians*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), also consistently refers to the Galatian situation as a “crisis.”

## The Background of Paul's Letter to Galatia

Apart from a few subtle allusions within the epistle, the origins of the churches in Galatia remain a mystery. We know that it was Paul who initially brought the gospel to them (4:13), but beyond this the precise details are scanty. Even a basic question such as “To which geographical region of Galatia is the letter addressed?” rebuffs confident conclusions.<sup>2</sup> Thankfully, however, the insoluble questions regarding geography do little to impede a sufficient and accurate understanding of both the letter and the situation which called it forth from Paul's pen.<sup>3</sup> It is to these more important questions that this study must now turn.

### The Problem

In Galatians, Paul speaks more openly and vehemently of a distinct opposition than in perhaps any other of his extant epistles (in this, Galatians is rivaled only by 2 Corinthians). From beginning to end, Galatians functions as both a defense and a counterattack against this unseen opponent. While refusing to name the opposition

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<sup>2</sup>In favor of a destination in “South Galatia” are Ernest de Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), xlv; Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 3; Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1990), lxx; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 29; Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 8. Supporting the “North Galatia” hypothesis are Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1979), 5; J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, The Anchor Bible (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 16-17; Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary*, New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 5; Marion L. Soards and Darrell J. Pursiful, *Galatians*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2015), 4-5. Nearly all scholars take a tentative position on the matter, recognizing the paucity of conclusive historical evidence for either side. James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 7, believes the evidence is inconclusive for either position.

<sup>3</sup>Rightly, Joseph B. Tyson, “Paul's Opponents in Galatia,” *Novum Testamentum* 10 (1968): 244-45; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 29.

directly<sup>4</sup>, Paul applies the derogatory terms οἱ ταρασσόντες (“the upsetters,” 1:7; 5:10) and οἱ ἀναστατοῦντες (“the agitators,” 5:12) to the ones who were bringing confusion to Galatia.<sup>5</sup> These opponents are guilty of “perverting” the gospel of Christ, they teach a gospel “contrary to”<sup>6</sup> that of Paul, they hinder the Galatians from obedience to the truth, and will bear an additional weight of judgment as the penalty for their false teaching (1:7, 9; 5:7, 10). So, what exactly was the teaching of this group which evoked such a fiery riposte from Paul?

**Torah observance as additional requirement.** It seems clear from the letter that the primary goal of this group was to engender some level of Torah observance

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<sup>4</sup>Whether Paul's neglect to name them was meant as an intentional slight, or simply because he was unaware of their identity, is difficult to determine. The opacity of Paul's descriptions of the opposition (e.g., “some people,” 1:7; “who bewitched you?,” 3:1; “whoever he might be,” 5:10) tilts the scales toward the latter. Likewise, the number of opponents is impossible to know, for in some places he refers to multiple (1:7; 5:12; 6:12-13), whereas in others (3:1; 5:7, 10) he refers only to a single opponent.

<sup>5</sup>It seems that scholars are not content to agree on a single term for the opposition in Galatia. Several scholars prefer to supply a neutral name for the opponents, arguing that Paul's polemic is perhaps more harsh than is fair: “the other missionaries” (Dunn, *Galatians*, 11); “teachers” (Martyn, *Galatians*, 18); “influencers” (Mark D. Nanos, “The Inner- and Intra-Jewish Political Context of Paul's Letter to the Galatians,” in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation*, ed. Mark D. Nanos [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002], 400). Vincent Smiles, *The Gospel and the Law in Galatia : Paul's Response to Jewish-Christian Separatism and the Threat of Galatian Apostasy* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 115, uniquely calls them “separatists.” Other scholars choose to identify them by their apparent objective, e.g., “Judaizers” (Brendan Byrne, *Sons of God-Seed of Abraham: A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background* [Rome: Biblical Institute, 1979], 141; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 49), or “circumcisers” (Atsuhiro Asano, *Community-Identity Construction in Galatians: Exegetical, Social-Anthropological and Socio-Historical Studies* [London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2005], 23). Still others opt for siding with Paul's vernacular, using the terms “agitators” (Bruce W. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham's God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* [Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998], 25; Gordon D. Fee, *Galatians*, Pentecostal Commentary [Dorset, UK: Deo Publishing, 2007], 6; Moo, *Galatians*, 19) or “troublemakers” (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982], 19).

<sup>6</sup>So ESV, HCSB, RSV. See BDAG, s.v. “παρά,” C.6. Παρ' ὅ can also include the corresponding ideas of “different from, other than” (NIV, BDF §236 [3]), and “more than, beyond” (BDAG, s.v. “παρά,” C., 3; BDF §236 [3]). The three options are not mutually exclusive, for one can reason that the opponents' “gospel” was both “contrary to” and “different from” Paul's message in that it contained additional requirements which were “more than” the true gospel of Christ. All of these ideas appear within Paul's criticism of the opponents' preaching in various places within the letter.

among the believers in Galatia.<sup>7</sup> In fact, these teachers were clearly promoting the idea that righteousness/justification<sup>8</sup> and inheritance depended upon some level of Law-keeping (2:21; 3:11, 16-18, 21, 29; 4.7, 30-31; 5:4). In the thematic statement of the epistle,<sup>9</sup> Paul states “We know that a person is not justified from *works of Law*, but through faith of Jesus Christ, and we ourselves [Jews included!] have believed in Christ Jesus, in order that we might be justified from faith of Christ and not from *works of Law*, for from *works of Law* no flesh will be justified.”<sup>10</sup> The thrice-repeated disparagement of

<sup>7</sup>It is important to acknowledge at the outset that many of the following conclusions rest primarily upon the process of mirror-reading. Apart from the letter itself, there is no extant evidence of the opponents' teaching among the Galatians. Thus, the only description of the opposition and their teaching is that which Paul provides. However, he clearly viewed these teachers as imposters, and may not have been entirely interested in granting them a fair representation. Galatians should therefore be categorized in some aspects as polemical, and scholars wisely counsel extreme care when practicing the art of mirror-reading polemical writings (see esp. John M. G. Barclay, “Mirror-reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31 [1987]: 73–93; Christopher D. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* [New York: T & T Clark International, 2004], 115-16). At the same time, however, R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxxxix, aptly quips, “Mirror reading is the only method here available to us,” and therefore scholars are consigned to such a strategy.

<sup>8</sup>Intense, detailed debate continues regarding how to define the terms δίκαιος, δικαιοσύνη, and δικαίω. Adjudicating this matter is not a goal of this study, and therefore this study will either simply employ the Greek terms or basic glosses, such as “righteous/righteousness” or “just/justification/justify.” This variety of references to the term should be interpreted as a matter of personal taste and avoidance of repetition, rather than inconsistency or lack of precision.

<sup>9</sup>R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 83, calls it “the central affirmation of the letter.”

<sup>10</sup>Gal 2:16, my translation and emphasis. For ἐὰν μὴ as “but” see BDF §376. It is also possible, however, to take the first ἐξ ἔργων νόμου as adjectival (modifying ἄνθρωπος) rather than adverbial (ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου would then function as a circumlocution for a Jewish person or a Jewish proselyte; οἱ ἐκ πίστεως in 3:7, 9 provides a grammatical analog). Ἐὰν μὴ would then be free to retain its customary exceptive meaning of “unless,” instead of the exceptionally rare adversative rendering of “but.” See Mark A. Seifrid, “Paul, Luther, and Justification in Gal 2:15-21,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 65 (2003): 217. Seifrid's rendering makes better sense of the grammatical features of 2:16, when coupled with the whole argument of the letter (it is precisely the tension between the exceptive rendering of ἐὰν μὴ and the teaching of the epistle which has led a majority of commentators to adopt the adversative reading). Weighing against Seifrid's suggestion, but not fatal to it, is the fact that the two subsequent appearances of ἐξ ἔργων νόμου in 2:16 are almost certainly adverbial (see A. Andrew Das, *Galatians*, Concordia Commentary [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014], 242-43). Debbie Hunn, “Ean Mē in Galatians 2:16: A Look at Greek Literature,” *Novum Testamentum* 49 (2007): 281-90, demonstrates not only that ἐὰν μὴ as “but” is lexically possible, but also that the clear contrast established by the context demands the adversative reading.

Also unlikely is the combination of the adverbial rendering of ἐξ ἔργων νόμου with the exceptive reading of ἐὰν μὴ, “a person is not justified from works of Law except through faith of Jesus Christ,” for this would create a contradiction in Paul's thought within the span of a single verse! On this see Hunn, “Ean Mē in Galatians 2:16,” 282; Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's*

“works of Law” in this thesis statement presages a sustained polemic against being “under Law,” characterized by an insistence that “those from works of Law are under a curse” (3:10), and by the teaching that the Law's temporary historical role, which never included the provision of eschatological life, had expired upon the arrival of Christ/faith (3:19-25).<sup>11</sup> The baneful result of the opposition's teaching is that the Galatian believers “desire to be under Law” (4:21), and that they have become convinced that submission to the rite of circumcision will be of some additional benefit to their faith in Christ (5:2).

What level of Law observance, then, were the “troublemakers” advocating? To begin with, it is obvious that circumcision played a central role in their teaching (5:2-3, 6; 6:12-15); Paul characterizes the opponents as “those who are compelling you to be circumcised.” They even make their boast “in the flesh” of their converts. By way of response, Paul relates the story of his bringing Titus to Jerusalem, of Titus' “not being compelled to be circumcised,” and of receiving the right hand of fellowship from the leaders in Jerusalem (2:1-10). This account of James, Cephas, and John—the “pillars”—granting approval to Paul's teaching surely functions as Paul's initial counterargument to

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*Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 179. Contra Dunn, *Galatians*, 137-38, who believes that Paul used “calculated ambiguity” in order to bring Peter around to his point of view. Similarly, A. Andrew Das, “Another look at *ean mē* in Galatians 2:16,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119 (2000): 529-39; de Boer, *Galatians*, 144-45; Peter Oakes, *Galatians*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 86, have also espoused the adverbial and exceptive combination, arguing that Paul begins with an affirmation (Das and de Boer maintain that Paul cites a common confession; Oakes believes the statement is Pauline but amenable to Jewish Christian logic) which, due to its ambiguity, could be shared by all on both sides of the debate, and then capitalizes upon the grammatical ambiguity of the phrase to align the “common ground” of the affirmation with the explicit statement of his position later in 2:16. Hunn, “*Ean Mē* in Galatians 2:16,” 289, rightly criticized this view as a “bait-and-switch” that would easily be refuted by Paul's opponents.

Πίστεως (Ἰησοῦ) Χριστοῦ is translated generically here, in acknowledgment of the sharp debate concerning the meaning of the phrase. For a detailed analysis of the problem see the excursus “Πίστις Χριστοῦ” in chap. 4.

<sup>11</sup>Whenever “Law” is capitalized in this study it will consistently refer to the Torah of Moses, in distinction from specific laws, law as a principle, or other systems of law. Apart from two occurrences (its second appearance in 3:21; 6:2), every instance of νόμος in Galatians (including 5:23) likely refers to the Mosaic code.

the pro-circumcision teaching of the opponents in Galatia. The Galatian readers are meant to equate the teachers of circumcision in Galatia with “the false brothers who sneaked in to spy on our freedom in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us.” The response of Paul, Barnabas, and Titus—“not yielding for even a moment in subjection”—is the one he hopes his Galatian readers will emulate in their own situation. Paul also emphatically insists that both circumcision and uncircumcision amount to “nothing” (οὔτε τί ἐστίν; 6:15; cf. 3:28), and that they cannot do anything to benefit (οὔτε τι ἰσχύει; 5:6) those who are “in Christ.” Thus, without any doubt a primary issue in Galatia was the question of whether or not circumcision should be mandatory for Gentile believers in Christ.

In addition to circumcision, Galatians also indicates that the opposing teachers were advocating other aspects of Law observance. Paul's broader language of “works of Law” and of being “under Law” implies an emphasis that goes beyond mere circumcision, and much of Paul's argument in Galatians 3 builds upon a description of the Law's role in God's historical plan. This emphasis upon the Law in general would be a strange response, were the opponents only teaching circumcision. Additionally, the story about the “Antioch Incident” (2:11-14) emphasizes the conflict between Jewish dietary practices and the open table-fellowship Paul believed should be shared by Jewish and Gentile believers. By “days, months, seasons, and years” in 4:10, Paul probably refers to maintenance of Jewish calendrical requirements.<sup>12</sup> Finally, his emphasis on the Spirit-led lifestyle as a suitable replacement for Torah observance indicates that his opponents were

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<sup>12</sup>Burton, *Galatians*, 232-33; Fung, *Galatians*, 193; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 182; Dunn, *Galatians*, 227-29; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 279. Richard B. Hays, *The Letter to the Galatians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, in vol. 11 of *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 288, and Moo, *Galatians*, 277-78, emphasize the lack of technical terms to refer to Jewish celebrations (cf. Col 2:16), noting that Paul probably generalized the nomenclature in order to make a comparison between Jewish observances and the Galatians' pagan past.

inculcating the use of the Law as a guide for moral living and a means of restraining fleshly desires (5:16-24).<sup>13</sup> Therefore, certain clues indicate that the opponents' teaching emphasized not only circumcision, but also the observance of Jewish dietary scruples, holidays and festivals, and the use of the Mosaic Law as a standard for moral conduct. Thus, it appears that the opponents were concerned not only with the Galatian believers' admittance into the covenant community, but also with their post-conversion pattern of life within the community.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, the opponents were likely not advocating complete observance of the Law, for it is assumed as obvious that even the other teachers “do not themselves keep the Law” (6:13), and the idea of keeping the Law in its entirety is disparaged as an impossible and undesirable standard (5:3; cf. 2:18; 3:10-11).<sup>15</sup> Paul appears to indicate that if the false teachers had realized that their circumcision requirement also bound them to full Law observance, they too would have recognized the impossibility of their position.

To what extent, then, were these teachers advocating Torah observance? Some additional clues from within the letter point in the direction of those elements of Law keeping that would traditionally have been required of proselytes to Judaism, that is,

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<sup>13</sup>J. Louis Martyn, “Apocalyptic Antinomies in Paul’s Letter to the Galatians,” *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985): 416, avers that the opposing teachers were presenting the Law and the “fleshly Impulse” as “a pair of opposites in the sense that the Law is the God-given antidote to the fleshly Impulse.” It is likely that Paul’s emphasis in chaps. 5-6 upon the moral guidance supplied by the Spirit is a defense against accusations that his Law-free gospel leads to antinomianism and moral anarchy (cf. 2:17; Rom 3:8). In response to this idea, Paul emphasizes that “moral identity falls within the orbit of salvation” (B. Longenecker, *Triumph of Abraham’s God*, 80).

<sup>14</sup>To borrow the phraseology popularized by E. P. Sanders, the opponents’ focus was not merely upon “getting in.” They were also concerned with the “staying in” aspect of covenant living. It seems likely that the focus upon circumcision was the primary part of the “getting in” side of the equation, while the attention directed toward holidays, food laws, and moral guidance covered the “staying in” portion.

<sup>15</sup>Contra B. Longenecker, *Triumph of Abraham’s God*, 35, who argues that they were emphasizing “comprehensive observance of the law.”



“Judaizers.” The first clue comes from the use of the term Ἰουδαΐζειν in 2:14. In Paul's retelling of the Antioch Incident, Peter is chastened for “compelling the Gentiles to Judaize” by his hypocritical table manners. The reason for Paul's reprimand of Peter is that Peter's actions were implicitly forcing Gentile believers to adhere to Jewish proselyte requirements in order to obtain the privilege of table fellowship with Jewish believers. By contrast, it is obvious that Paul's preference was for Peter to continue “living like a Gentile and not like a Jew” (ἔθνικῶς καὶ οὐχὶ Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῆν), rather than capitulating to the preferences of those who insisted on retaining Jewish separatist table manners. For Paul, to exclude Gentile believers from table fellowship was the equivalent of deviating from the path of gospel truth. Clearly, the central issue in this incident revolved around whether or not Gentile believers should adopt Jewish patterns of living, including standards of ritual cleanliness.

The emphasis on Abraham and his descendants also points to proselyte requirements. Although it is impossible to know for certain whether or not the other teachers were using the Abraham narrative to inculcate circumcision and Torah observance, Paul's emphasis on the tradition, combined with the apparently strained reasoning of 3:15-16, indicates that he is attempting to nullify a major plank of the opponents' argument.<sup>16</sup> The Abraham narrative would have been the logical proof text for anyone who wanted to argue in favor of the necessary role of circumcision in order to

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<sup>16</sup>It bears repeating that “mirror-reading” is an art, not a science, and that one can never reach complete certainty when it comes to defining precisely the arguments the opponents were using in Galatia. Thus, one should not assume that every aspect of Paul's argument is a blow-by-blow rejoinder to individual details of the opponents' presentation. Given this warning, however, most commentators agree that the Abraham narrative (and probably also its subsequent use in Jewish tradition) represented a principal part of the other teachers' argument. See especially Martyn, *Galatians*, 303-6. Also R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, xvii; Hays, *Galatians*, 186; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 34; Moo, *Galatians*, 19-20; Das, *Galatians*, 8.

become members of the covenant community.<sup>17</sup> Genesis 17:9-14 clearly makes this rite requisite for Abraham and all his future descendants, whether born within his house or as a foreigner. Further, “any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant” (Gen 17:14 ESV). Thus, the Abraham narrative equipped the opponents with a powerful scriptural argument which they could use to compel Gentile Christ-believers to be circumcised.

Third, the focus on inheritance points distinctly toward an emphasis on the need for the Galatians to “become” Jews, so that they might receive the inheritance promised to Jews. The underlying theme which drives the entire argument of chapters 3-4 is that of inheritance.<sup>18</sup> It was likely a key facet of the opposition's teaching, and was probably the most appealing aspect of their arguments to the Galatians. Without question, early Jewish believers in Jesus who were convinced that believing Gentiles needed to become proselytes in order to become part of the covenant community would appeal to the fact that the scriptural promises of inheritance were made “to Abraham and to his seed.” Thus, the logical implication of the inheritance promises would be that anyone who desired to inherit alongside Abraham's offspring would themselves also have to obtain membership within that family. Proponents of Judaizing would quickly point out that

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<sup>17</sup>Jewish tradition tended to focus more upon Abraham's model proleptic Torah obedience and circumcision than upon his πίστις per se. See, for example, Jub. 15.1-26; 16.20-31; 23.10; 2 Bar. 57.1-3; T. Ben. 10.4; T. Levi 9.1-14; CD (Damascus Document) 3.2-4; 16.1, 5-6; Philo, *Abr.* 5, 275-276; m. Qid. 4.14; Gen. Rab. 56.11; 95.3; m. Ned. 3.11. His πίστις was regularly interpreted through the lens of both his circumcision and obedience: Sir 44.19-20; Jub. 17:17-18; 1 Macc 2.50-52.

Perhaps equally as important for the false teachers was the popular conception of Abraham as the first, and model, proselyte. See Tanh. B. 32a; Pesiq. Rab. 108a; Jub. 12.1-26; Apoc. Ab. 1-8; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.154-156. For a helpful summary of Jewish views of Abraham, see G. Walter Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1989), 175-99.

<sup>18</sup>Byrne, *Sons of God—Seed of Abraham*, 158, 189. Terms from the “inheritance” word group (κληρονομέω, κληρονομία, κληρονόμος) appear five times between Gal 3:18 and 4:30 (3:18, 29; 4:1, 7, 30; also 5:21). Galatians is rivaled only by Hebrews for the frequency and emphasis placed upon the theme of inheritance.

becoming a proselyte was the only logical means of accomplishing this.

The troublemakers were most likely Jews who also had placed their faith in Jesus.<sup>19</sup> Although it is unclear whether they viewed their teaching as contradictory to Paul's, they clearly saw his gospel as problematic.<sup>20</sup> Almost certainly, the problem they had with Paul's gospel was that they believed it was incomplete.<sup>21</sup> These teachers would readily have agreed with Paul upon the importance of faith in Messiah Jesus as a vital component of the gospel. However, from their point of view, the fact that Paul's proclamation stopped short—leaving out circumcision and various aspects of Torah

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<sup>19</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 7; Fung, *Galatians*, 7-9; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 25; Philip Francis Esler, *Galatians*, New Testament Readings (New York: Routledge, 1998), 75; Dunn, *Galatians*, 9; Smiles, *Gospel and the Law in Galatia*, 9; Barclay, "Mirror-reading a Polemical Letter," 86; B. Longenecker, *Triumph of Abraham's God*, 33; Howard, *Paul*, 9; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, xciv; Tyson, "Paul's Opponents in Galatia," 252; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 6.

That they almost certainly referred to their teaching as "gospel" (1:6-9) indicates that they viewed themselves as teachers of what Acts calls "the Way" (what might anachronistically be called "Christianity"). Paul's description of them as "perverting the gospel of Christ" further indicates at least that the starting point for their teaching was the "Christian" kerygma itself.

The strongest evidence that they were Jewish is simply the fact that they were advocating Judaizing as requisite for justification (cf. Acts 15:1). Paul also equates the opposition with "the present Jerusalem" and, strikingly, with Ishmael, the son who "was begotten according to the flesh." The equation of the opponents with the son born "according to the flesh" apparently marks them as Jews, who boasted of their lineage to Abraham *κατὰ σάρκα*. A final clue is the fact that Paul describes the troublemakers in the Antioch Incident as having come "from James." While there is no way of knowing whether the instigators of the Antioch Incident were the same individuals as those who were upsetting the Galatians, the fact that Paul uses this story to set the stage for the main argument reveals fundamental similarities between the two situations.

An alternative explanation for the other teachers is that they were Gentile proselytes who were urging their fellow "God-fearers" to take the next logical step in becoming full adherents to the Jewish religion. Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (Norwich, UK: SCM Press, 2012), 129-34, is credited with popularizing this theory. He alleges that the present tense-form οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι in 6:13 belies the theory that the opposition was Jewish.

<sup>20</sup>Paul's extended *apologia* in 1:1-2:10 indicates that his credibility as an apostle was under attack. Most likely, the opponents' view that Paul's preaching was deficient led them to disparage his ministry and credentials altogether. They may even have told the Galatians that, by proclaiming a deficient gospel to them, Paul had become their "enemy" (4:16). For them, Paul's incomplete gospel was, to borrow Paul's own phrase, "no gospel at all."

<sup>21</sup>Paul implies as much in his rhetorical question of 3:3—"having begun by the Spirit, are you now being completed by the flesh?" Additionally, the narrative of bringing Titus to Jerusalem and not having anything "added" (in the case of Titus, the threat of "addition" by subtraction, i.e., circumcision, 2:1-6), indicates that "adding" to his gospel was a priority for the opposing teachers. Fee, *Galatians*, 1, states that the concern of the epistle is "whether, once begun, one must also add these aspects of the law to be completed in one's faith in Christ."

observance—indicated that he also left out justification, inclusion in the people of God, and the inheritance promised to Abraham's seed altogether! They would have argued that in order to be a beneficiary of the covenant promises, one had to be a member of the covenant community, a “seed of Abraham.” This membership, from their perspective, could only be obtained through conversion to the Jewish way of life. This conversion mandated more than simply undergoing the rite of circumcision, for the Jewish covenant lifestyle also carried other obligations. Thus, the other teachers probably also emphasized Jewish dietary guidelines and calendar observances.<sup>22</sup> It also seems clear that they felt Paul's Torah-free approach engendered moral laxity, and the logical solution for them was to submit to the Mosaic Law's moral guidelines as a means of restraining sinful desires.

The opponents would aver that the problem with Paul's gospel was that it stopped short of relating these ethno-national requirements, and they probably believed that Paul had watered down the gospel in an effort to make it more appealing to his audiences.<sup>23</sup> The foundation of faith in Christ had been laid by Paul, but the important requirements for covenant membership had been neglected. Paul's perspective on the matter, however, was clearly that their “completions” through addition were in reality a massive subtraction (4:9-11, 15, 17; 5:2-6).

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<sup>22</sup>In this sense, Dunn's thesis that Paul and his opponents were arguing about Jewish “badges of covenant membership” when they referred to “works of the Law” is correct (see James D. G. Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul,” in *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* [London: SPCK, 1990], 191-93). Dunn rightly recognizes that the identity markers which the opponents were requiring were indeed those very aspects of identity which best served to distinguish Jews from Gentiles within the Hellenized first century world. The question that persists, however, is why Paul disparaged “works of the Law.” Was it because Jews had a faulty understanding of these works, which resulted in “a too narrowly nationalistic and racial conception of the covenant,” to the exclusion of Gentiles (Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul,” 201-2)? Or (contra Dunn), was it because Paul was countering a mode of teaching which maintained that “works of the Law” were a necessary part of one's justification before God?

<sup>23</sup>Paul's rhetorical outburst in 1:10 regarding people-pleasing can be interpreted as an indication that the opposing teachers had accused him of slinking off from the demanding requirements of Judaizing in an effort to make his message more palatable.

## Establishing the Context for Ὑιοθεσία in Galatians

The main body of Galatians easily divides into a tripartite structure. In the first of the three main sections, Paul presents a defense of himself and the gospel he proclaims, including two recent examples of how he stood firm in the face of threats against “the truth of the gospel.” In the second portion, Paul presents a lengthy argument from Scripture, demonstrating how the (predominantly Gentile) Galatian believers are offspring and heirs of Abraham apart from submission to the Mosaic Law. In the final section of the body, Paul works out the ethical and Spiritual ramifications of the preceding scriptural argument. Therefore, Galatians falls into five main sections, as follows: the first section (1:1-10) comprises a greeting and purpose statement; section two (1:11-2:21) supplies examples from Paul's life and ministry (1:11-2:21); in the third section (3:1-5:12), Paul makes a scriptural argument based upon the Abraham narrative;<sup>24</sup> this is followed by Spiritual<sup>25</sup> and ethical implications for the Galatians (5:13-6:10); finally, 6:11-18 includes concluding remarks and a farewell.<sup>26</sup>

This initial chapter will first provide a brief analysis of 2:15-21, the thesis paragraph of the letter, and then supply a wide-angle perspective of the social identity crisis in Galatia, along with Paul's identity-formative solution. The chapters which follow

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<sup>24</sup>Most commentators include 3:1-5 within this central section (Burton, *Galatians*, lxxiii, Betz, *Galatians*, 19; Fee, *Galatians*, 10; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 58; Moo, *Galatians*, 64), and some extend it to include 5:1-12 (Fung, *Galatians*, vi-vii; Dunn, *Galatians*, 21; Moo, *Galatians*, 64). The correlation of the content of these two pericopes with that of 3:6-4:31 warrants their inclusion with the scriptural argument, rather than separation from it. Gal 4:8-20 functions as another one of these experiential/application parentheses to which Paul repeatedly returns. Thus, the epistle's theology is never abstract, but always speaks into the lives of the Galatians.

<sup>25</sup>“Spiritual” is here capitalized to emphasize that it refers specifically to the Holy Spirit.

<sup>26</sup>See Dunn, *Galatians*, 21-22; Moo, *Galatians*, 63-64, for nearly identical analyses. An attractive alternative to this structure, presented by Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 53-54, divides the body of the epistle into two sections: rebuke and request. Hansen's analysis detaches 4:12ff. from the preceding section, viewing it as the beginning of the “request” portion of the letter.

this one will be devoted to a detailed exegesis in three parts (3:6-14; 3:15-29; 4:1-11), tracing the argument of the central theological section of the letter, and leading up to its climax in the adoption pericope, 4:1-7.

### **Summary of Galatians 1:1-2:21**

After a brief introduction, Paul swiftly explains his reason for writing—the Galatians are turning aside to “another gospel,” introduced by some other teachers (1:6-9). As a result of this new teaching, Paul is forced to articulate the divine (and thus not human) origins of the gospel which he had preached to the Galatians, thereby demonstrating its superiority (1:10-24). He then describes two incidents which exemplify the way in which he had held firmly to gospel truth in the face of external threats. Both of these incidents pertained to the question of ethnicity and the people of God. In the first of these incidents, upon arriving in Jerusalem with the Greek disciple Titus, Paul did not yield to the desires of the “sneaked-in false brothers” who demanded Titus' circumcision. Furthermore, James, Cephas, and John were all in agreement with Paul's decision in this matter (2:1-10). In the second instance, which transpired in Antioch, Paul publicly lambasted Cephas for hypocritically shrinking back from table fellowship with Gentile believers (2:11-14). Cephas' actions obviously did not align with the gospel, and Paul transcribed for posterity his lecture to Cephas on this occasion (2:15-21).<sup>27</sup>

The importance of Paul's speech to Cephas in 2:15-21 is difficult to overstate. Paul includes this “transcript” for a more profound purpose than simply that of satisfying

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<sup>27</sup>Scholars dispute at what point Paul's speech to Peter concludes. In favor of placing the quotation marks after 2:21 are Byrne, *Sons of God—Seed of Abraham*, 143; Seifrid, “Paul, Luther, and Justification,” 216; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 150; Moo, *Galatians*, 153.

the Galatians' historical curiosity regarding the conclusion of the Antioch incident;<sup>28</sup> this speech articulates precisely what Paul wanted the Galatians to learn for their own scenario. What he said to Cephas in Antioch is no less than Paul's thesis statement for the Galatian believers.<sup>29</sup>

Paul's message to Cephas is this:<sup>30</sup> even for Jews,<sup>31</sup> δικαιοσύνη cannot derive from “works of Law.”<sup>32</sup> Paul and Cephas had both recognized this, and as a result had believed in Christ Jesus, so that they might be justified “from faith of Christ and not from works of Law.”<sup>33</sup> In seeking justification in Christ, however, Paul pleads guilty to the

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<sup>28</sup>In fact, Paul never relates the outcome of the incident, a fact that has garnered some interest in recent scholarship. Dunn, *Galatians*, 130, is representative of several who believe that the scenario in Antioch resulted in a rift between Paul and the Jerusalem apostles.

<sup>29</sup>In this instance, the isolation of this pericope as the “*propositio*” is helpful (see Betz, *Galatians*, 114). Schreiner, *Galatians*, 151, calls it “a hermeneutical key for the remainder of the letter.” See also R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 80; Smiles, *Gospel and the Law*, 103-5; Seifrid, “Paul, Luther, and Justification,” 215; Fee, *Galatians*, 78; Moo, *Galatians*, 154.

<sup>30</sup>Das, *Galatians*, 239, refers to 2:15-21 as “the *nexus* of almost every major debate in Pauline theology.” The nature of the present study rules out the opportunity to answer all of the debates revolving around this complex passage in which “virtually every word, phrase, and clause . . . is disputed in modern scholarship.”

<sup>31</sup>The combination of the intensive *καί* (BDAG, s.v. “*καί*,” 2.b.) with the emphatic *ἡμεῖς* in 2:16 draws attention to the fact that, yes, even *we* Jews (“we” refers specifically in this context to Paul and Cephas, and by extension, to all Jewish Christ-believers) must place our faith in Christ for righteousness. See Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 101; Dunn, *Galatians*, 139; Smiles, *Gospel and the Law*, 106; Moo, *Galatians*, 163; Das, *Galatians*, 164. Schreiner, *Galatians*, 154, adds that 2:15 is concessive to *εἰδότες*: “even though we are Jews by nature . . . we know that . . .”

Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 65-66; followed by John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 86, argues that for Paul, *ἄνθρωπος* refers “in general” to Gentiles. Little evidence commends such an assertion, and the context of Gal 2:11-17 excludes it. See Smiles, *Gospel and the Law*, 116.

<sup>32</sup>Once again, *ἐξ ἔργων νόμου* (2:16a) can be read either adverbially or adjectivally. The adjectival interpretation (“a person from works of Law”) appears to make the better reading of some grammatical features, especially *ἐάν μή* (see note 10 above). However, the fact that *ἐξ ἔργων νόμου* is almost certainly adverbial in its two other iterations in 2:16 tilts the scales in favor of the adverbial reading for this instance as well. Additionally, an examination of the broader Pauline pattern of usage of the phrase *ἐξ ἔργων* (*νόμου*) reveals a consistent adverbial usage (e.g., Rom 3:20; 4:2; 9:12, 32; 11:6; Gal 3:2, 5). See Schreiner, *Galatians*, 163, who argues that “in every other instance where the phrase ‘works of law’ occurs, it modifies a verb.” But see Gal 3:10, *ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσιν*, which could mitigate his thesis.

<sup>33</sup>The repetition of *πίστεως* directly following the statement that they had both believed (*ἐπιστεύσαμεν*) in Christ is no real weakness for those who take the objective genitive reading (likewise

verdict that he (even he, a Law-observant Jew, cf. Phil 3:6) is a sinner (just like the Gentiles).

Germane to the argument of Galatians are several conclusions deriving from this verse. The first of these is that Paul sets up a clear antithesis between “works of Law” and faith in Christ. This antithesis is fundamental to the issue affecting the Galatian churches, so it is important to define it in the way that Paul does. Careful analysis of the text reveals three dangers to avoid. First, one should shun the error of over-specification, whereby “works of Law” is limited to Jewish national identity. Secondly, one should steer clear of the opposite extreme of over-generalization, equating Paul's reference to “works of Law” with generic legalism. Finally, it is vital to recognize that the antithesis between “works of Law” and faith in Christ is germane to a specific context, and the two are not opposed in every sense and at all times.

### **Excursus: “Works of the Law”**

The fierce, ongoing debate regarding “works of the Law” calls for a closer look at the phrase before looking into the “works of the Law”/faith antithesis of Galatians 2:16. First, it will be necessary simply to define the phrase (τὰ ἔργα (τοῦ) νόμου, as scholars struggle to agree even on this initial facet of the problem. Secondly, this excursus will survey the various answers posed to the question, “What does Paul see as the problem with 'works of the Law'?”

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those who see it as a genitive of source, e.g., Seifrid, “Paul, Luther, and Justification,” 218-19), for Paul wants to emphasize his point by way of juxtaposition: “faith of Christ *and not* works of law.” The resounding crescendo of repetition—“not from works of Law” (3x) contrasted with its alternative “through faith,” “believed,” “from faith”—makes it clear that when he says “from faith of Christ” Paul does not mean something different from the “we believed” which precedes it (so rightly Fee, *Galatians*, 87-88). Supporters of the subjective genitive reading often appeal to the supposedly needless repetition created by the objective genitive reading of this verse, yet does anyone accuse Paul of tautology in his threefold repetition of the phrase “works of Law” in the same context?



With regard to defining the phrase “works of the Law,” scholars have followed three main trajectories. The first approach is to define “works of the Law” as any and all works demanded by and performed in obedience to the Law.<sup>34</sup> A second definition of “works of the Law” is that they refer specifically to Jewish identity markers which serve to distinguish Jews from other people groups.<sup>35</sup> A final definition is that the phrase “works

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<sup>34</sup>Douglas J. Moo, “‘Law’, ‘Works of the Law’, and Legalism in Paul,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1983): 93-95; Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1983), 177; Charles E. B. Cranfield, “‘The Works of the Law’ in the Epistle to the Romans,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 43 (1991): 89-101; In-Gyu Hong, *The Law in Galatians* (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1993), 133-35; Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 54; Hilary B. P. Mijoga, *The Pauline Notion of Deeds of the Law* (Lanham, MD: International Scholars Publications, 1999), 159; A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 155-60. James D. G. Dunn, “Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law,” in *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1990), 135-36, agrees with this assessment, but streamlines his definition further, as will be seen below.

<sup>35</sup>Dunn, “Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law,” 220-21; N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 237-41; Jeffrey R. Wisdom, *Blessing for the Nations and the Curse of the Law* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 163; Hays, *Galatians*, 239; Fee, *Galatians*, 84.

While Michael Bachmann's unique definition of ἔργα νόμου as the actual regulations or *halakhot* of the Torah (as distinguished from the obedience of these regulations) does not fit perfectly into any of the three categories, it falls closest to this second category. Bachmann attempts to extricate the idea of legalism from “works of the Law,” in arguing that Paul “neither stands against Torah as an expression of God's demands nor against human beings doing good.” Instead, he “opposes Christian tendencies to be oriented toward certain regulations such as circumcision.” Nevertheless, Bachmann's analysis does not penetrate to a satisfactory explanation of why Christ-believers might find ἔργα νόμου appealing, if not that they might somehow improve one's status before God. Bachmann's explanation of Paul's problem with “works of the Law” appears to place him either in the second or third category: submission to ἔργα νόμου “would mean competition with the Christ event and offense against the inclusivity of the salvation that Christ has given.” See Michael Bachmann, *Anti-Judaism in Galatians? Exegetical Studies on a Polemical Letter and on Paul's Theology*, trans. Robert L. Brawley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 31.

Robert Keith Rapa, *The Meaning of “Works of the Law” in Galatians and Romans* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), argues for a melding of the first two definitions. The “works of the Law” are, by definition, works that the Mosaic Law demands. However, because the Law belongs solely to Jews and determines what it means to be Jewish, the “works of the Law” cannot be separated from Jewishness. Nor can they be limited solely to “identity markers,” because a total Jewish lifestyle entails observing the whole Law. Thus, the “works of the Law,” in a Gentile setting, represent “the Jewish-Christian ideal of Gentile converts as ‘proselytes’ to a ‘completed’ Judaism.” It is a “commitment to pursue life as a practicing Jew” (see Rapa, *Meaning of “Works of the Law”*, 250, 263). Joseph Michael Winger (*By What Law? The Meaning of Νόμος in the Letters of Paul* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992], 137), likewise represents a blend of the first two categories. While he rejects the limitation of ἔργα νόμου to specific commands such as circumcision or food laws, he does argue that to live ἐξ ἔργων νόμου equates to living Ἰουδαϊκῶς, meaning “to do as Jews do,” and “taking up a way of life belonging to the Jewish people.” See also Kari Kuula, *The Law, the Covenant and God's Plan*, vol. 2, *Paul's Treatment of the Law and Israel in Romans* (Helsinki: The

of the Law” actually functions as Pauline code for an improper legalistic attitude toward the Law.<sup>36</sup> The three options are treated here in reverse order.

Daniel Fuller has attempted to argue that the phrase “works of the Law” itself actually means “legalism.” This explanation fails to satisfy. Fuller's argument depends upon a questionable reading of Galatians 3:10, where he maintains that the phrase refers to a “legalistic frame of mind” which is the equivalent of “trying to bribe God.” Since the author of Deuteronomy explicitly states that the Lord “takes no bribe” (Deut 10:17), and a merit-based approach to the Law may be considered a form of bribery, the curse of

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Finnish Exegetical Society, 2003), 132, who defines the “works of the Law” as “obedience to the obligations of the covenant as written in the law.”

Ernst Lohmeyer, *Probleme paulinischer Theologie* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1955), 31-74, and Joseph B. Tyson, “Works of Law' in Galatians,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92 (1973): 431, aver that “works of the Law” refers to a sphere of existence known as “a life dedicated to nomistic service.” Their definition falls close to that of Winger and Kuula, yet the emphasis falls upon Law as a realm of life rather than the obligations it brings. Tyson, “Works of Law' in Galatians,” 430, refers to the “works of the Law” simply as “existence as a Jew.”

<sup>36</sup>Daniel P. Fuller, “Paul and the Works of the Law,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 38 (1975): 28-42.

A fourth position, followed by a very small minority, is that “works of the Law” is a subjective genitive, meaning “works produced by the Law.” See Lloyd Gaston, “Works of Law as a Subjective Genitive,” *Studies in Religion* 13 (1984): 39-46; Paul Owen, “The 'Works of the Law' in Romans and Galatians: A New Defense of the Subjective Genitive,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126 (2007): 553-77. Gaston and Owen differ in how they apply the subjective genitive. Gaston argues that “the works of the Law” are limited to Gentiles, and that they refer to the Law's purpose of “working wrath” (Rom 4:15). Gaston relies upon a questionable reading of Rom 2:14 where τὰ τοῦ νόμου refers to the sins described in Rom 1 which evoke the wrath of God. At times it is difficult to distinguish whether Gaston interprets the “works of the Law” as the Law's role of working wrath and condemnation, or the actual sinful acts which bring about the Law's judgment.

In the case of Owen, the subjective genitive interpretation of the “works of the Law” references “the Law's own inability (owing to the gripping power of sin) to produce in people a righteousness that can survive before the bar of God's judgment” (Owen, “The 'Works of the Law' in Romans and Galatians,” 554). This interpretation appears to be a case of “right doctrine, wrong text.” Owen inconsistently applies his reading of ἔργα νόμου such that at times they refer to the Law's act of condemning and cursing (Rom 3:20; Gal 3:10), whereas at others they speak of futile human effort at achieving justification (Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16).

A fifth position, presented by Jacqueline C. R. de Roo, maintains that “works of the Law” are “good deeds produced by Jews in the old aeon.” De Roo argues specifically that Paul's polemic confronted a Jewish reliance upon meritorious works performed by Abraham, which would be credited as justification to the account of his descendants. De Roo's definition ultimately comes close to that of Dunn, in that it defines being “of works of the Law” as expecting “redemption to come from one's Jewish identity as a son of Abraham,” yet her presentation emphasizes a reliance upon works performed by Jewish forbears which were deemed to be meritorious for others. See Jacqueline C. R. de Roo, *Works of the Law' at Qumran and in Paul* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 174, 206.

Deuteronomy 27:26 falls upon those who approach the Law with a legalistic mindset.<sup>37</sup> Several scholars have demonstrated Fuller's readings of both Galatians and Deuteronomy to be faulty. First, although Deuteronomy does state that the Lord takes no bribes, it never once explicitly denounces legalism.<sup>38</sup> Secondly, Deuteronomy 27:26/Galatians 3:10 indicates that the problem with “works of the Law” is not one's disposition toward the Law, but rather that one is cursed if he does not abide in all the things written in it. The curse inheres due to insufficient obedience, not a legalistic attitude.<sup>39</sup> Outside of Galatians 3:10, Fuller has an even steeper hill to climb, for the other “works of the Law” passages do not provide him the same Deuteronomic context from which to glean such meaning.

The second approach to defining “works of the Law” is far more attractive. Dunn, Hays, Wright, and others have argued that the phrase refers specifically to markers or “badges” of Jewish identity such as circumcision, Sabbath observance, and food laws. These acts serve as “litmus-test practices”<sup>40</sup> and “boundary markers”<sup>41</sup> that distinguish Jews from everyone else. Without question, the phrase first occurs in the immediate context of a controversy regarding mixed ethnicity table-fellowship, and shortly after Paul's relation of an incident which centered upon circumcision (Gal 2:16).<sup>42</sup> Moreover, it becomes apparent later in the epistle that calendrical observances are also at issue in

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<sup>37</sup>Fuller, “Paul and the Works of the Law,” 33.

<sup>38</sup>Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment*, 58.

<sup>39</sup>Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 162. Michael Cranford, “The Possibility of Perfect Obedience: Paul and an Implied Premise in Galatians 3:10 and 5:3,” *Novum Testamentum* 36 (1994): 245.

<sup>40</sup>Hays, *Galatians*, 239.

<sup>41</sup>Dunn, “Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law,” 220.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*; Kent L. Yinger, *Paul, Judaism, and Judgment According to Deeds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 171-72.

Galatia (4:10). Within the context of Romans, “works of the Law” appears in a passage where Paul focuses specifically on Jews in his universal indictment of humanity (Rom 3:20), and one that excludes “works of the Law” from justification, basing this exclusion at least in part upon the fact that God is God of both Jews and Gentiles (3:28-29).<sup>43</sup>

Further evidence gleaned from the Qumran literature suggests that the phrase “the works of the Law” functions in a sectarian setting to demarcate faithful members of the covenant from outsiders.<sup>44</sup> Given these factors, the phrase probably does not mean anything *less* than these aspects of Jewish identity.<sup>45</sup>

Taking a broader approach, many interpreters conclude that ἔργα νόμου refers to any and all practices done in obedience to Torah. These scholars levy good arguments against limiting the “works of the Law” to those aspects of the Law which served to demarcate Jews from Gentiles. First, Paul never explicitly defines the phrase with this meaning for his readers, so one must assume that if he expected them to understand “the works of the Law” as Jewish identity markers, he had already delineated them as such in

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<sup>43</sup>James D. G. Dunn, “Yet Once More—'The Works of the Law': A Response,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 46 (1992): 105-11; Yinger, *Paul, Judaism, and Judgment*, 172; Rapa, *Meaning of “Works of the Law”*, 244, acknowledge Paul's focus on Jews in Rom 3:20, while arguing for a broader referent than identity markers for ἔργα νόμου. Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 100, states, “Paul obviously regards the 'works of the law' as bearing an ethnic and national significance. Only a Jew may boast in 'the works of the law' or be identified as one who is 'of the works of the law.'”

The phrase “works of the Law” appears eight times in the Pauline corpus, all of which are in either Romans or Galatians (Rom 3:20, 28; Gal 2:16 [3x]; 3:2, 5, 10).

<sup>44</sup>Martin G. Abegg, “Paul, 'Works of the Law' and MMT,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 20 (1994): 55; Bachmann, *Anti-Judaism in Galatians*, 19-22; James D. G. Dunn, “4QMMT and Galatians,” *New Testament Studies* 43 (1997): 147-48. Dunn points to other features shared by 4QMMT and Galatians. For example, they both rely on the blessing and curse schema found in Deuteronomy, they both use Gen 15:6—“reckoned for righteousness,” and both refer to calendar observance (see Dunn, “4QMMT and Galatians,” 148-53).

<sup>45</sup>Dunn nuances his definition of “works of the Law” by insisting that they are not restricted to the boundary markers of circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath observance. However, “whenever the need to maintain Israel's distinctive identity became an issue in relation to Gentile encroachments,” these specific markers functioned as “crucial test cases.” See Dunn, “Yet Once More—'The Works of the Law,’” 100-2.

a context outside of his extant writings, or that he was using a phrase that was already familiar to his audience.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, in Galatians 3:10-11, Paul may equate “works of the Law” with “all the things written in the book of the Law” and simply “the Law.”<sup>47</sup> Finally, the immediate context of Deuteronomy 27:26 (quoted by Paul in Gal 3:10) includes many laws which “are not limited to Israel's distinctiveness.”<sup>48</sup>

These criticisms are not insurmountable. First, in response to the argument that Paul never defined “the works of the Law” as boundary markers between Jews and Gentiles, it may be argued that the phrase was commonplace. Given the ubiquity of Diaspora Jews in the Mediterranean world, their likely presence in a majority of early Christ-believing communities, the clear evidence in both Romans and Galatians that ethnicity was a controversial topic in both letters where the phrase occurs (cf. Acts 15), and the external evidence that the phrase was already being used in a sectarian manner to differentiate the “righteous” from the “unrighteous” (Qumran), it is plausible that the phrase was widespread and familiar among Jews and the Gentiles who had regular contact with them. Furthermore, it may be argued that although Paul does not explicitly define ἔργα νόμου in Galatians or Romans, the sense of the phrase can be gleaned from the immediate context.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup>Matera, *Galatians*, 93, argues that “works of the Law” is “a technical phrase akin to a code word and has a precise meaning for Paul and the Galatians.” Winger, *By What Law?*, 136, argues that the phrase comes from the opposing teachers in Galatia.

Both of these explanations fail to account for Paul's use of ἔργα νόμου in Romans, since Paul had never before taught at any of the Roman congregations, and there is no sign in Romans of the same false teaching that Paul was opposing in Galatia. Paul thus would have had less reason to expect his auditors to recognize a specific “code” meaning for the phrase.

<sup>47</sup>Schreiner, *The Law and its Fulfillment*, 57; Das, *Galatians*, 249.

<sup>48</sup>Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 157; Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment*, 57.

<sup>49</sup>Although space does not permit a full exegesis of all eight appearances of the phrase in Paul, it may suffice to point out that the phrase always occurs in contexts where a distinction between Jewish and Gentile identity is discussed with specific reference to obtaining δικαιοσύνη. Furthermore, the first use of

The argument that Galatians 3:10 presents “the works of the Law” as equivalent to “all the things written in the book of the Law” is frail. In fact, a strong case can be made that viewing “the works of the Law” in 3:10a as a subset of “the Law” in its entirety supplies the best interpretation of Paul's citation of Deuteronomy 27:26—because “all who are of the works of the Law” are *ipso facto* not performing “all the things written in the book of the Law,” they are susceptible to the curse.<sup>50</sup> The fact that Paul turns to speak simply of “the Law” in the next verse does not mean that he viewed the two phrases synonymously, but rather that what he had to say about the Law in its entirety also applied to its smaller subset, “the works of the Law.”

In the contexts of Galatians and Romans, the best way to explain “the works of the Law” is that they are works performed in obedience to the Law in an effort to obtain δικαιοσύνη, with specific reference to the prescriptions which most publicly differentiate Jews from Gentiles.<sup>51</sup> Although the phrase might be construed to refer more generally to any and all works required by the Law, its appearances in the Pauline corpus suggest a

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the term (Gal 2:16) appears within the discussion of living ἔθνικῶς and Ἰουδαϊκῶς, Ἰουδαίειν, φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι, and ἐξ ἔθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί. Winger, *By What Law?*, 137, notes that the context of Gal 2 suggests a nearly synonymous relationship between living Ἰουδαϊκῶς, being φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι, and performing ἔργα νόμου.

<sup>50</sup>This verse registers a strike against the argument that “works of the Law” refer to the whole Law. If one argues that the “works of the Law” represents the entire Law, then he must find an explanation for the apparent contradiction this creates between 3:10a and 3:10b, with most of these scholars arguing for an implied premise that complete obedience is impossible. As will be seen in the exegesis of that passage in the next chapter, this interpretation solves one problem only to create others in the process.

<sup>51</sup>Rapa, *Meaning of “Works of the Law”*, 250, comes very close to this when he defines “works of the Law” as “a Jewish lifestyle as a soteriological requisite.” However, his denial that “identity markers” stand at the fore of the arguments in Galatians and Romans distinguishes his view from the one presented here.

Contra Dunn, “Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law,” 224, this is not to say that “the works of the Law” can be summarized as an inappropriate attitude of “national superiority and presumption of divine favour by virtue of membership of a particular people.” They are rather, markers of ethnic or national demarcation between Jews and Gentiles, without reference to any particular attitude standing behind their practice.

more specific referent.<sup>52</sup> In this case, the arguments of Galatians and Romans point to the conclusion that ἔργα νόμου refers specifically to the demands of the Mosaic Law which, if followed, would render one a Jew (or Jewish proselyte), thereby making him or her a member of the covenant and, as such, a beneficiary of its blessings.<sup>53</sup> In the Diaspora context of Galatia and Rome, the most prominent practices that distinguished Jews from Gentiles were precisely the ones brought forth in these two epistles: circumcision, food laws, and calendar observance.<sup>54</sup> It should be no surprise to find that prominent and controversial Law-works such as circumcision and food laws might function as the particular object of focus which represents the overarching set of “works of the Law” as a whole.<sup>55</sup> Thus, within the context of the Galatian controversy, specific emphasis is placed especially upon circumcision, with additional mention also given to purity laws governing and limiting commensality<sup>56</sup> with Gentiles, and the observance of special days such as

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<sup>52</sup>Scholars who argue that the “works of the Law” should not be limited to a subset of the Law fail to provide good explanations for why Paul employs the phrase at all, when he could easily use a shorter referent, such as “by Law,” “from Law,” or “from works” (cf. Rom 4:2; 9:12, 32; 10:5; 11:6; Gal 3:10, 18, 21; 5:4; Eph 2:9; Phil 3:6, 9; Titus 3:5)

<sup>53</sup>Kuula, *Paul's Treatment of the Law and Israel in Romans*, 132.

<sup>54</sup>It might be argued that to be a Jew, one would need to obey the Law in its entirety, yet some evidence suggests that Jewish communities in the Hellenistic world presented a “soft edge” and were “willing to recognize various degrees of attachment” (John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000], 168). Different Jewish communities appear to have had differing standards of what was required of Gentiles to be considered a full proselyte (Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew,” *Harvard Theological Review* 82 [1989]: 14). The witness of Galatians suggests that the opposing teachers were not pushing the Gentile believers to take on complete Law observance (5:3).

<sup>55</sup>Dunn, “Yet Once More—'The Works of the Law,’” 100-2. Although Das sharply criticizes Dunn's restriction of “works of the Law” to badges of Jewish identity, he nonetheless admits that “the particular laws referred to by the phrase can vary from one conflict situation to another.” See Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 158-59.

<sup>56</sup>“Commensality” is the practice of eating together, and was the cause of the controversy in Antioch (Gal 2:11-14).

Sabbath and festivals.<sup>57</sup>

It is now time to address the question, “What does Paul see as the problem with ‘works of the Law’?” Scholars typically provide one (or more) of four common answers to this query.<sup>58</sup> First, some scholars believe that Paul’s problem with “works of the Law” was that they elicit legalism. Because the “works of the Law” lead to an inappropriate merit-based approach to Torah, they are an improper means of attaining δικαιοσύνη.<sup>59</sup>

A second common answer to the question is that “works of the Law” engender an improper attitude of national exclusivism.<sup>60</sup> This response is closely associated with the definition of “works of the Law” as markers of Jewish identity. The “works of the Law” are wrong, then, in that they lead to an inappropriate attitude that excludes Gentiles from participation in God’s covenant promises to Abraham. It is thus a rejection of God’s plan to bless all the nations through Abraham.

A third solution regularly given to the question is that the “works of the Law”

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<sup>57</sup>Likewise, Romans evinces an emphasis on circumcision (Rom 2:25-29; 3:29-30; 4:9-12), food (14:1-3, 13-21), and calendar laws (14:5-6). Moreover, it is clear that Romans counters a false presupposition of Jewish ethnic privilege (2:9-3:30; 4:16; 9:6-13; 10:12)

<sup>58</sup>For the sake of brevity, and to avoid substantial overlap with the exegetical portions of the next three chapters, this section will merely introduce the common explanations given by scholars, without analyzing the merits and deficiencies of each one.

<sup>59</sup>C. E. B. Cranfield, “St. Paul and the Law,” in *New Testament Issues*, ed. Richard Batey (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 151; Fuller, “Paul and the Works of the Law”; Bruce, *Galatians*, 137; Robert H. Gundry, “Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul,” *Biblica* 66 (1985): 13-15; Thomas R. Schreiner, “‘Works of Law’ in Paul,” *Novum Testamentum* 33 (1991): 235; Rapa, *Meaning of “Works of the Law”*, 166-67; William Barrick, “The New Perspective and ‘Works of the Law’ (Gal 2:16 and Rom 3:20),” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 16 (2005): 285-86.

<sup>60</sup>Dunn, “Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law,” 224. An alternative form of this explanation is N. T. Wright’s view, which states that the problem is Jewish reliance upon the Law as proof that they are members of the covenant people, yet the very Law upon which they rest condemns them, since all Jews have broken that Law, putting them on the same plane as the Gentiles. Wright comes very close to the third view, below, but does not state it outright. See N. T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, in vol. 10 of *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 459-61.



are problematic because it is impossible to obey the Law perfectly.<sup>61</sup> This perspective argues, based upon Galatians 3:10/Deuteronomy 27:26, that the “works of the Law” will always bring a curse, for no one can unfailingly obey the Law all the time. The promise of life for those who obey (Galatians 3:12/Leviticus 18:5) is legitimate, yet it never comes to fruition.<sup>62</sup> Critics of this view argue that perfect obedience is unnecessary, because the Law provided means of atonement for sin via the sacrificial system. In response to this, adherents to this perspective often aver that the sacrifices no longer atone for sin, and they have now been replaced by the sacrifice of Christ.<sup>63</sup>

This leads to a fourth common response, which many scholars combine with the third: the problem with “the works of the Law” is salvation-historical. The Law's role was restricted to a particular time in history, but now that Christ has come, the time for the Law has expired.<sup>64</sup>

Paul's critique of ἔργα νόμου was complex and multi-faceted. When limited to only one or two of the above criticisms, the result is an incomplete view of the problem. For this reason, this study takes the position that Paul saw at least three problems with

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<sup>61</sup>Moo, “‘Law’, ‘Works of the Law’, and Legalism in Paul,” 98; Gundry, “Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul,” 19, 25-26; Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment*, 60-61; Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 146-70. Frank Thielman, *From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul's View of the Law in Galatians and Romans* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 68-69, argues that, from Paul's first-century perspective, it was obvious that the covenant had not been, and thus could not be, kept.

<sup>62</sup>Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment*, 60.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 63; Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 122; Moo, *Galatians*, 29.

<sup>64</sup>Tyson, “‘Works of Law’ in Galatians,” 430; Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment*, 44. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 474-511, espouses a different form of the salvation-historical argument. He maintains that there was nothing wrong with the “works of the Law” *per se*. Paul, Sanders argues, was working back from solution to plight, and having determined that Christ is the solution, he necessarily had to exclude “works of the Law” as the solution because they are not Christ. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 201; Kuula, *Paul's Treatment of the Law and Israel in Romans*, 133; N. T. Wright, “4QMMT and Paul: Justification, ‘Works,’ and Eschatology,” in *History and Exegesis: New Testament Essays in Honor of Dr. E. Earle Ellis for His 80th Birthday*, ed. Aang-won Son (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 125, largely follow Sanders on this.

“works of the Law.” First, they do not justify or supply life. In fact, to supply justification was never the Law's role (Gal 3:21-22; Rom 3:19-20).<sup>65</sup> Secondly, they create improper social divisions between Jews and Gentiles within the eschatological community.<sup>66</sup> Finally, the “works of the Law” manifest a merit-based mentality that contradicts justification by faith in Christ.<sup>67</sup>

The following observations on Galatians 2:16 will lead to a more precise understanding of what Paul means here by “works of Law.” First, the fact that Paul repeats the thesis that no one will be *justified* from “works of the Law” indicates that something more fundamental than Kashrut laws was at stake in the Antioch Incident. This controversy was more than just a social issue; it was a matter of δικαιοσύνη. The same can be said for the scenario in Galatia. The false teaching being propagated in these churches had to do *at minimum* with justification. The preponderance of δικαιο- root words throughout the epistle evinces this (Gal 2:16 [3x]; 17, 21; 3:6, 8, 11 [2x], 21, 24; 5:4, 5). Obviously, Paul saw a problem wherein Law-observance was being treated

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<sup>65</sup>Kuula, *Paul's Treatment of the Law and Israel in Romans*, 120.

<sup>66</sup>Tyson, “Works of Law' in Galatians,” 431, sums it up thus: “God has opened the door to Gentiles and Jews and consequently must say no to nomistic service as a condition of existence. In God's new word in Christ, there is no distinction between Jew and Greek.”

<sup>67</sup>Schreiner, “Works of Law' in Paul,” 235-37; Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 211, rightly point out the inherent false dichotomy of the argument regularly presented by proponents of the “New Perspective” that “works of the Law” as a reference to Jewish ethnocentrism precludes a merit-based attitude toward the Law, for it was precisely in the *doing* of the “works of the Law” that some Jews prided themselves as being distinct from Gentiles and believed that they as opposed to the Gentiles would be justified.

The first and third criticisms of the “works of the Law” are not problems with the “works of the Law” themselves, but with their practitioners, who were using the “works of the Law” contrary to their intended purpose. When the “works of the Law” are used in an effort to attain δικαιοσύνη, they are deficient, because the Law was neither meant to give righteousness nor capable of doing so (Gal 2:20; 3:11, 21). Furthermore, this misuse of the ἔργα νόμου in an attempt to get righteousness evinces a merit-based mentality which contradicts the gospel principle of justification by faith by making “a claim for the self before God.” See Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 104.

(whether explicitly or implicitly) as a means of obtaining righteousness.<sup>68</sup>

On the other hand, the social side of the debate about “works of the Law” cannot be excluded. The “works of the Law” were often external, visible acts which set apart their practitioners from the surrounding peoples.<sup>69</sup> This reality manifests itself in Paul’s overtly ethnic rhetoric: “being a Jew and living like a Gentile and not like a Jew,” “compelling the Gentiles to live like Jews,” “Jews by nature and not sinners from the Gentiles.”<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, the stereotypes regarding those groups used clear insider/outsider language which placed Gentiles on a lower plane both morally (“sinners”) and in relation to righteousness before God (“justified”). Paul repeatedly returns to the issue of how Gentiles might receive Jewish blessings and benefits, arguing fervently that “works of the Law” and “Judaizing” cannot merit them. Moreover, every time Paul brings up “the works of the Law,” it is in a context which addresses the concept of a distinction between Jews and Gentiles with respect to the acquisition of righteousness or the Spirit. Thus, the “works of the Law” were being used to perpetuate inappropriate distinctions between ethnic identities in the churches of Galatia and Rome.<sup>71</sup>

Finally, it is clear that a merit-based mentality is latent within every criticism that Paul levies against ἔργα νόμου.<sup>72</sup> Legalism stands behind efforts to attain δικαιοσύνη

<sup>68</sup>Thus, Winger, *By What Law?*, 140, notes that Paul juxtaposes ἔργα νόμου and πίστις Χριστοῦ “as competing principles of justification.” Cf. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 177: “Paul attacked the law . . . as the Jewish gateway to righteousness.”

<sup>69</sup>Even circumcision was external and public, for it could not be hidden in the public baths, which were a prominent part of civic and social life in the Hellenistic world.

<sup>70</sup>Gal 2:14, 15. See also 3:7, 8, 14, 28, 29.

<sup>71</sup>Note that the problem is not an illegitimate ethnocentrism, but rather a “religio-national identity” in which the “works of the Law” function as “signs of the people who are righteous.” Rightly, Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 100.

<sup>72</sup>To affirm this is not to deny that the Judaism of Paul’s day was a religion which centered upon God’s gracious election, but simply to affirm that a merit-based mentality had crept in through the back

via Law observance. It is at the basis of all attempts to gain by works that which has already and solely been accomplished by Christ. Finally, legalism results from Gentiles' attempts to "live like a Jew" in order to obtain Jewish blessings (Gal 2:14-16).

Therefore, in Galatians Paul had at least three problems with "works of the Law." First, even in a system of so-called "covenantal nomism,"<sup>73</sup> the "works of the Law" ultimately tended to create a legalistic mentality of trying "to complete yourselves by the flesh" or "be justified by Law" (3:3; 5:4).<sup>74</sup> This mindset stands in opposition to the gospel principle of justification by faith in Christ. Secondly, the "works of the Law" created and upheld social barriers and distinctions which were inappropriate for those who belong to Christ (3:28; 6:15).<sup>75</sup> Finally, the "works of the Law" were incapable of supplying justification and life.

The gospel response to this, perhaps surprisingly to many Jewish believers, is not to argue that the Gentiles may be included in the people of God via becoming Jewish proselytes. Rather, the initial social reality of the gospel is to acknowledge a leveling

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door. See Rom 4:2-5.

<sup>73</sup>For "covenantal nomism," the seminal work is E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. "Covenantal nomism" refers to the idea that Judaism was a grace-based religion in which one's position within the covenant is granted by gracious election (and not by works), and that Torah-observance is the (gracious) God-given means by which a faithful Jew remains within the covenant. Therefore, "works of the Law" are the means, not of "getting in," but of "staying in." On this basis, adherents of the New Perspective on Paul argue against the notion that Judaism in the Second Temple period was legalistic.

<sup>74</sup>These criticisms levied by Paul would almost certainly have been disputed by the opponents, for they would have presented their teaching as gracious rather than legalistic. Nevertheless, the fact remains that these are the problems which Paul explicitly mentions with their system. Whether the objective is "getting in" or "staying in," the end result appears to be the attempt to obtain δικαιοσύνη via Law-observance, and Paul saw this as a major error.

<sup>75</sup>In light of modern debates between the "old" and "new" perspectives on Paul," it appears that scholars too readily set up an either-or dichotomy between self-righteousness and national exclusivism when attempting to describe Paul's problem with "works of the Law." It is more likely that Paul saw problems on both fronts. So Moisés Silva, "Faith versus Works of Law in Galatians," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 2, *The Paradoxes of Paul*, ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O'Brien, and M. A. Seifrid (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 246.

between Jew and Gentile in which Jews become “sinners” just like the Gentiles.<sup>76</sup> In recognizing that δικαιοσύνη is obtained only through faith in Christ, and not by “works of the Law,” Jewish believers show that ethnic distinctions do not divide the “righteous” from the “unrighteous.” Justification in Christ requires full cognizance of the fact that one's ethnic status or relationship to the Mosaic Law does not contribute to his or her δικαιοσύνη.

It should now be apparent that Paul is not simply setting up a comprehensive antagonism between faith in Christ and “works of the Law,” but is contrasting them within two specific contexts: δικαιοσύνη, and social (specifically, ethnic) divisions. The problem is not that “works of the Law” are inherently wrong, but that they are problematic when (1) they are viewed as necessary for righteousness,<sup>77</sup> and (2) when the social divisions they create are allowed to persist even within the community of the justified people of God.

### **Galatians 2:17-21**

In 2:17, Paul continues by raising a potential objection to his gospel: “If, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves are found to be 'sinners,' does that make Christ a servant of sin? Absolutely not!” The meaning of this verse is difficult to

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<sup>76</sup>Moo, *Galatians*, 157, sums up the tone of the paragraph perfectly: “He is not arguing that Gentiles should be included, with Jews, in the people of God; he is arguing, rather, that Jews should be included, with Gentiles, in the mass of ordinary humanity. Jews are 'sinners' just like the Gentiles.” Also, Byrne, *Sons of God—Seed of Abraham*, 145; Mark A. Seifrid, “Scripture and Identity in Galatians,” in *All That the Prophets Have Declared: The Appropriation of Scripture in the Emergence of Christianity*, ed. Matthew R. Malcolm (West Ryde, Australia: Paternoster, 2015), 104. R. Barry Matlock, “The Rhetoric of πίστις in Paul: Galatians 2.16, 3.22, Romans 3.22, and Philippians 3.9,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30 (2007): 199, points out that Paul begins and ends the verse with the generic terms ἄνθρωπος and πᾶσα σὰρξ to place “the Jewish Christian experience of the gospel . . . within a common human narrative.”

<sup>77</sup>Cf. Winger, *By What Law?*, 131: “Nothing is said against ἔργα νόμου except that one is not justified ἐξ ἔργων νόμου.” Also Wright, “4QMMT and Paul,” 110.

apprehend, and one major question dominates the scholarly scene. This question is, “Does Paul speak of a pre-conversion evaluation, or of a post-conversion accusation?”

Adherents of the post-conversion view argue that Paul is responding to accusations or criticisms that his gospel leads to antinomian living due to the freedom from the Law which the gospel engenders.<sup>78</sup> According to this view, Paul's opponents argued that because the gospel frees one from obedience to the stipulations of the Torah, that person inevitably will become a “sinner” by breaking its codes. A more nuanced approach of this position emphasizes the specifically social implications of the Torah: the removal of the Law opens the way to a common table for Jewish and Gentile believers, yet the Law still pronounces the verdict of “sinner” upon those who eat in mixed company.<sup>79</sup>

The alternative to this approach is to argue that Paul is speaking from a pre-conversion, or better, moment-of-conversion, point of view.<sup>80</sup> In saying, “we were found to be sinners,” Paul notes the divine verdict which falls upon all, whether Jew or Gentile.<sup>81</sup> Conviction of this verdict of “sinner” leads even the faithful, Law-observant

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<sup>78</sup>Dunn, *Galatians*, 141; Matera, *Galatians*, 102; Hays, *Galatians*, 241; Rapa, *Meaning of 'Works of the Law'*, 144; Fee, *Galatians*, 88-89; Moo, *Galatians*, 165; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 96.

<sup>79</sup>See especially Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 105; Dunn, *Galatians*, 141; Normand Bonneau, “The Logic of Paul's Argument on the Curse of the Law in Galatians 3:10-14,” *Novum Testamentum* 39 (1997): 69-70; Hays, *Galatians*, 241; de Roo, *'Works of the Law' at Qumran and in Paul*, 197.

<sup>80</sup>Several indicators show that the “finding” occurs simultaneously to the moment of seeking justification in Christ. First, the present tense-form of ζητοῦντες indicates that the verdict of “sinner” occurs “while seeking to be justified,” not after the justification occurred. See Schreiner, *Galatians*, 168; Das, *Galatians*, 259.

“Seeking to be justified in Christ” parallels “we believed in Christ Jesus, in order that we might be justified” from the previous verse, pointing to a moment-of-conversion time frame rather than a post-conversion verdict. Furthermore, Paul uses the term ἀμαρτωλός, not παραβάτης, in 2:17. Were he talking about post-conversion violation of the Law, he could easily have used the more specific term. Given his use of παραβάτης in the next verse, he appears to operate with a distinction in mind between the two concepts. That is to say, in 2:18 Paul speaks of something different than in 2:17. This difference appears to be that in 2:17, the “sinner” verdict occurs apart from the Law (i.e., “while seeking to be justified in Christ”), whereas the “transgressor” verdict occurs only after a rebuilding of that Law which in 2:17 had been torn down.

<sup>81</sup>Who is the subject of εὑρέθημεν? It could be a divine passive, since the passive form of

Jew to recognize that the only hope for δικαιοσύνη is found “in Christ” (and not in “works of the Law”), for, in spite of any amount of scrupulous Law-observance, everyone is inevitably a sinner.<sup>82</sup>

The solution to this query lies in determining what Paul meant by “sinner.” It looks as though Paul is interacting with a common misunderstanding of sin and righteousness. According to a pervasive Jewish stereotype, the term ἁμαρτωλός carried not only moral, but also social, connotations. For Jewish people, “sinner” functioned as a derogatory epithet for outsiders, that is, Gentiles.<sup>83</sup> This use of ἁμαρτωλός derives from the fact that Gentiles, by definition, did not keep the Law.<sup>84</sup> Because faithful Jews adhered to the works demanded by the Law, they considered themselves, by way of contrast, “the righteous.” Thus, the terms “righteous” and “sinner” had come to be used also in a sociological manner. Although the term “sinner” continued to retain its moral

εὐρίσκω often functions in biblical literature as a reference to a divine verdict (Sir 44:17, 20; Acts 5:39; 1 Cor 4:2; 15:15; Phil 3:9; 1 Pet 1:7) (so Schreiner, *Galatians*, 169; Das, *Galatians*, 259).

Interpreters who follow the post-conversion reading of 2:17 tend to read εὐρέθημεν as an accusation leveled by outsiders (Matera, *Galatians*, 102; Hays, *Galatians*, 241; Moo, *Galatians*, 165), but were this the case, it seems as though Paul could have chosen a more fitting term than εὐρίσκω (Schreiner, *Galatians*, 169).

Moo, *Galatians*, 164, interprets εὐρέθημεν reflexively as “we find ourselves.” This notion can be combined with either of the above readings. Moo’s reading is acceptable, so long as one recognizes that the ultimate judge of sinfulness is God, and that which is found by believers is the guilty verdict laid upon all by God.

<sup>82</sup>Some scholars point to the sin offerings prescribed by the Law as a satisfactory provision for dealing with sin. It is in this sense that Paul can say in Phil 3:6 that, with respect to “righteousness from the law” he had “become blameless.” At the same time, however, Paul asserted a need, not for “my own righteousness which is from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ.” How can Paul maintain with any consistency the possibility of “blamelessness” according to the Law, and yet argue that a righteousness through faith in Christ is necessary? The best explanation is that Paul had come to believe that the Law was never capable of supplying justification. To be certain, according to the Law’s strictures and provisions, he could regard himself as “blameless,” yet this does not necessarily warrant the conclusion that he had attained the righteousness which he formerly sought from the Law. For Paul, “If a law had been given which was able to make alive, then surely righteousness would have come from the Law” (Gal 3:22).

<sup>83</sup>See Jub 23.23-24; 24.28; 1 Sam 15:18-19; Isa 14:5; Tobit 13:6 (LXX 13:8); Pss Sol 2.1-2; 4 Ezra 3.28-36; 4.23. Don Garlington, “Paul’s ‘Partisan ἐκ’ and the Question of Justification in Galatians,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (2008): 572; Das, *Galatians*, 239.

<sup>84</sup>Dunn, “Yet Once More—‘The Works of the Law,’” 102; Smiles, *Gospel and the Law*, 107.

connotations, it now carried social and rhetorical power as a negative stereotype.<sup>85</sup> The identity of the Gentile, from the Jewish perspective, was that of “sinner.” That ἁμαρτωλός ought to be read in this specific sociological fashion, serving primarily to distinguish Jews from Gentiles, is supported by the fact that this is precisely how Paul begins his speech in 2:15.<sup>86</sup>

The manner in which Paul uses ἁμαρτωλοί in 2:15 should direct the way it is read here in 2:17. It is clear that Paul continues to capitalize upon the stereotyped phrase ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί. Paul had used the Jewish stereotype regarding “sinful Gentiles” in 2:15, only to debunk it in 2:16 by noting that “even we” Jews need to believe in Christ for justification. Galatians 2:17a adds nothing new to the argument. In fact, the protasis of 2:17 is a recapitulation of what Paul has already said in the preceding verse. He is building upon the assumption latent within the decision made by Jewish believers to place their faith in Christ. By recognizing that “no flesh is justified from works of Law,” they agreed with the verdict that they were no different from Gentiles with respect to sin and justification.<sup>87</sup> Then, by seeking justification in Christ (and not in Law), they reject the

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<sup>85</sup>Das, *Galatians*, 261, rightly warns against a strictly social interpretation of ἁμαρτωλοί: “The label ‘sinner’ should not be severed from its attendant ethical dimension. This is not a case of either/or.”

<sup>86</sup>Paul uses ἁμαρτωλοί as a denigration of Gentiles in 2:15. It is doubtful that he used the term in two different ways in the same context. Rightly Winger, *By What Law?*, 142; Rapa, *Meaning of “Works of the Law”*, 144; Moo, *Galatians*, 165; Das, *Galatians*, 239. Additionally, the καὶ αὐτοί (“even we” or “we also”) indicates that Paul is still speaking from the perspective of a Jewish Christian, with the surprising verdict that “even we Jews” might be found like the Gentiles (cf. the καὶ ἡμεῖς in 2:16).

Clearly, Paul is speaking ironically in 2:15 (cf. Winger, *By What Law?*, 143; Smiles, *Gospel and the Law*, 107-8; Rapa, *Meaning of “Works of the Law”*, 144; de Roo, *‘Works of the Law’ at Qumran and in Paul*, 194). While he would affirm that unbelieving Gentiles are “sinners,” he would reject the idea that it is their ethnicity that constitutes them such. The remainder of the paragraph Gal 2:16-21 demonstrates that Paul rejects such a notion, for he goes on to argue that even Jews are found to be “sinners.” Smiles, *Gospel and the Law*, 153, rightly remarks, “The application of ‘sinners’ to Jews in verse 17 resolves the enigma of separatist vocabulary from Paul in verse 15.”

<sup>87</sup>Jan Lambrecht, “Line of Thought in Gal 2:14b-21,” *New Testament Studies* 24 (1978), 490-91; Byrne, *Sons of God—Seed of Abraham*, 145; Bruce, *Galatians*, 140-41; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 168; Das, *Galatians*, 259-60.



Law as a means of justification and a source of eschatological identity. In doing so, even Jewish believers show themselves to be in the same category as Gentiles—those who do not derive their identity from the Torah. From the perspective of the old stereotype—to be apart from the Law is to be a “sinner”—these Jewish believers have become “sinners” no different from Gentiles, for they have rejected the Torah as a source of eschatological identity. By finding δικασύνη in Christ, Jewish believers reject the idea that relationship to Torah determines whether one falls on the δίκαιος or ἁμαρτωλός side of the eschatological divide. Because a Jew can be a “sinner” equally as much as a Gentile, ethnicity (as defined by one's relationship to the Torah) plays no role in distinguishing “sinner” from “righteous.”<sup>88</sup>

Therefore, the gospel eradicates a socially-defined view of sinfulness wherein one ethnic group, due primarily to their loyalty to the Law, was considered δίκαιός, whereas all outsiders were ἁμαρτωλός.<sup>89</sup> In view of the cross of Christ, neither physical ethnicity (φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι) nor markers of social and moral identity (“works of Law”) constitute a distinguishing factor between sinfulness and righteousness. Paul, Cephas, and any other Jewish person who had found justification in Christ, had recognized the surprising fact that they were “sinners,” because seeking to be justified in Christ meant they had rejected the Law as source of religious identity. Therefore, Paul has, in 2:15, introduced a common sociological misnomer only in order to tear it down. By showing even faithful Jews to be “sinners,” the gospel demolishes the racially-determined aspect of the “sinner” stereotype. The idea, then, carried by 2:17a is this: “Yes, in seeking

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<sup>88</sup>Similarly, Winger, *By What Law?*, 144, argues that in 2:17, Jewish Christians are found to be ἁμαρτωλοί when they decide “not to live ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, that is, Ἰουδαῖκος.”

<sup>89</sup>Note the manner in which Paul severs the connection between “works of Law” and justification three times in 2:16.

justification in Christ, I am found to be a 'sinner' (because my identification with Christ meant a cessation of my reliance upon Torah).”

How then, does Christ become a “servant of sin”? This objection is one that would genuinely concern Jewish people who had come to believe in Jesus. Faith in Christ eliminates the need to do “works of Law,” that is, to become/continue to be Jewish. As a result, both Jewish and Gentile believers end up living ἐθνικῶς καὶ οὐκ Ἰουδαϊκῶς. Thus, Christ becomes a “servant of sin” by eliminating the need to live “Jewishly” in order to be a member of the people of God. In removing “works of the Law” from the picture, Paul's gospel would eliminate the primary means of moral guidance and restraint from sin, for (according to the prevailing Jewish opinion) to “live like a Jew” is to live in submission to the strictures of the Torah, while to “live like a Gentile” was to live without moral guidance, as a sinner.<sup>90</sup> Paul's point is that the “servant of sin” objection only stands if the stereotypical social dichotomy of “Gentile sinner”/“righteous Jew” is valid. He, however, maintains that this idea is incorrect; living ἐθνικῶς is not what makes one a sinner.<sup>91</sup> Sinfulness is a universal human condition, and therefore the ethnically-defined conception of “sinner” is wrong. Paul does not deny that believers, both Jewish and Gentile, are “sinners,” but only that what made them such was neither their ethnicity nor

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<sup>90</sup>Paul likely evokes an accusation that had been directed against his proclamation of the Gospel in both Antioch and elsewhere (Rom 3:8; 6:1). In eliminating “works of Law” from the equation (whether as entry requirements or as community code of conduct), “Paul's system leads to antinomism and immorality” (Lambrecht, “Line of Thought,” 491; see also Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 186; Das, *Galatians*, 260).

<sup>91</sup>Rightly Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 105. In 1 Thess 4:5, Paul notes that the specific “Gentiles” who live in “the passion of lust” are those who “don't know God.” This passage, therefore, cannot be adduced against the point made above. Similarly, 1 Cor 12:2 speaks of a time in the Corinthians' lives prior to their coming to faith. Cf. Eph 4:17, where τὰ ἔθνη is used typologically to refer to unbelievers, and therefore might better be translated as “pagans” than as “Gentiles.”

their relationship (or lack thereof) to “works of the Law.”<sup>92</sup> As soon as the category of living apart from “works of Law” (i.e., as a Gentile) is no longer the measuring stick for sinfulness, Christ no longer has to be seen as ministering to sin by severing believers from the Law. In fact, in the next verse, Paul will go on to explain that the situation is actually much worse for those believers who attempt to abide by the Law.

The objection Paul rebuts in 2:17 is fundamentally a sociological one. The gospel which proclaims justification solely by faith and not by Law-works does not distinguish between Jew and Gentile. Various identity markers, such as ethnic (Jew, Gentile, Torah observance) or moral (“righteous,” “sinner,” used stereotypically) characteristics, do not determine “Christian” identity. Gentiles could be rectified, not by becoming members of the Jewish community through Judaizing and submission to the Law, but simply and freely, by faith in Christ. Conversely, Jews (even faithful, Law-observant ones) were in effect downgraded to “sinner” status by the gospel, which proclaimed that all their Law observance was nil. Paradoxically, before they could be included in the covenant community within which they had previously believed themselves to be members, they first had to recognize that they were excluded. Now that Christ had come, possessing and obeying the Law did not protect them from being “sinners.” The gospel of Christ had the humbling effect of placing all people, Jew or Gentile, into the same “outsider” camp. Paul's gospel destroys Jewish presumption that Law-observance makes one “righteous” and protects from the identity of “sinner,” guaranteeing membership in the people of God.

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<sup>92</sup>Smiles, *Gospel and the Law*, 149-53. Dunn, *Galatians*, 142, gets this point backwards. He maintains that “Paul's deduction was that continued categorization of Gentile believers as 'sinners' was wholly inappropriate.” In opposing the “Gentile sinner” stereotype, Paul does not contest the idea that Gentiles are sinners, but the idea that “we who are Jews by nature,” in contrast with Gentiles, are not.

Verse 18 functions to support (γάρ) the adamant μὴ γένοιτο (“Absolutely not!”) with which Paul had just concluded 2:17. “For if I rebuild those things which I tore down, I make myself a transgressor.” Paul is still correcting the misconception described in 2:17. Opponents of his gospel were contending that Law-observance is necessary for δικαιοσύνη, and therefore the solution which avoids making Christ a servant of sin (misconstrued as Gentile-like living) is to reestablish the Mosaic Law as a standard in the lives of believers.<sup>93</sup> Paul refutes this idea by noting that the situation is actually worsened by relying upon the Law. While every Jewish believer implicitly takes on the identity of a Law-less “sinner” when they seek justification in Christ, reestablishing the Law in an attempt to remove that socially defined “sinner” identity makes them something even worse—a transgressor.

Paul paints a picture in which the Law is re-established in the life of the Jewish believer, despite having previously been abolished when that believer trusted in Christ. Paul says to submit again to the Law is to make oneself a “transgressor.” Scholarly opinion is divided in determining in what sense Paul uses the word παραβάτης. Nearly all scholars recognize the technical nature of the term as referring to a transgressor of the Law or a Law-breaker. Many scholars follow this line of thought literally, believing that

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<sup>93</sup>That by “those things which I tore down” Paul refers to the OT Law is apparent from the context, wherein the major contrast throughout is between justification in Christ and justification via “works of the Law.” Paul’s use of the technical term παραβάτης supports this conclusion. In the next verse, Paul’s basis for the assertion that “rebuilding those things which I tore down” renders one a transgressor is the assumption that he has already “died to the Law.”

Dunn, *Galatians*, 142-43, by contrast, believes that Paul refers to a rebuilding only of divisive boundary markers between Jews and Gentiles. The transgression, then, would be Paul’s insistence on communion with Gentile believers. Against this idea, Paul speaks in 2:19 simply of “the Law,” and not of specific elements of the Law. While it is true that “dying to the Law” would include a dying to its ethnic divisions, it simply cannot be the case that Christ’s crucifixion (and that of all believers together with him) only served to tear down walls of division.

Paul assumes the violation of one or more commands of the Torah.<sup>94</sup> Other scholars see the transgression not as the breaking of a specific command of Torah, but as a violation of God's intentions, in light of the gospel.<sup>95</sup> According to this reading, rebuilding the Law as a means of attaining δικαιοσύνη takes one backwards in God's salvific plan, returning to the time prior to salvation when the Law enslaved him under the power of sin (4:1-3).

Although it is true that in resubmitting to the Torah, Jewish believers would inevitably make themselves transgressors of that Law in the specific sense of violating one or more of its commands (especially its rules regarding interaction with Gentiles), the immediate context appears to indicate that the παράβασις Paul has in mind is an infraction against the ultimate intent of the Torah. To rely upon the Torah to accomplish a role which was reserved for Christ-faith (the provision of life and righteousness) is a misunderstanding of its purpose (see 3:19-22) and a betrayal of God's plan to provide these through the gospel. Furthermore, as the following verse indicates, it could be regarded as a violation of the Torah's already-enacted death sentence against the believer.<sup>96</sup> Having died to the Law “through the law” in the death of Christ, the believer who attempted to re-submit to it would be transgressing the Law's punishment which had already severed him from its jurisdiction.

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<sup>94</sup>Matera, *Galatians*, 102; Dunn, *Galatians*, 143; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 187; Hays, *Galatians*, 242; de Boer, *Galatians*, 158; Moo, *Galatians*, 167. Matera, Dunn, Hays, and Moo believe Paul has a specific transgression in mind, that of Jewish believers communing with Gentiles. Within the context of 2:15-21 and Paul's reproof of Cephas, this is accurate enough. However, given the paradigmatic use of the Antioch “conversation” for the Galatians' situation, it is best to interpret the concept of transgression in the broader sense of any infraction of the Law (cf. 3:19).

<sup>95</sup>Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 106; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 91; Smiles, *Gospel and the Law*, 160; Martyn, *Galatians*, 256; Sam K. Williams, *Galatians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 74; B. Longenecker, *Triumph of Abraham's God*, 111; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 188; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 170; Das, *Galatians*, 266; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 98.

<sup>96</sup>Das, *Galatians*, 266.

Thus, Paul presents two options. The first option, described in 2:17, is to become a “sinner,” that is, to acknowledge one's own “Gentile-like” status and seek justification in Christ *apart from works of the Law*. The second option, expressed here in 2:18, is to become a “transgressor.”<sup>97</sup>

The next verse, 2:19, grounds the entire argument going back to verse 16. It is in fact the basis for Paul's Law-free gospel. Why does the Law no longer hold sway over the Christian? Because “I died to the Law.”<sup>98</sup> Believers, Paul says, die to the Law by being crucified together with Christ (cf. Gal 3:13; Rom 7:4-6).<sup>99</sup> Thus, Paul introduces what will prove to be a key theme in his presentation, participation in and with Christ. Paradoxically, the believer's death “to the Law” happens “through the Law.” Most likely, Paul refers to the condemning function of the Law. The Law names one a παραβάτης, thereby condemning him to the death penalty.<sup>100</sup> For believers, this death transpires in the death of Christ, inasmuch as they participate in it with him.<sup>101</sup> They are thereby freed

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<sup>97</sup>Lambrecht, “Line of Thought,” 487-89, rightly notes the distinctions between “found” and “make,” “sinner” and “transgressor” in 2:17, 18. Paul is speaking of two different things in the two verses, for “παραβάτης says more than ἁματωλός.” 2:18 is not an elaboration of 2:17, but an opposing option.

<sup>98</sup>Das, *Galatians*, 267, rightly notes that “I died to the Law” in 2:19 corresponds to the “tearing down” of 2:18.

<sup>99</sup>R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 92; Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, 168; Matera, *Galatians*, 103; Smiles, *Gospel and the Law*, 171; Martyn, *Galatians*, 257; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 189; Hays, *Galatians*, 243; Rapa, *Meaning of “The Works of the Law”*, 147; Fee, *Galatians*, 91; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 170; Das, *Galatians*, 268; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 100. Thus, the interpretation of Moo, *Galatians*, 169, that Paul refers to the frustration of failure in trying to live by the Law and ultimate decision to die to it is not strong enough. Paul speaks here of a real death, not a metaphorical one. Creative yet unsatisfactory is the idea that Paul's zealous effort to preserve the Law led to his encounter with the risen Christ, and thereby his own severance from the Law. This thesis garners no support from the immediate context. Contra Dunn, *Galatians*, 143; de Boer, *Galatians*, 160.

<sup>100</sup>Fee, *Galatians*, 91, rightly regards “through the Law I died” as a reference to the Law's death sentence against trespassers.

<sup>101</sup>The instrumentality of the Law (διὰ νόμου) which causes Paul to die to the Law refers to the “curse of the Law” which fell upon Christ when he was crucified (Gal 3:13), and thus, to all believers who participate in his death. Rightly, Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 107-8; Smiles, *Gospel and the Law*, 171; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 100.

forever from the condemnation levied by the Law, and are under no obligation to continue observing it, for once it executes its sentence, its purpose has been accomplished. There will be no double jeopardy. Paul further elaborates upon this intriguing correlation between the Law's condemnation and Christ's death for believers in 3:13, 22, 24.

Having been united with Christ in his death, believers continue to be united with him for the remainder of their earthly lives in order to live for God. In 2:20, Paul probably has in mind the detractors of his Law-free gospel who criticized it for eliciting moral laxity. To these critics, Paul counters that “I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me, and what I now live in the flesh I live by faith<sup>102</sup> in the son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me.” Faith in Christ never leads to license, but is empowered by and follows the example of the one who kept the Law perfectly. Believers, therefore, neither need the Law for justification, nor as a guidebook for moral living.<sup>103</sup>

The Law, in its revelation of universal sinfulness, condemns to death all who stand under its sway. It sets an impossible standard, and then executes its sentence against all who fail to keep it. The only means of escape from its condemnation is to surrender to its verdict by dying with Christ. Because of this, to rebuild the Law and resubmit to that which had been torn down through the act of dying with Christ, is in practice to nullify God's grace and bankrupt Christ's death, as Paul concludes in 2:21.

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<sup>102</sup>Of the several passages relevant to the πιστις Χριστοῦ debate, this one, due to its unique syntax and emphasis upon Christ's love and self-sacrifice, supplies perhaps the strongest support for the subjective genitive reading. Nevertheless, for reasons to be expounded later, this study will adhere to an objective genitive reading here, as in the other debated passages. On this, see the excursus “Πιστις Χριστοῦ” in chap. 4.

<sup>103</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 122; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 95; Das, *Galatians*, 269, all rightly notice that the idea of “living to God” carries the ideas both of eschatological life and of an ethical lifestyle pleasing to God. Thus, Christ is not a “servant of sin” in severing believers from the Law, for he himself lives in them, creating a manner of life which overcomes the flesh (see 5:13-25).

## **The Problem in Galatia Viewed Sociologically**

The situation in Galatia can helpfully be described through the sociological categories of “relative deprivation,” “social change,” and “social mobility.” According to Social Identity Theory, “relative deprivation” occurs when a member of a group recognizes or feels that his group has less access to specific goods, opportunities, or benefits, than do members of other groups.<sup>104</sup> The believers in Galatia, when addressed by the teaching of the imposters, experienced this phenomenon. Where they had previously thought that their spiritual affairs were in order simply through faith in Christ and reception of the Holy Spirit, the opposing teachers claimed that they had not yet qualified for the benefits of membership in the covenant community. The new teachers alleged that the Galatians, by following Paul's gospel, had yet to obtain justification/righteousness, eschatological life, the inheritance of Abraham's family, and that they had no means of moral guidance by which to restrain their fleshly impulses. By way of contrast, the group membership being offered by these new teachers seemed superior in several ways to what the Galatians had received from Paul's gospel.

When a group, such as the Galatian believers, experiences these feelings of relative deprivation, there are generally two options available to them: “social change” and “social mobility.” Social change is the acquisition of a superior social identity via the process of positively re-evaluating the ingroup to which one belongs.<sup>105</sup> As the perceived value of the ingroup increases, the contentment of the ingroup members correspondingly increases. For the Galatians, however, the new teachers were not offering a better social

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<sup>104</sup>Philip Francis Esler, “An Outline of Social Identity Theory,” in *The T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014), 20.

<sup>105</sup>Esler, *Galatians*, 51.



identity through social change. Instead, what they offered the Galatians was an improved identity through social mobility. Social mobility is the “attempt to leave [a] group (psychologically or in reality) to join some more positively distinct group.”<sup>106</sup> Thus, the teachers were “upsetting” (Gal 1:7; 5:10) the Galatians by telling them that the only way they could obtain these positive benefits was if they transferred themselves to an entirely new group, the group of Jewish Christians.

### **The Galatians' Need**

Based upon the preceding conclusions regarding the teaching of the opponents in Galatia, it is apparent that the problem in Galatia truly constituted a crisis of identity. Sometime after Paul's initial evangelization, the other teachers arrived, teaching a different “gospel,” one that promoted a dramatically different identity for believers in Jesus Christ. Their proclamation, highlighted by convincing scriptural arguments, probably seemed compelling to many of the Galatians. Their attack on the validity of Paul's apostleship and critique of his allegedly deficient gospel message traded the Galatians' former confidence in Paul for a shadow of mistrust, bringing further confusion to the Galatian congregations. The end result is that the Galatian believers likely did not know whom to believe. Should they believe Paul, who “publicly portrayed Christ as crucified” before their very eyes, the acceptance of whose gospel was accompanied by the reception of the Holy Spirit and miracles performed in their midst? Or should they capitulate to the cogent arguments of the new teachers, who urged them to bring their incipient faith in Christ to its logical completion?

The believers in Galatia were confronted with two “gospels,” and they needed

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<sup>106</sup>John C. Turner, *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 30.

to know how the gospel is defined, and how they might be constituted true members of the people of God and recipients of all the benefits associated with that membership. Paul's gospel emphasized the cross, faith in Christ, and the evidence of the Holy Spirit. The opponents harped on the importance of (certain aspects of) the Mosaic Law for both entrance into the covenant community and continued covenant living. Thus, the opponents' preaching raised disturbing questions concerning the role of the Law for believers in Christ. What was the role of the Law for believers? What was its relation to justification, inheritance, and sanctification? How can uncircumcised Gentiles partake of the promises made to Abraham and his seed? Paul's epistle to Galatia sought to provide answers to these vital questions.

### **The Formation of Social Identity in Galatians**

Once Paul heard about the emergency in Galatia, he wasted little time in penning this epistle.<sup>107</sup> Although he would have preferred to visit the Galatian believers in person, some inhibiting factor, now unknown, precluded that course of action (4:20). Paul recognized, however, that his physical presence among the Galatians was not the only available means of helping them deal with this problem. He knew that his epistle could serve as a legitimate replacement for his own personal presence in Galatia, and he recognized that texts (such as a letter, or the Scriptures) can play a vital role in the formation of personal identity.<sup>108</sup> Thus, he wrote this letter, recognizing that it could

<sup>107</sup>The absence of Paul's standard thanksgiving section in the introduction of the letter may indicate the urgency he felt as he began to write the epistle. Furthermore, it is plausible to read 6:11 as stating that Paul himself physically wrote the letter. If this is the case, it was most likely the exigency of the Galatian crisis which compelled him, against what was likely his regular practice of employing an amanuensis, to write the letter himself.

<sup>108</sup>Scholars such as Judith Lieu, Paul Trebilco, J. Brian Tucker, Mikael Tellbe, and William S. Campbell have all recognized the important role played by texts in the formation of early Christian identity.

determine which “gospel” the Galatians would choose to follow.

When viewed from the perspective of modern sociology, the identity-formative character of Paul's letter to the Galatians quickly becomes apparent. Paul uses several means of identity formation, easily recognizable to modern Social Identity theorists. Among these methods are the concepts of “social change,” “recategorization,” “narrative identity,” “self-designations,” and “positive distinctiveness.”

**Social change.** As mentioned earlier, the opposing teachers were proposing that the Galatian believers employ *social mobility* (that is, to leave one social group—Gentile believers in Christ—to enter a different group perceived to be superior—Jewish believers in Christ) in order to obtain the benefits which they so desired. Paul, on the other hand, viewed *social change* as the solution to the Galatians' problem. Rather than encouraging them to abandon one social group for another, Paul wanted to revise the Galatians' understanding of the group to which they already belonged. By demonstrating that their membership in this group was actually better than that which the other teachers were offering, Paul could convince the Galatians to remain in the true gospel of Jesus Christ. This social change—a positive reevaluation of the Galatian believers' “in Christ” identity—functions as the umbrella for all the other means of identity formation which take place in the letter to Galatia. Recategorization, narrative identity, positive distinctiveness, and self-designations are all employed by Paul in order to convince the Galatians that their identity “in Christ” is superior to that which any other identity, any “other gospel,” can supply.

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For references, see “The Textual Formation of Identity” in chap. 1 of this study.

**Recategorization.** One of the primary strategies used by Paul in his letter to Galatia is a method modern sociologists refer to as “recategorization,” also known as the “Common Ingroup Identity Model.” This process, best described by Samuel Gaertner, functions as a means of bringing reconciliation and unity to the members of two opposing groups. Recategorization works by taking two distinct groups, formerly at odds with one another, and either creating a new shared superordinate identity or pointing out that they both already share a common superordinate group identity. As a result, the two groups experience a sense of commonality inasmuch as the individuals are now co-members within a group that functions on a higher plane than the group memberships which incite the cross-group enmity.<sup>109</sup>

Recategorization is frequently powered through the use of a group “prototype,” an “ideal person from the past” who “serves as the leader of the recategorization process by creating a sense of commonality between differing groups (or subgroups) while allowing each to maintain its own particular salient features.”<sup>110</sup> The prototype must obviously be an individual who can be claimed by both groups as a representative, and usually serves as an exemplar of the traits that will serve as identity markers for the group.

Finally, recategorization is often accompanied by “deategorization.” Once the two subordinate groups are unified through their common alignment within the

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<sup>109</sup>Esler, “An Outline of Social Identity Theory,” 29; Samuel Gaertner et al., “The Common Ingroup Identity Model: Recategorization and the Reduction of Intergroup Bias,” *European Review of Social Psychology* 4 (1993): 1-26. Esler describes this as a move from an “us and them” mentality to a “we” mindset.

<sup>110</sup>Coleman A. Baker, “A Narrative-Identity Model for Biblical Interpretation,” in *The T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, 112. In this, Baker is following Marco Cinnirella, “Exploring Temporal Aspects of Social Identity: The Concept of Possible Social Identities,” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 28 (1998): 227-48, who has done the best work on prototypes.

superordinate grouping, it is often the case that the affiliations which caused the former division are eliminated altogether. Gaertner, however, notes that decategorization need not always follow recategorization, and in fact, that it is sometimes harmful to the unification process. He points out that the most effective recategorization processes are those in which “both the superordinate and the sub-group identities are salient, such as when the members conceive of themselves as two sub-groups within a more inclusive superordinate entity.”<sup>111</sup> Decategorization carries the inherent danger that “individuals might consider that they were being deprived of their valued (sub) group identities.”<sup>112</sup>

In the case of Galatians, an obvious tension existed between members of the two groups “Jewish believers in Christ,” and “Gentile believers in Christ.” The teachers clearly alleged that being a member of the “Jewish” group of believers was superior to membership within the Gentile grouping. From the perspective of Paul, however, there was no need for members of one group to transition to another group (as the false teachers were asserting) in order to obtain the important benefits of membership within the people of God. Rather, Paul believed that members of both groups already retained a higher-order identity, one that was more important than the identity provided by their ethnic status. While the other teachers were harping on the need to adhere to the principal markers of Jewish identity, Paul averred that the focus was not to be placed upon the subordinate identity supplied by ethnic affiliation, but upon the superordinate group membership shared in common by all those who have been united with Christ. Thus, Paul points out that it is superfluous to become a Jewish proselyte in order to become a seed

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<sup>111</sup>Gaertner et al., “The Common Ingroup Identity Model,” 20 (I owe this citation to Esler, “An Outline of Social Identity Theory,” 29-30).

<sup>112</sup>Esler, “An Outline of Social Identity Theory,” 30.

and heir of Abraham, for that benefit is reaped not through the “Jewish” group identity, but through membership within the superior “in Christ” grouping.

In Galatians, Paul uses the prototype as a means of bridging the ethnicity divide. For example, Abraham functions as a prototype for the Galatians of one who believes in God, receives a promise, obtains an inheritance, and is affiliated positively with πάντα τὰ ἔθνη.<sup>113</sup> In an ironic reversal, Paul uses precisely the same prototype as the other teachers were using, with exactly the opposite purpose. While the opponents were using Abraham to argue that one had to become a Jewish proselyte in order to partake of the promised Jewish blessings, Paul pointed out that Abraham serves as the ideal prototype for Gentile sharing in the promised blessings. Paul also presents Sarah the “free woman,” and Isaac the “child of promise” who was “begotten according to Spirit,” as prototypes for the Galatian believers. Finally, Jesus himself serves as the ultimate group prototype and identity symbol for believers.

As mentioned above, decategorization often accompanies recategorization in the process of group unification. Often, when two subordinate groupings are recategorized, the previous disharmonious group identities are eliminated altogether. Nevertheless, sociologists point out that the most successful recategorization processes avoid decategorization. On the surface, it appears that Paul was not only recategorizing believers into the “in Christ” group, but also decategorizing them from previous identities. For example, in Galatians 3:28, the previous groupings—Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female—appear to be nullified. Paul also empties the identity markers of circumcision and uncircumcision of significance, replacing them with the more

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<sup>113</sup>Robert L. Brawley, “Nodes of Objective Socialization and Subjective Reflection in Identity: Galatian Identity in an Imperial Context,” in *The T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, 139.

important criterion of a “new creation” (6:15). Heated scholarly debate persists over how to interpret Paul's exclusion of these ethnic, social, and gender-based identity categories for believers. These are questions that the exegesis of the next few chapters will address more fully.

**Narrative identity.** Another aspect of identity formation used by Paul in Galatians is that of *narrative identity*. In Galatians, Paul uses the Abraham narrative as a means of contesting the Galatians' potentially incorrect self-understanding, and reconfiguring it based upon a revised analysis of the Abraham story. Paul's teaching about Abraham sandwiches the robust central section of the letter, demonstrating that Abraham plays a key role in Galatian Christian self-understanding. Ricoeur's three-stage explanation of the dialectic between narrative and audience helps us to visualize exactly what Paul was trying to accomplish. The initial stage is that of “prefiguration,” which refers to the “preunderstanding” brought to the text by the audience member, and can also be understood as their “pre-existing identity.” Stage 2 is “configuration,” which includes “the author's construction of the text and the readers' interaction” with the text. Finally, stage 3—“refiguration”—is the change in the readers' identity resultant of their “interaction with the narrative.”<sup>114</sup> Thus, Paul intended for the Galatians to hear the Abraham story afresh and to allow it to change their perception of who they are and what they are to do (or not do) as a result of it.

**Self-designations.** Another method used by Paul to convince the Galatian

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<sup>114</sup>Baker, “A Narrative-Identity Model for Biblical Interpretation,” 105-6. See also Judith M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 30; J. Brian Tucker, *You Belong to Christ: Paul and the Formation of Social Identity in 1 Corinthians 1-4* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 31.

believers that their current ingroup (a group that might be called the “in Christ group” or possibly, at the risk of anachronism, the “Faith Alone Group”) was superior was the use of honorific *self-designations* to describe their own group. The way in which self-designations function to fashion identity has been helpfully parsed by Paul Trebilco. He notes that early Christ-believers chose specific “self-designations which for them both expressed their identity and had the ongoing effect of further creating and reinforcing that identity.” “Self-designations both arise from and shape identity and practice,” Trebilco argues.<sup>115</sup> Paul was seemingly well-aware of the powerful effect that self-designations can have in the identity-formation process. In Galatians, Paul applies several important self-designations and prestigious titles to the members of the “in Christ” group. Terms such as “offspring of Abraham,” “heirs,” and “sons of God” function to grant the ingroup not only a positive and desirable identity, but also one that is superior to any other that can be offered.

But Paul does not simply create a positive identity for the “in Christ” group. He goes one step further by creating a positive contrast between the ingroup and the outgroup. This process, known as “legitimation,” creates *positive distinctiveness* for the ingroup over against an outgroup which threatens the ingroup. The primary objective of legitimation is not necessarily to devalue the outgroup,<sup>116</sup> but to create a comparatively advantageous contrast for the ingroup, thereby increasing its perceived value and desirability. As Turner explains it, “People are motivated to establish positively valued

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<sup>115</sup>Paul S. Trebilco, *Self-Designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 8-9.

<sup>116</sup>Aaron Kuecker, “Ethnicity and Social Identity,” in *The T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, 72.



distinctiveness for groups with which they identify from relevant outgroups.”<sup>117</sup> Esler notes that legitimation “is especially important in any social order where the prevailing arrangements are under threat from dissenters from within, or through opposition from without, which may be capable of causing the members to falter in their commitment.”<sup>118</sup> In Galatians, Paul uses positive distinctiveness in several ways in order to make the Galatians realize that the “in Christ” group is superior to the alternative. He uses scriptural exegesis, appeals to authority, reminders of the Galatians' personal experiences, and identity markers.

Galatians is laden with terms that sociologists would recognize as potential markers of identity. Key terms such as “seed,” “Abraham,” “sons,” “works,” “Law,” “flesh,” “circumcision,” “slavery,” “curse,” “in Christ,” “faith,” “Spirit,” “inheritance,” and “righteousness,” among others,<sup>119</sup> all function as part of the rhetorical attempt by both Paul and the opponents to define Christian identity for this group of believers in Galatia. These terms stake out the battlefield upon which the fight to define Galatian Christian identity would be joined.

Some of these key terms of identity were areas which were claimed by both Paul and the opposition. Table 1 below contains several such identity markers. Both Paul's gospel and that of the opposition laid claim to these traits, yet their means of attaining them were distinct. At this point, Paul is probably accurately representing the opposition.

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<sup>117</sup>Turner, *Rediscovering the Social Group*, 30.

<sup>118</sup>Philip Francis Esler, *The First Christians in Their Social Worlds: Social-scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1994), 9.

<sup>119</sup>“Life,” “grace,” “redemption,” “freedom,” “crucify,” “promise,” “new creation,” “zeal,” “compel,” and “exclude,” among others, might also be included.

Table 1. Identity markers claimed by Paul and opponents

<i>Identity Markers Claimed by Both Paul and the Opponents</i>	<i>Opponents' Method</i>	<i>Paul's Method</i>
Seed of Abraham	Circumcision/Judaizing	Union with Christ
Justification/righteousness and Life	By Works of Law	By Faith
Inheritance	Through Physical Descent from Abraham/Judaizing	Through Promise/Union with Christ
Ability to Restrain Flesh	Via Law	Via Spirit

Another set of identity markers are those which were likely claimed by the other teachers as valid characteristics of their message, but not by Paul. In each instance, Paul's gospel supplies a different, opposing trait. Once again, Paul's representation of the opponents' teaching likely would not raise any cries of protest from the opponents at this point. Table 2, below, summarizes these identity markers.

Table 2. Opposing identity markers claimed by opponents and Paul

<i>Identity Markers Claimed by the Opponents</i>	<i>Corresponding Trait According to Paul's Gospel</i>
Works of Law	Faith
Jewish Identity	“In Christ” Identity
Completion	Holy Spirit
Circumcision	New Creation; Faith working through love

Another group of identity markers characterizes the defensive, polemical tone of Galatians. Inasmuch as Paul is battling with the other teachers to capture the hearts of the Galatians, one would expect some polemicizing, and it is therefore unsurprising to

find Paul caricaturing the teaching of his opponents. In an effort to present a positive ingroup identity for his gospel, Paul would build up the beneficial aspects of his presentation while emphasizing the detrimental aspects of theirs. When the positive characteristics of his gospel are viewed alongside a negative portrayal of his opposition's teaching, his readers would be encouraged to choose his superior gospel over the comparatively pathetic version offered by his opponents. Table 3 pictures the positive distinctiveness Paul's polemicizing might have helped to create for his gospel.

Table 3. Paul's gospel versus his caricature of the opponents' gospel

<i>Paul's Gospel According to Paul</i>	<i>Paul's Caricature of the Opponents' "Gospel"</i>
Promise, Cross, Spirit	Flesh
Adoption to Divine Sonship, Freedom	Slavery, Coercion
Redemption from Law	Curse of Law
Truth	"Other gospel," "Perverted gospel"
Grace	Exclusion, Cut off from Christ, Fallen from grace

Paul's use of these identity markers follows what one would expect based upon Social Identity Theory. The ingroup—that is, the “in Christ” group—under threat from the outgroup, which claimed to offer superior benefits both for the present and the future, needed to have its positive identity reestablished. Paul thus uses the process of legitimation to create positive distinctiveness for the “in Christ” group, by way of positive contrast with the outgroup.

From our limited perspective, which relies solely on Galatians and has no other material evidence of the opponents' teaching, it appears that Paul is being unfair to the

opposition. However, in spite of the dearth of hard evidence, one can safely assume that their representation of Paul's gospel was of a similar ilk. Based upon Paul's arguments, and especially those areas where he stridently defends himself, one can imagine that the opponents' presentation looked something like that pictured in Table 4:

Table 4. The opponents' gospel versus their caricature of the Pauline gospel

<i>Opponents' Caricature of Paul's Gospel</i>	<i>Opponents' Gospel According to the Opponents</i>
Unauthorized message and apostleship	Comes from Jerusalem
Incomplete	Completion through Judaizing and keeping the Law
Gentile outsiders and sinners	Seed of Abraham through circumcision
Excluded from the covenant community, no inheritance	Members of Israel, Heirs
No moral guidance or restraint for the flesh	Mosaic Law as guide for covenant lifestyle <sup>120</sup>

Sociologists agree that this process of creating positive distinctiveness is a natural phenomenon used by groups as a means of self-preservation. The fact that the opponents used it as a means of elevating the profile of their message, while Paul used it as a response to an external threat to the ingroup, fits perfectly with Social Identity Theory.

Much of the effort exerted by both Paul and the opposing teachers was focused upon the creation of a positive and desirable social identity for the Galatian church

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<sup>120</sup>In addition to these, the opponents may also have made use of blessing/curse terminology to enhance the contrast between their message and Paul's. It is plausible to take Paul's exegesis of Deut 27:26 and Lev 18:5 in 3:10-12 as a response to their teaching. If this is the case, they might have construed adherents of Paul's gospel as accursed due to their failure to obey the Law fully (Deut 27:26), whereas followers of their own gospel were recipients of the blessing of life due to their Law-keeping (Lev 18:5).

members. The opponents made a compelling case for their position—their arguments from Scripture were convincing; the social identity which they offered, along with its concomitant benefits, was attractive; and they had succeeded in raising doubts regarding Paul's qualifications as an apostle—and therefore Paul was obliged not only to rebut their arguments, but also to demonstrate that the true gospel which he had already preached to the Galatians was superior to the alternative offered by his rivals.

A careful analysis of the letter reveals that the identity markers which were being claimed both by Paul and his opponents were the ones upon which Paul chose to focus the majority of his effort. As a result, the motifs of “justification,” “life,” “seed of Abraham,” “inheritance,” and “ability to restrain the flesh” dominate the epistle. The winner of the tug-of-war over these issues would determine whether Christ was indeed to be formed in the Galatians, or whether Paul had been running his race in vain. Thus, a closer look at these motifs is warranted before moving on.

The first major area where Paul thought the identity of Christ-believers should differ from the identity which was being promoted and proffered by the other teachers is Paul's emphasis on faith for justification/righteousness. This aspect of Paul's gospel was countered by the opposition's focus on “works of Law.” The opponents' preaching emphasized the observance of certain aspects of Law for justification (2:21; 3:21), whereas Paul centered on the fact that faith in Jesus Christ is the only means of righteousness, and “by works of Law no flesh will be justified” (2:16).

A second identity clash between Paul's gospel and that of the opponents was based upon ethnicity. The false teachers promoted an ethnic identity which relied upon one's relationship to Abraham, requiring circumcision and Judaizing in order for one to partake of the Abrahamic inheritance and covenant promises. Paul, however, traced

Abrahamic descent differently, through Jesus Christ, the one true seed of Abraham. For Paul, relationship to Abraham is reckoned through faith and union with Christ (3:7, 16, 29).

A third area of contrast between Christian identity according to Paul vis-à-vis the opponents' teaching was that Paul believed the presence and work of the Holy Spirit within the believer to be not only the definitive evidence of Christian identity (3:2-5; 4:6), but also the wholly sufficient source of guidance for moral conduct (5:16, 22-25). For Paul, those who are led by the Spirit have no need to be “under Law” (5:18), for they have been redeemed from the Law and have received the Spirit as proof of this liberation and as the eschatological empowerment for proper conduct. By contrast, possession of the Holy Spirit was not enough for the other teachers. Although the Galatian believers had begun by the Spirit, the teachers focused upon the ongoing role of the Law in the life of the believer as the “completion” of the process begun at conversion (3:3). By Paul's estimation, the submission to the Law being advocated by the other teachers was nothing less than slavery to weak and poor elements, a return even to pagan worship of false gods (4:8-10)!

Thus, for Paul Christian identity was in some ways quite distinct from the idea that his opponents in Galatia had of it. While both sides undoubtedly claimed to have the true gospel, Paul wanted to make it abundantly clear that the two “gospels” were incompatible. In sociological parlance, one would say that Paul was defining the boundaries of Christian identity differently than were his opponents. For Paul, the non-negotiables of Christian identity were righteousness by means of faith (and nothing else), possession of the Holy Spirit, and union with Christ. At the same time, he viewed the ideas of fleshly effort and accomplishment, Law-keeping, and physical descent from

Abraham to be either hazardous or immaterial.

### **The Pauline Solution**

On Paul's first trip to Galatia, when he initially preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to them, the Galatians had warmly received his message. As a result, God had confirmed their salvation by endowing them with the Holy Spirit and working powers among them. After Paul left, however, some other teachers arrived, alleging that Paul's gospel was incomplete and that his apostleship was dubious. These other teachers, most likely claiming the support of the highest authorities in the early church, taught the Galatian believers that, with regard to their salvation, they had only just begun. If they desired justification, they needed to keep the Law. If they wanted to be members of the covenant community and heirs of the promises to Abraham, they had to be circumcised. And if they aspired to live a lifestyle that accorded with the expectations of the covenant, they needed to walk in line with the moral code of the Mosaic Law.

By the time word about the situation in Galatia reached Paul, some of the Galatian believers were seriously considering, if not already putting into practice, the suggestions of the opposing teachers. Paul appears to indicate that some of the Galatians had already given themselves over to the “other gospel,” for they are in the process of “deserting” God who called them (1:6), they have already been “bewitched” (3:1), are attempting to bring faith to completion “by the flesh” (3:3), are observing special calendrical requirements (4:10), have been cut off from Christ and fallen away from grace (5:4), and have ceased “running well” and “being persuaded by the truth” (5:7). Paul genuinely feared that his labor on their behalf had been for naught (4:11).

On the other hand, Paul gives indications that the Galatians have not gone all the way in following this heresy. He can still urge them not to “submit again to a yoke of

slavery” (5:1), and is still in a position to warn them of the dire consequences of receiving circumcision (ἐὰν περιτέμνησθε, 5:2-4). The imperfective aspect of the present tense verbs (“trying to finish” 3:3; “turning back” 4:9; “desiring to be” 4:21) indicates an ongoing process as yet incomplete or still under consideration, and communicates hope for the Galatians. Paul retains a hope that Christ will yet be formed in them (4:19) and that they will still come to agreement with his position (5:10). The fact that Paul wrote this letter at all indicates that he still held out hope for their salvation, and his repeated references to them as “brothers” (1:11; 3:15; 4:12, 28, 31; 5:11, 13; 6:1, 18) and “children” (“my children” 4:19; “children of promise” 4:28; “children of the free woman” 4:31) evince that he did not view them as a lost cause.

Paul's response to this serious situation was to write the Galatians a letter that served to define the contours of their identity. As has already been demonstrated, Galatians abounds with identity-formative characteristics. The analysis given above shows that Paul viewed the crisis in Galatia as one regarding an inadequate grasp of “in Christ” identity. At the heart of this letter devoted primarily to the strategy of identity formation, Paul introduces the theological metaphor of υιοθεσία, God's adoption of believers as his own children. What role does υιοθεσία play in Paul's identity-formative strategy in Galatians? How does it contribute to a discussion of the complex issues regarding ethnicity, Law, covenant, eschatology, and the people of God? In order to find answers to these questions, the next three chapters will examine the central theological portion of the epistle, which climaxes with Paul's bold proclamation of the Galatian believers' adoption into the family of God.



## CHAPTER 3

### EXEGESIS OF GALATIANS 3:6-14

#### **Galatians 3:1-5**

Galatians 3:1 marks a transition in the epistle. Paul moves from speaking of his own personal experience to directly addressing the “foolish Galatians.” Galatians 2:15-21 functions as the hinge which connects these two sections, for it both summarizes his lecture to Cephas, while also encapsulating his thesis for the Galatian believers. It does so by combining the anecdotal style of 1:13-2:14 with the theological tone which dominates chapters 3-4. Therefore, the move into the central portion of the letter, Ἦ ἀνόητοι Γαλάται, is not as abrupt as it initially seems, for even in his recounting of the meeting in Jerusalem and the incident at Antioch, Paul has constantly held the Galatians in mind.

Galatians 3:1-5 initiates the central theological portion of the epistle by appealing to the Galatians to perceive their own Spiritual experience.<sup>1</sup> In this paragraph, Paul presents two indisputable facts and one debated inference. The first indisputable fact is that the Galatians had received the Spirit. Even the opposing teachers would agree on this matter.<sup>2</sup> The second indisputable fact in this paragraph is that the Galatians received

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<sup>1</sup>“Spiritual” is intentionally capitalized to emphasize that the experience of the Galatians to which Paul appeals is a tangible experience of the personal Holy Spirit.

<sup>2</sup>The fact that the Galatian believers showed clear evidence of the Spirit's work in their lives serves as the *sine qua non* for Paul's argument in the letter. Paul repeatedly returns to the idea that Spirit-possession is the indisputable proof not only of membership within Abraham's lineage, but also of sonship and membership within the family of God (3:14; 4:6) and its concomitant inheritance. Additionally, possession of the Spirit serves as a means of freedom from Torah (5:4-6, 18, 25). If Paul cannot rely upon the Galatians' possession of the Holy Spirit, neither can he refute the opposing teachers by proving to his readers that “works of the Law” are inappropriate for believers in Christ. Paul views the arrival of the Spirit

the Spirit not “from works of the Law,” but ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως. Paul's questions in 3:2, 5 are rhetorical, and the answer is self-evident. Performing demands of the Law had nothing to do with the Galatians' reception of the Spirit. In other words, the Spirit came to them while they were still living ἐθνικῶς. That the Galatians had received the Spirit before the opposing teachers arrived on the scene promulgating “works of the Law” was apparent, otherwise Paul's argument would have failed.

Finally, Paul makes a debated inference in 3:1-5. Paul's contested assumption is that πίστις not only begins, but also completes, the Christian experience. As a result, possession of the Spirit, which the Galatian believers achieved via ἀκοή πίστεως, rules out “works of the Law” with regard to δικαιοσύνη.<sup>3</sup> It is this inference which Paul intends to demonstrate throughout the following theological section.

In Paul's mind, the Galatians' possession of the Spirit closes the case against any requirement of Law-observance. His logic is as follows:

If  
(A) you have received the Spirit,  
and  
(B) you received the Spirit from faith and not from “works of the Law,”  
then  
(C) “works of the Law” are ineffectual for you.<sup>4</sup>

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as the harbinger of the eschatological time, a signal of the Law's expiration.

This aspect of Paul's argumentation distinguishes Paul's gospel from the “other gospel” of the opponents. While the opponents acknowledged that the Galatians had received the Spirit, they denied that this signaled their membership within the eschatological people of God and reception of the inheritance. They averred rather that a further “completion” (cf. 3:3, ἐπιτελεῖν) through “works of the Law” was warranted to attain full member status and benefits.

<sup>3</sup>The line of reasoning in 2:16 is strikingly similar. If a person is not justified from “works of the Law” except through πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, then logically speaking the “works of the Law” are excluded altogether as the cause of justification. Rightly, Peter Oakes, *Galatians*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 86.

<sup>4</sup>At this point, it is vital to emphasize that Paul was not opposed to obedience to the Law *per se*. Paul does not simply repudiate “works of the Law.” In fact, later in the epistle he speaks of “fulfilling the entire Law” in a positive sense (5:14). Rather, he opposes “works of the Law” to “faith.” This either-or dichotomy points to the conclusion that Paul's problem with “works of the Law” was not the works

For Paul, the penetrating question is, How did they receive the Spirit? From “works of the Law”? Or from “the hearing of faith”?<sup>5</sup> Once he had determined that the Spirit's arrival was a result of faith, the argument, for Paul, would have sufficed. This is because Paul believed the Spirit to be the complete fruition of the Christian life, including full membership within the people of God. The Spirit's activity proved that the Galatians had already received the blessing of Abraham, the promise, the inheritance, and δικαιοσύνη. The opponents, however, would not have agreed with this. For them, the Spirit was only the beginning, and a greater blessing, a “completion,” could be obtained through Law-observance.

Galatians 3:1-5 functions as the introduction to 3:6-14 in several ways. First, Paul sets up the dichotomy which grounds his argument until 3:14—faith versus “works of the Law.”<sup>6</sup> Paul builds his argument in such a way that the two categories are mutually opposed. A person receives the Holy Spirit *either* “from faith” *or* “from works of the Law.” Paul's argument reveals the fundamental problem with the opposing teachers, for they, in contrast to him, would have maintained a “both/and” approach to πίστις and “works of the Law.”

In direct opposition to the “other gospel,” Paul asserts that faith and “works of the Law” represent two sources of identity. These “identity markers” characterize two distinct social groups, with no overlap between the two groups. If one is a member of the social group of “the ones from faith” then he cannot belong to the group of “as many as

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themselves or the Law itself, but the attempt to garner via “works of the Law” that which can be gained solely through faith. Fundamentally, then, Paul condemns a misunderstanding of the Law's purpose. The Law's role was distinct from that of faith, and faith carried a monopoly on the provision of δικαιοσύνη.

<sup>5</sup>On the meaning of ἀκοή πίστεως, see the excursus below.

<sup>6</sup>The faith-Law contrast continues until the end of Gal 3, but 3:10 marks Paul's final use of the full phrase “works of the Law.”

are from works of the Law,” and vice versa.<sup>7</sup> This is why the bulk of Galatians 3 will constitute Paul's attempt to demonstrate the intrinsic incompatibility of πίστις and “works of the Law.”

A second way that 3:1-5 prepares for 3:6-14 is that Paul's refrain “from works of the Law or from hearing of faith” introduces the main themes of each of the next two paragraphs. In 3:6-9, Paul articulates how the “from faith” group are justified/blessed along with their prototype, Abraham. In 3:10-12, he teaches that those who identify with “works of the Law” only end up “under a curse.” Finally, 3:1-5 introduces the key proof for Paul's entire argument, not only through 3:14, but all the way through 4:7—the Holy Spirit.

### **Excursus: The “Hearing of Faith”**

The phrase ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως in 3:2, 5 is notoriously difficult to translate. There is no way to translate it into English without presupposing a particular interpretation. As Richard Hays and others have pointed out, the polysemous nature of the terms ἀκοή and πίστις creates the possibility of at least four different meanings.<sup>8</sup> The ambiguous nature of the genitive construction further heightens the uncertainty.

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<sup>7</sup>Note that the arena where Paul builds this dichotomy is that of the reception of the Holy Spirit. It would not be fair to Paul's argument to say that a person of the faith group cannot also legitimately perform “works of the Law.” His point is that “works of the Law” cannot bring about the reception of the Holy Spirit. Only faith can do this. Therefore, the dichotomy which Paul sets up exists only in a specific domain, that of the Holy Spirit. It will soon become clear that Paul believes this Holy Spirit domain also encompasses justification and Abrahamic blessing.

<sup>8</sup>Richard Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 124-32. Ἀκοή can mean either “the act of hearing” or “report, message” (it can also mean “ear” [e.g., Mk 7:35] but the context of Gal 3:2-5 excludes that option). Πίστις can refer to “faith,” “faithfulness,” or “that which is believed.” See BDAG, s.v. “ἀκοή.” Hays (*Faith of Jesus Christ*, 126) lists as the four possible readings (1) “hearing with faith,” (2) “hearing the faith” = “hearing the gospel,” (3) “the message that enables faith,” (4) “the message of the faith” = “the gospel message.” To this list, Sam K. Williams adds a fifth option—a genitive of apposition. His rendering is thus “the ‘hearing’ that is faith.” See Sam K. Williams, “The Hearing of Faith: Akoē Pisteōs in Galatians 3,” *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 82–93.

The best interpretation of ἀκοῆς πίστεως is that it refers to a specific message which is believed (i.e., one that evokes faith). Three compelling clues point in this direction. First, Paul alludes to Isaiah 53:1, which speaks of belief in a specific message. Second, Paul's use of Isaiah 53:1 in Romans 10:14-17 confirms that the most likely referents for πίστις and ἀκοή are “faith” and “message” respectively. Third, Galatians 3 makes a comparison between the Galatians' reception of the Spirit ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως and Abraham's belief in God's promise.

First, the phrase ἀκοῆς πίστεως alludes to Isaiah 53:1—τίς ἐπίστευσεν τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν. Paul collocates πίστις with the noun ἀκοή in order to evoke Isaiah 53:1.<sup>9</sup> Romans 10:16, where he quotes this same verse from Isaiah, immediately following it with a clarification regarding ἀκοή and πίστις, shows that Paul liked to use this verse to refer to faith in the gospel message. This concatenation makes it likely that Paul has Isaiah 53:1 in mind here in Galatians 3 as well.

Isaiah 53:1 leaves no ambiguity in the meanings of πιστεύω or ἀκοή.<sup>10</sup> It clearly

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<sup>9</sup>Karen Jobes, “Jerusalem, Our Mother: Metalepsis and Intertextuality in Galatians 4:21-31,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 55 (1993): 312. Surprisingly few commentators mention the possibility of an allusion to Isa 53:1 in their discussions of Gal 3:2, 5. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 149, tentatively adopts this stance. Several other commentators allude to Paul's quote of Isa 53:1 in Rom 10:16, but more often emphasize his use of ἀκοή in the next verse than the OT text which Paul happens to be discussing.

Scholars' reticence to link Gal 3:2, 5 with Isa 53:1 is surprising in light of the fact that such a connection easily satisfies at least six of Richard Hays' seven criteria for determining an “echo” (see Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989]: 29-33): the source material of Isa 53 was readily available to the auditors; the verbal correspondence between both ἀκοή and πίστις/πιστεύω supplies sufficient “volume” for an echo to be heard; Paul's use of Isa 53:1 in Rom 10:16 furnishes “recurrence”; “thematic coherence” occurs between Isa 53 and Gal 3 in that πίστις is regarded as the appropriate response to a specific ἀκοή, i.e., a gospel report regarding the suffering Messiah; the pervasive use of Isa 53 throughout the NT and early “Christian” tradition shows the “historical plausibility” of the idea that the Galatian readers would pick up on the echo; the criterion of “satisfaction” is met in that the allusion provides a meaning for the debated phrase ἀκοή πίστεως which makes excellent sense within the immediate context and the letter of Galatians as a whole.

<sup>10</sup>Jobes, “Jerusalem, Our Mother,” 312, carefully asserts that “it is not clear that intertextual resonance can be used to make semantic decisions.” She confirms that if one follows the line of reasoning pursued here, the result is the reading of the passage espoused by this study. Even if one cannot depend

refers to *belief* in a specific *message*. This is further confirmed by the fact that the ἀκοή spoken of in both Galatians 3:1-5 and the broader context of Isaiah 53 is the same one, the report about the death of the Messiah. When Paul refers to a “message,” he is specifically referring back to the kerygma that he had just spoken of in 3:1—Jesus Christ publicly portrayed to the Galatians as having been crucified.

The allusion to Isaiah 53 also supports a reading of πίστις in Galatians 3:2, 5 as “belief” rather than “faithfulness,” for Isaiah uses the verbal cognate πιστεύω, with a specific object—τῆ ἀκοῆ. It would be nonsensical to translate Isaiah 53:1 as “Who has been faithful to our message?” It must be read, “Who has *believed* our message?”<sup>11</sup> In the same way, if it is true that Paul alludes to Isaiah 53:1 here, then πίστεως in Galatians 3:2, 5 has to be read as “faith,” with ἀκοῆς functioning as its object.<sup>12</sup>

A second argument in support of the rendering “a message which is believed” is that Romans 10:16 interprets Isaiah 53:1 in the same manner. First, it equates ἀκοή with

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upon the intertextual echo to determine the meanings of ἀκοή and πίστις, Paul's exposition of Isa 53:1 in Rom 10:16-17, combined with the contextual considerations from Gal 3, confirm the conclusions derived from the allusion to Isa 53:1.

<sup>11</sup>This is not to separate obedience from faith. Obedience is inseparable from true πίστις, such that Paul can refer to belief in the message as “obeying” (ὕπακούω) the gospel (Rom 10:16).

<sup>12</sup>Several commentators argue that the contrast with ἔργων νόμου means that ἀκοῆς must mean the act of “hearing,” because Paul was likely contrasting two opposing modes of human action (see James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black's New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011], 154; G. Walter Hansen, *Galatians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994], 110-11; Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998], 212; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010], 183). This argument fails to convince for at least two reasons. First, it assumes that the governing noun in the genitive construction ἀκοῆς πίστεως functions as the primary element of the contrast—works versus hearing. The broader witness of Galatians demonstrates, to the contrary, that Paul is more interested in the contrast between “works” and “faith.” Thus, it is best to conclude that the two genitive constructions do not function in exactly the same manner. Secondly, it is possible that Paul is contrasting human action with divine—works which derive from the Law versus faith which is elicited by the gospel (J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, The Anchor Bible [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997], 288). Paul's desire to contrast human “works” with the divine “message” could very well be the impetus behind his decision to use ἀκοῆς πίστεως rather than πίστεως ἀκοῆς.

the “gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον) in the same way that ἀκοή in Galatians 3:2, 5 refers back to the report of Christ's crucifixion in 3:1.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, the references to “faith” (πίστις) and “believing” (πιστεύω) indisputably refer to belief in the gospel message, and not to “faithfulness.” This is evident by the multiple references to a “preacher” and “those preaching a gospel of good news.”<sup>14</sup>

A final argument in favor of reading ἀκοῆς πίστεως in 3:2, 5 as a “message which is believed” is the comparison that Paul makes in 3:6. Abraham serves as an example of πίστις for believers. Just as (καθώς) Abraham “believed” and received righteousness, so also believers in Christ exercise πίστις in a divine message.<sup>15</sup> The end

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<sup>13</sup>Furthermore, Isa 53:1 follows fast on a passage remarking the beauty of the feet of the one who “*gospels* a message of peace” (εὐαγγελιζομένου ακοῆν εἰρήνης, Isa 52:7). In Romans 10:16, Paul uses the term εὐαγγέλιον to describe the ἀκοή of Isa 53:1. In Gal 3:1-2, the ἀκοή is even more specific, as it refers to Jesus Christ crucified.

Two parallels from NT literature further illuminate the connection between ἀκοή, “gospel,” and πίστις. First, Heb 4:2 (καὶ γὰρ ἐσμεν εὐηγγελισμένοι καθάπερ κακεῖνοι· ἀλλ’ οὐκ ὠφέλησεν ὁ λόγος τῆς ἀκοῆς ἐκείνους μὴ συγκεκρασμένους τῇ πίστει τοῖς ἀκούσασιν) refers to ὁ λόγος τῆς ἀκοῆς as a “gospel” message which requires πίστις in order to benefit its auditors. Likewise, in 1 Thess 2:13 (παραλαβόντες λόγον ἀκοῆς παρ’ ἡμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐδέξασθε οὐ λόγον ἀνθρώπων ἀλλὰ καθὼς ἐστὶν ἀληθῶς λόγον θεοῦ, ὃς καὶ ἐνεργεῖται ἐν ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν) Paul speaks of what in context is clearly the gospel kerygma using the phrase λόγον ἀκοῆς, which once again is closely associated with the idea of reception by faith (ἐν ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν).

<sup>14</sup>Paul Nadim Tarazi (*Galatians: A Commentary*, Orthodox Biblical Studies [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999]), 99-100, attempts to use Rom 10:16-17 to argue that ἀκοή must mean “hearing” rather than “message,” since the surrounding context in Romans focuses upon hearing (ἀκούω, 10:14 [2x], 18), and translating ἀκοή as “message” in 10:17 would make ῥήματος Χριστοῦ redundant. The problem with this reading is twofold. First, it ignores the way Isa 53:1 uses the term ἀκοή. Second, Paul does not return to the question of whether or not they heard the proclamation until 10:18. In 10:17, he is dealing with the belief/obedience aspect of the discussion, where belief in the message equates to obeying the gospel. The argument about redundancy in 10:17b is mitigated by the fact that Paul appears to be identifying the ἀκοή of Isaiah: “Therefore faith comes from the message, that is, the message which comes through the proclamation of Christ.” Thus, Richard Hays, *The Letter to the Galatians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, in vol. 11 of *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 252, correctly concludes that ἀκοή in Rom 10:16-17 means a “proclaimed message.”

Thus, the interpretation presented here demonstrates Paul's consistency in the manner in which he reads and applies Isa 53:1. In both Romans and Galatians, Paul emphasizes a specific message, a message concerning the Messiah, which evokes faith from its auditors. See Martyn, *Galatians*, 288.

<sup>15</sup>Rightly Williams, “The Hearing of Faith,” 87; In-Gyu Hong, *The Law in Galatians* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 130; Debbie Hunn, “Pistis Christou in Galatians 2:16: Clarification from 3:1-6,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 57 (2006): 29. Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 183; A. Andrew Das, *Galatians*, Concordia

result is that God supplies the Holy Spirit to them (with reception of the Holy Spirit functioning as proof of the Galatians' justification).<sup>16</sup> The fact that Paul is making a comparison of believers with Abraham is confirmed in 3:7 where he concludes: “Know therefore (ἄρα) that those from faith, these are sons of Abraham.” The only reading of the passage which does justice to the inferential nature of ἄρα as expressing a conclusion for 3:6 is if Paul is comparing the πίστις of 3:2, 5 to that of Abraham.<sup>17</sup>

Is Abraham's πίστις, then, to be regarded as “faith” or as “faithfulness”? The context of Genesis 15:6, and the fact that the verbal form ἐπίστευσεν occurs, argue strongly in favor of a “faith” that Abraham exercised toward God's promise to him.<sup>18</sup> Nothing in the context suggests the idea that Abraham's “faithfulness to God” is in view

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Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014), 291; Oakes, *Galatians*, 104.

Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1979), 140; Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 170; Tarazi, *Galatians*, 108, argue that καθώς is an abbreviated form of καθώς γέγραπται. While Paul undoubtedly tends to introduce Scripture citations with καθώς, in every case he includes another introductory word, such as γέγραπται, before the quote. This would be the only case in Paul in which καθώς led directly into a quote (as Betz admits).

Another argument against reading καθώς as an abbreviated introductory formula is the location of Ἀβραάμ in Gal 3:6. In the LXX of Gen 15:6, Ἀβραάμ appears after ἐπίστευσεν rather than before it as Ἀβραάμ does in Galatians (in Rom 4:3, Paul places it after ἐπίστευσεν, more faithfully following the LXX). If the quote begins directly after καθώς, either Paul uses different *Vorlagen* in Gal and Rom or he has altered the word order of Gen 15:6. It seems better to place the quotation marks after Ἀβραάμ, and read 3:6 as a true comparison: “Just as with Abraham: 'he believed in God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness.’” Paul's omission of Ἀβραάμ from the citation is then easily explained by the fact that he used Ἀβραάμ in setting up the comparison before quoting Gen 15:6. Thus, this argument of Betz and Hays is unconvincing.

<sup>16</sup>On this connection see especially Sam K. Williams, “Justification and the Spirit in Galatians,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (1987): 91–100. Also Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, 127, 131.

<sup>17</sup>G. Walter Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1989), 111. This interpretation stands whether γινώσκετε is interpreted as an imperative or an indicative.

<sup>18</sup>Notice that Abraham, just as the Galatian believers, had directed his πίστις toward a specific “message” (rightly Sam K. Williams, *Galatians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries [Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997], 86; Robert Keith Rapa, *The Meaning of “The Works of the Law” in Galatians and Romans* [New York: Peter Lang, 2001], 157; Martyn, *Galatians*, 298). The comparison with Abraham, therefore, encompasses both the πίστις and the ἀκοή of 3:5. Paul's emphasis, however, clearly falls upon the πίστις.



here. Therefore, because Paul creates what Hansen calls “an unbreakable chain” in which the meaning of πίστις in 3:2, 5, 7, 8, 9 is determined by the meaning of ἐπιστεύσεν in Galatians 3:6/Genesis 15:6, then it is certain that Paul is referring to “faith.”<sup>19</sup>

Richard Hays argues forcefully that Paul is contrasting God's work with that of believers in 3:2-5 . As a result, an interpretation of πίστις as believers' faith rather than the faithfulness of Christ might mitigate Paul's emphasis on divine action.<sup>20</sup> However, reading the πίστις as belonging to believers does not mean that God's work in the gospel is minimized. Πίστις is not something people do; the very nature of the contrast of faith with “works of the Law” evinces that faith is not a work (see also 3:12), but rather something that the message of the Gospel elicits from us. Furthermore, Paul's positioning of ἀκοή as the head noun in the genitive construction ἀκοῆς πίστεως subtly prioritizes the gospel message above the faith response which it evokes.<sup>21</sup> As Paul states elsewhere, “faith comes from the message” (Rom 10:17). Far from focusing solely upon human operations here, Paul actually accentuates God's gracious action.

### **Galatians 3:6-9**

Paul's argument takes an unexpected turn when he quotes Genesis 15:6, which says nothing regarding the Spirit. His strategic use of this specific text includes three vital components: Abraham, πίστις, and δικαιοσύνη. A cursory reading of Galatians reveals that

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<sup>19</sup>Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 113; Das, *Galatians*, 291; Williams, “The Hearing of Faith,” 87.

<sup>20</sup>Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 130-32. For this reason, Hays leaves open the possibility that πίστις could refer to “that which is believed” rather than specifically the believers' “act or attitude of faith.”

<sup>21</sup>Rightly Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 130; Martyn, *Galatians*, 288-89; Marion L. Soards and Darrell J. Pursiful, *Galatians*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2015), 122. Betz, *Galatians*, 133 n. 50, states, “while the Torah requires man to do 'works of [the] law,' the Christian message 'gives' Spirit and faith to man.”

these three motifs pervade the epistle, yet this is Paul's first mention of Abraham. Paul has already introduced the correlation of faith and righteousness/justification (2:16), therefore it will be necessary to explore why he introduces Abraham into the discussion.<sup>22</sup>

Why then, does Paul bring Abraham into his argument? The first, most obvious, answer, is that Abraham supplies an excellent example of justification by faith.<sup>23</sup>

Continuing the contrast he has already set up between faith and “works of the Law” (2:16; 3:2, 5), Paul points to Abraham, the one who believed and to whom faith was credited as righteousness.<sup>24</sup>

This talk of Abraham, however, does more than simply provide an OT example of one who received δικαιοσύνη from faith and not from “works of the Law.” This

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<sup>22</sup>Williams, “Justification and the Spirit in Galatians,” 93-95; Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 115, emphasize the close, nearly equivalent, correspondence which Paul creates between the work of the Spirit and δικαιοσύνη in the movement of vv. 5-6. Bruce, *Galatians*, 152, likewise states that “the connexion implied in καθώς would be lost unless there were the closest possible link between receiving the Spirit and being justified.” Das, *Galatians*, 300-1, makes the same point grammatically, recognizing that καθώς in 3:6 does not begin a new sentence, but continues that of 3:5, thereby creating a comparison between the reception of the Spirit by faith and Abraham's justification by faith.

<sup>23</sup>“Paul understands Abraham as the prototype of justification by faith.” So A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 164. Contra Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 172.

<sup>24</sup>Hays suggests that Abraham's πίστις is his obedience rather than his faith. All the nations, therefore, are blessed in him “not on the ground of their own faith, [but] on the ground of Abraham's faith, which is deemed to have a vicarious soteriological effect” (*The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 168-77, quote from 176; followed by Caroline E. Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* [New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2007], 80). However, Hays merely assumes that ἐπιστεύσεν in Gen 15:6/Gal 3:6 refers to Abraham's faithfulness or obedience. His argument bypasses the contextual indicators within Gen 15, and instead rests precariously upon his conclusions regarding the phrase ἐκ πίστεως. Without question, Paul presents Abraham as a representative figure in whom (ἐν σοί) others are blessed. He is, however, also an exemplar who demonstrates the sort of faith that will bring others into blessing alongside him (σὺν τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ). Paul's point here in 3:7-9 is that being blessed “in Abraham” transpires through believers exercising faith “just as” Abraham did, thereby being justified “in Christ,” who is the Seed of Abraham to whom the promises pointed. Furthermore, Paul says nothing about Abraham's faithful obedience here; the two texts he highlights (Gen 15:6; 12:3) occur prior to Abraham's obedience in circumcision (17:10) or his near-sacrifice of Isaac (22:1-12) (Schreiner, *Galatians*, 194; Das, *Galatians*, 309). For a cogent critique of Hays' argument, see Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 116.

The fact that Abraham knew nothing of Jesus Christ does not thereby render the “faith” interpretation anachronistic. Paul, in fact, seems to anticipate this objection, for he specifically states that God “preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham.” Abraham's faith, just like that of Christ-believers thousands of years later, is placed in a “gospel” message given by God. See Tarazi, *Galatians*, 118.

quickly becomes evident when Paul speaks of “those from faith”<sup>25</sup> being “sons of Abraham.” Additionally, the composite quotation of Genesis 12:3/18:18, “In you all the nations will be blessed,” does not appear to support a merely exemplary interpretation of Galatians 3:6-9.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, one must look for another reason for Paul's evocation of Abraham.

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<sup>25</sup>Many scholars recognize rightly that the preposition ἐκ here signifies the faith of believers as their functional source of identity (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου in 3:10 functions similarly). See Dunn, *Galatians*, 163; Martyn, *Galatians*, 299; Hays, *Galatians*, 256; Das, *Galatians*, 306. Williams, *Galatians*, 87, says the phrase denotes πίστις as both a personal characteristic and a means of social grouping.

Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 84, correctly states that the “article-ἐκ πίστεως” construction “becomes a shorthand way of referring to those who are included in the many descendants promised to Abraham.” However, she wrongly argues that the presence of ἐκ demands that πίστις be taken as “the faithful characteristics and actions of Abraham and Christ” (Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 80-84; she translates οἱ ἐκ πίστεως as “those who descend from [Abraham's] faithfulness”). Although Hodge rightly recognizes that the ἐκ denotes “origins, participation, and membership,” like Hays before her, she commits the error of importing her conclusions regarding the πίστις Χριστοῦ debate into the naked term πίστις here (see the excursus on ἀκοή πίστεως above for several compelling reasons to interpret every instance of πίστις or πιστεύω in 3:2-9 as “faith” and “believe”). Perhaps the greatest strike against Hodge's thesis is that Paul nowhere in the context speaks of a single act of Abraham that could be construed as his “faithfulness.” If Paul were speaking of Abraham's faithfulness, he most certainly would have given some explanation of it. If indeed those “from Abraham's faithfulness” are his sons, it begs the question of exactly what act of faithfulness he performed by which we derive our sonship. Paul never answers that question, most likely because it never entered his mind.

<sup>26</sup>Paul probably replaced πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαί of Gen 12:3 with πάντα τὰ ἔθνη (either from Gen 18:18 or 22:18; cf. 26:4; 28:14) because he wanted specifically to emphasize the term “Gentiles” or “nations” rather than “tribes” (rightly Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 115; Hodge, *If Sons, then Heirs*, 98-99). It is unclear why Paul chose to combine the two verses rather than simply to quote Gen 18:18 or 22:18 in its entirety. Paul may have desired to retain Gen 12:3 due to its contrast between blessing and cursing, a contrast that he pursues in 3:10-13. The obvious problem with this suggestion is that Paul does not actually quote the initial blessing and curse contrast of 12:3, and its use in Genesis (curse pronounced upon those who curse Abram) is different from the curse which he elaborates in 3:10ff. (curse pronounced upon those who are of “works of the Law”). Furthermore, the blessing portion of Gen 12:3a (“those who bless you I will bless”) is a different blessing from the one in Gen 12:3b (“in you will all the tribes of the earth be blessed”), and Paul's interest is in highlighting only the second. Incidentally, this is the first of several weaknesses in E. P. Sanders' argument that throughout this section Paul was simply using a key-word citation technique to overwhelm his audience with proof texts (see E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1983], 21-22). Were it simply his aim to connect as many OT passages as possible through certain key-words, Paul certainly would have included the curse portion of Gen 12:3 as well.

Three better explanations for Paul's preference to retain (an altered form of) Gen 12:3 in this context are (1) its primacy as the first instance of the promise God made with Abraham; (2) its ἐν σοί rather than ἐν αὐτῷ (18:18) or ἐν τῷ σπέρματι σου (22:18). Gen 12:3 is preferred over 18:18 because the latter's third-person reference is impersonal, whereas Paul wanted to emphasize God's promise spoken directly to Abram. The insistence upon including the “in you” of 12:3 rather than “in your seed” of 22:18 continues the specific focus upon Abraham as an exemplar, which would have been undermined by a premature reference to Abraham's seed. Finally, (3) Paul probably leaned toward a conflation of Gen 12:3/18:18, rather than

Abraham is introduced to the discussion principally because descent from Abraham and Gentile inclusion were primary issues of concern among the churches of Galatia. Although it is ultimately impossible to prove (once again the scholar is compelled to rely upon mirror-reading), it is almost certain that this emphasis upon Abrahamic descent was introduced to the Galatians by the teachers of the “other gospel.”<sup>27</sup> Were Paul's only concern in citing Genesis 15:6 the connection between πίστις and δικαιοσύνη, he could simply have quoted Habakkuk 2:4, which he does later. Paul's continued emphasis on Abraham (3:6-9, 14, 15-18; 29; 4:22-31), however, reveals that Abraham was a matter of considerable importance for the Galatians. Furthermore, in all but one of the mentions of Abraham, Paul treats the matter of Abraham's “sons,” “seed,” or “children.”<sup>28</sup> Therefore, it is almost certain that the false teachers were using the Abraham narrative to enjoin the Galatian believers to take on circumcision and other requirements of the Mosaic Law. The motive used to compel the Galatians to do so seems clearly to reside in the concept of Abrahamic sonship, and its concomitant promise of inheritance.<sup>29</sup>

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22:18, because the latter emphasizes Abraham's faithfulness rather than his faith (rightly, Das, *Galatians*, 308-9; contra Scott Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009], 246-47).

<sup>27</sup>Rightly Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 113; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 227; Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 164; Gordon D. Fee, *Galatians*, Pentecostal Commentary (Dorset, UK: Deo Publishing, 2007), 113; Erin Heim, “Light through a Prism: New Avenues of Inquiry for the Pauline Υιοθεσία Metaphors” (PhD diss., University of Otago, 2014), 143. Tarazi, *Galatians*, 112, says “someone else has made an issue [out of Abrahamic sonship] by telling them that they are *not* sons of Abraham.” A less likely possibility, followed by a minority of scholars, is that Galatian believers, in their study of the Scriptures, began to wonder how it was possible to be included in the covenant community apart from making themselves Jews through Judaizing. It would be difficult for a Gentile believer to read the Abraham narrative without arriving at this conclusion. Thus, Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (Norwich, UK: SCM Press, 2012), 87, believes the “other gospel” had arisen from within the Gentile Galatian population.

<sup>28</sup>Gal 3:14, the lone mention of Abraham which does not explicitly refer to sonship of any sort, still alludes to Abrahamic descent when it speaks of “the blessing of Abraham.” This “blessing of Abraham,” equivalent to being justified (3:8), is granted to those whose identity derives “from faith,” and those who are of faith are “sons of Abraham” (3:7).

<sup>29</sup>Three different times Paul explicitly connects Abrahamic descent with the notion of inheritance (3:18, 29; 4:30). In all three examples, Paul attaches the inheritance to the basis of “promise.” In

Although the false teachers in Galatia were using the Abraham story to compel the believers there to submit to circumcision and “works of the Law,” Paul finds a far different implication within the Genesis narrative. The Scripture, Paul says, foresaw that God would justify Gentiles “from faith.” Just as Abraham's justification occurred not only prior to the inception of the Law (3:17), but also before he had even received circumcision, and therefore rested solely upon πίστις, so also the Gentile believers may obtain the full benefits of the Abrahamic blessing—that is, the inheritance—ἐκ πίστεως.<sup>30</sup>

Becoming a “son of Abraham,” then, depends upon whether or not one is ἐκ πίστεως (3:6-9). The central importance of being a “son of Abraham” for Paul's argument and for the Galatian believers only becomes apparent later, when Paul speaks of the distinction between the Law and God's promise to Abraham and his Seed (3:15-18), then resurrects the subject eleven verses later when he avers that those who belong to Christ qualify as Abraham's offspring and heirs (3:29). He returns to the theme yet again in the “allegory” of Hagar and Sarah (4:22-31). The best explanation for this is that “Abraham sonship was the disputed issue at Galatia.”<sup>31</sup>

In sociological parlance, one could say that Abraham has become the representative member, or prototype, of the specific “ingroup” to which the Gentile

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the other two Abraham passages (3:6-9, 14), Paul ties the concepts of “blessing,” “promise,” and “Spirit” together so closely that they are nearly indistinguishable. Thus, when he speaks of being “blessed with Abraham,” receiving “the blessing of Abraham,” and the “promise of the Spirit,” Paul is simply using different terms to speak of the same concept of inheritance. This connection means that in all five instances where Paul mentions Abraham, he either explicitly or implicitly broaches the subject of the inheritance.

<sup>30</sup>Das (*Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 164) notes that the opponents' interest in the Abraham story lay in the circumcision narratives, whereas Paul placed his emphasis upon Abraham's πίστις. Contrary to the theory of Sanders (*Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 21), then, Paul's motivation for citing these passages is not merely the result of a key-word citation technique.

<sup>31</sup>Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 113.

Galatian believers desire membership.<sup>32</sup> Paul labors to emphasize that membership within this group has nothing to do with ethnicity or the Law, and everything to do with faith.<sup>33</sup> Thus, Paul and the opposing teachers were functioning with contradictory views of what is required for one to become a “son of Abraham.” One can imagine, based upon the evidence scattered throughout the epistle, that the opponents focused upon circumcision and “works of the Law” as requisite for Abrahamic descent. Their emphasis would have fallen upon descent “according to the flesh” (4:23, 29), which, since the Galatians were primarily Gentile, would have meant becoming Jewish proselytes. The opposing teachers would have viewed the world of humanity as two distinct groups of people: those who are of “works of the Law,” and those who are not.<sup>34</sup> Only those who do the appropriate “works of the Law” may be considered “sons of Abraham.”

Paul also believed the world was divided into two distinct social groupings, with relationship to Abraham functioning as the differentiating factor. The first group would be those who derive their identity “from faith.”<sup>35</sup> These, Paul says, are the “sons of

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<sup>32</sup>It is for this specific reason that Paul used a text which emphasized blessing for “all the nations.” While πάντα τὰ ἔθνη of Gen 18:18 logically includes Israel as a “nation,” Paul’s primary focus, given the situation in Galatia, is upon τὰ ἔθνη as “Gentiles,” a fact which 3:14 confirms (Das, *Galatians*, 309).

<sup>33</sup>Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 110-12, points out that Paul’s use of the Abraham story contradicts two constant emphases within the Jewish tradition: (1) that Abraham’s “faithfulness under testing” was the cause for his being counted righteous, and (2) that the πίστις of Gen 15:6 should be connected to and interpreted in light of his circumcision in Gen 17:4-14. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 225, sums it up thus: “There is no evidence that Paul got his particular interpretation of the Abraham material from this Jewish heritage.”

By way of contrast, Paul may be drawing directly from the Jewish tradition of Abraham as the “first proselyte and first convert to Jewish monotheism” (Jub. 12; Apoc. Ab. 1-8; Philo, *Abr*: 60-88; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.155). Rightly Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 225.

<sup>34</sup>Cf. the related stereotypical contrast between “Jews by nature” and “sinners from the Gentiles” in 2:15.

<sup>35</sup>Later in this chapter, the social identity implications of the phrase οἱ ἐκ πίστεως will be discussed. For now, it will suffice to say that the οἱ ἐκ τινος phrase communicates membership within a particular social grouping deriving from a salient character trait or other marker of identity. See Dunn, *Galatians*, 163; Martyn, *Galatians*, 299; Williams, *Galatians*, 87; Hays, *Galatians*, 256; Murray J. Harris,

Abraham.” Paul’s use of οὔτοι in 3:7 implies that he is making a distinction between two groups: “*these* [and therefore not *those*] are the sons of Abraham.”<sup>36</sup> If Paul had desired simply to say “the ones from faith are sons of Abraham,” he would not have needed the οὔτοι. Thus, the οὔτοι functions to exclude all those who do not depend upon faith.<sup>37</sup> Yet, it is possible to be even more specific than this. We already know from 3:2-5 that the salient contrast with faith is “works of the Law.” Therefore, when Paul says “the ones from faith—*these* are sons of Abraham,” he is also saying by implication, “the ones from works of the Law—these are *not* sons of Abraham.” Although he only implies it here in 3:7-9, Paul will make this very clear in the verses that follow.

Although the context is distinctly polemical—Paul is clearly responding to the false gospel of the other teachers—the overall tone of the paragraph is actually inclusive. Paul emphasizes Gentile participation in blessings which had previously been restricted to Jews. He does this by redefining Abrahamic descent in a manner that nullifies physical descent and observance of the Torah, replacing these with a different criterion. In this

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*Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 109; Das, *Galatians*, 306; Oakes, *Galatians*, 106.

Don Garlington, “Paul’s ‘Partisan ἐκ’ and the Question of Justification in Galatians,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (2008): 580-81, bases the social group aspect of the phrase οἱ ἐκ πίστεως on the so-called “partisan use of ἐκ.” However, it is the presence of the article, not the preposition, which serves to denote a specific group of people. For additional critique of Garlington’s conclusions, see Jan Lambrecht, “Critical Reflections on Paul’s ‘Partisan ἐκ’ as Recently Presented by Don Garlington,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lavanienses* 85 (2009): 135-41.

<sup>36</sup>Paul makes a similar move in Rom 9:6-8, when he states, οὐ γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ οὔτοι Ἰσραήλ. Gal 3:7-9 speaks primarily (though not exclusively) of how Gentiles are incorporated into Abraham’s family, whereas Rom 9:6-8 speaks solely of a bifurcation within ethnic Israel. In both cases, the οὔτοι specifies the members of the most desired ingroup while excluding certain others who might have made a claim upon that membership.

<sup>37</sup>Brendan J. Byrne, *Sons of God—Seed of Abraham: A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1979), 148; Dunn, *Galatians*, 163; Hays, *Galatians*, 255; Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary*, New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 191. Hodge and other advocates of a two-covenant *Sonderweg* approach, in which Jews and Gentiles are given different paths to salvation, fail to recognize the exclusive character of Paul’s statement here. There exists only one path to Abrahamic descent, and that is the way of πίστις. Physical descent is excluded as a criterion.

instance, Paul recognizes that Abraham's principal character trait is his πίστις. It was Abraham's πίστις, in fact, that was the basis for his δικαιοσύνη, as Genesis 15:6 clearly states. Thus, Abraham's πίστις, rather than his fleshly descent (he was, after all, a Gentile when God called him), his Law-keeping (the Law did not even arrive until long after Abraham's death, 3:17), or his circumcision (which transpired subsequent to his justification, Rom 4:10), is what defines Abraham's identity.<sup>38</sup> As a result, it is not those who descend from Abraham's lineage, or those who get circumcised, or obey the Torah, who are true sons of Abraham (cf. Rom 2:25-29; 4:11-12; Phil 3:2-9). Those who follow in Abraham's footsteps are those who have πίστις in God, and on that basis receive δικαιοσύνη. Abraham is, for Paul, the archetype of a family of people who believe and are justified.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Jewish traditions tended to focus on different aspects of Abraham's identity. For example, Sir 44:19-21 focuses upon how Abraham “kept the law of the Most High,” “confirmed the covenant in his flesh,” and “was found faithful in trial.” Thus, Abraham's proleptic Law-observance, circumcision, and obedience to the Lord's command to sacrifice Isaac were foremost. Abraham is regarded as πιστός in reference to the Akedah rather than his belief in God's promises. Jubilees emphasizes Abraham's adherence to the Law even more, highlighting his observance of feasts (Jub 15:1-2; 16:20). Abraham's “faithfulness” is his response to many “afflictions” which he endured, such as his wanderings, famine, circumcision, the sacrifice of Isaac, Ishmael and Hagar, and Sarah's death (Jub 17:16-18; 19:7-8). First Maccabees, in an effort to inspire zealous obedience to Torah, appeals to Abraham's being found faithful in testing, saying “it was reckoned to him for righteousness.” Thus, the author defines Abraham's πίστις in Gen 15:6 as his faithfulness at the Akedah in Gen 22 (1 Macc 2:50-52). T. Levi 9:1-14 portrays Abraham as having taught Isaac the levitical laws and sacrifices long before the Law was given.

Thus, Jewish tradition frequently regarded Abraham as πιστός primarily in reference to his obedience in the near-sacrifice of Isaac. A second aspect of Abrahamic faithfulness was his proleptic observance of the Mosaic law codes and his teaching them to Isaac. His circumcision is also a regular component in discussions of his faithfulness.

Another regular aspect of Abrahamic tradition in Judaism was discussion of God's choice of Abraham and his covenant with him (Sir 44:21). This election and covenant is frequently the basis of appeals for mercy made to God by Abraham's descendants (Pss. Sol. 9:15-19; T. Levi 15:4; Ass. Mos. 3:8-10).

Thus, Paul parts ways with typical Jewish uses of the Abraham tradition. Whereas the traditions frequently emphasized the Akedah, Abraham's circumcision, and his Law-observance, Paul focuses upon Abraham's belief in God's word of promise in Gen 15. Moreover, while Jewish tradition made regular appeal to the covenant with Abraham as a source of mercy for his physical descendants, Paul, while confirming these promises to Abraham and his seed, defines descent from Abraham differently, determining it via faith rather than flesh.

<sup>39</sup>“Abraham's true heirs are those who have like 'faith' with Abraham, since that alone was attributed to him as 'righteousness' regarding his own relationship with Yahweh.” So Gordon D. Fee, “Who



Reading this paragraph together with 3:1-5, one sees Paul creating a very close connection between the Galatians' reception of the Spirit on the one hand, and the justification/blessing of Abraham on the other.<sup>40</sup> Paul views Abraham's experience of faith-counted-for-righteousness as paradigmatic for the Gentiles' justification from faith and reception of the Spirit. It was so paradigmatic, in fact, that Paul viewed it as a foreshadowing of the Gospel itself—"the Scripture pre-evangelized [προευηγγελίσατο] Abraham." The Galatians' experience of the Holy Spirit ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως functions as incontrovertible proof that they have already experienced the "blessing" of Abraham.<sup>41</sup> Paul's tandem use of the comparative conjunction καθώς and inferential particle ἄρα demonstrates that he draws justification and the reception of the Spirit as closely together as he can. His argument presupposes that one cannot have the Spirit without justification, and vice-versa. He categorizes the experiences of both as "being blessed."<sup>42</sup> Throughout

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Are Abraham's True Children? The Role of Abraham in Pauline Argumentation," in *Perspectives on Our Father Abraham: Essays in Honor of Marvin R. Wilson*, ed. Steven A. Hunt (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 131.

This focus upon πίστις as the defining characteristic of Abraham and his descendants does not disregard or nullify God's election of Abraham and the Jewish people. Rather, it recognizes that God's promises to Abraham involved more than one family/nation. In Abraham, *all* the nations would be blessed. If this were truly to be the case, then some other means apart from being a "Jew by nature" must determine membership within the family. The opponents' "gospel" maintained that Gentiles could be blessed in Abraham by Judaizing, whereas Paul saw the gospel preached in advance to Abraham as a blessing for the Gentiles *as* Gentiles, a literal πάντα τὰ ἔθνη.

<sup>40</sup>Gal 3:8-9 practically equates justification with blessing, so this study will treat them as a single complex. On this equation, see Jan Lambrecht, "Curse and Blessing: A Study of Galatians 3,10-14," in *Pauline Studies: Collected Essays by Jan Lambrecht* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), 279; Oakes, *Galatians*, 105.

<sup>41</sup>This does not necessarily mean that Paul formulated his polemic against works of the Law in a solution-to-plight direction, as E. P. Sanders argues. Paul argues in this direction because he is using the presence of the Spirit as a proof of the Galatians' justification. Contra Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 484.

<sup>42</sup>Contra Charles H. Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit: A Study in the Argument and Theology of Galatians* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 50-51. If any distinction can be pressed at this point within Paul's argument, it appears that the experience of the Spirit is only concomitant to, yet not equated with, justification/blessing. It is possible (depending on one's interpretation) to maintain this distinction in 3:14, but a systematic distinction breaks down later, for after equating the Spirit with "promise" in 3:14, Paul then appears to equate the "promises" (plural!) with provision of life and

his argument, he continues to follow this paradigm of using “promise,” “blessing,” “justification,” and “Spirit” almost interchangeably; the presence or experience of any one of these proves the concomitant experience of the others.<sup>43</sup>

### **Excursus: Caroline Johnson 's Interpretation of Ἐν Σοί**

The interpretation being advanced here is not the only possible reading of Galatians 3:6-9. Caroline Johnson Hodge and others have proposed an interpretation which builds upon a reading of πίστις as “faithfulness” and emphasizes the “in you” portion of 3:8. Hodge, following Richard Hays, argues that ἐκ πίστεως in 3:7-9 “refers to the faithful characteristics and actions of Abraham and Christ, not to the personal commitments of believers.”<sup>44</sup> She cites a number of passages in which ἐκ functions to identify the source of one's familial identity.<sup>45</sup> Upon this pattern, she builds her thesis that Paul combines ἐκ with πίστεως in a common figure of speech which would be recognized as a means of identifying Gentiles as descendants of Abraham. Paul thereby “constructs for [the gentiles] a myth of origins” by “linking them to this moment in history.”<sup>46</sup> The Gentiles are therefore blessed “in Abraham” inasmuch as they are incorporated participants in his faithfulness, being latent within him as his future seed. Hodge leans

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righteousness in 3:20. It seems better to see Paul as using a conglomerate of interchangeable terms, all of which may carry both a more specific *denotation* (e.g., the Spirit, or the promises spoken to Abraham) and a more general *connotation* (association with the whole complex of ideas connected with justification/blessing).

<sup>43</sup>On this see especially Williams, “Justification and the Spirit in Galatians,” 91-100. One could also add the ideas of “inheritance,” Abrahamic sonship, and “adoption” to this list.

<sup>44</sup>Hodge, *If Sons, then Heirs*, 80; Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 176 .

<sup>45</sup>Gen 15:4; 17:16; 35:11; 49:10; 2 Sam 7:12; Rom 1:3; 9:5, 6, 10; 11:1; Gal 1:15; 2:15; 4:4, 22, 23; Phil 3:5.

<sup>46</sup>Hodge, *If Sons, then Heirs*, 85.

heavily upon the “in you” (ἐν σοί) in Paul's quotation of Genesis 12:3 to demonstrate that the πίστις Paul speaks of is in fact the πίστις of Abraham, through which the Gentiles are blessed with descent.<sup>47</sup>

Despite its ingenuity, there are several major flaws to Hodge's thesis. First, her reading turns a blind eye to Paul's own interpretation of the Genesis citation. Hodge places far too much weight upon the ἐν σοί of Paul's citation of Genesis 12:3.<sup>48</sup> The near context of Paul's argument does not focus upon Gentiles' incorporation into Abraham. Rather, it speaks of Gentiles being justified from faith and being “blessed *with* Abraham.”<sup>49</sup> Key to this discussion is Paul's characterization of the Genesis 12:3 promise as a “pre-preaching of the gospel.” Paul finds the gospel of justification from faith in that passage. Having already specified πίστις as εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν (2:16) and directed toward the message of Christ crucified (3:1-5), Paul does not need to specify that this πίστις and this “gospel” which are preached to Abraham in Genesis 12 are about what God and Christ have done, not in what Abraham did. Abraham functions as a paradigm for πίστις in a gospel message, not as the faithful one who effected blessing for the Gentiles.<sup>50</sup> In other words, Abraham is a prototype of believers, not of Christ.

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<sup>47</sup>Hodge, *If Sons, then Heirs*, 97-103.

<sup>48</sup>Dunn, *Galatians*, 165, had already anticipated and refuted Hodge's interpretation before her work was published: “Paul was not concerned here to make anything of the idea of being 'in' Abraham, since he can equally formulate the same point in terms of 'with' Abraham. . . . The only 'incorporation' Paul had in mind in this context was the 'in Christ' (iii.28) which made it possible for him to number Gentiles within the seed of Abraham.” Also Schreiner, *Galatians*, 194; Das, *Galatians*, 309.

<sup>49</sup>As Jacqueline C. R. de Roo points out, Paul's substitution of σύν for ἐν was probably an attempt “to carefully avoid picturing the patriarch too much as an instrument of justification and salvation.” See Jacqueline C. R. de Roo, *Works of the Law' at Qumran and in Paul* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 205.

<sup>50</sup>Lambrecht, “Curse and Blessing,” 278, notes, “It would be wrong to understand this blessing of all the Gentiles as a kind of reward for Abraham's faith; Paul's reflexions run in another direction. He emphasizes the parallel between father and children, and thereby also between his righteousness and their blessing.”

A more likely interpretation for ἐν σοί is that it refers to someone else who is latent within Abraham. Christ, as a descendant of Abraham (in one sense, the sole seed of Abraham, 3:16), is the direct cause of blessing for all people who are ἐκ πίστεως.<sup>51</sup> In this sense, one may argue that Abraham functions as the source of blessing for the ones who are ἐκ πίστεως, because he is Christ's progenitor.<sup>52</sup> It is better, however, to speak of the direct source of blessing for the people of faith, and that is Christ.

Next, Paul's use of ἐκ πίστεως does not follow the pattern of the passages cited by Hodge which use ἐκ as a marker of ethnic origins. Not a single example refers to identity or descent deriving from a character trait, such as πίστις. In every instance, the ἐκ precedes a personal source or physical source that represents an individual (such as κοιλία, μήρος, or σπέρμα). If Paul were following this pattern, he would be referring to those who descend from πίστις, not those who are descendants of Abraham, as Hodge maintains. If Paul had stated something like ἐξ Ἀβραάμ or ἐκ σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ (Rom

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Paul further develops the discussion of Abraham as prototype of πίστις in Rom 4, where he speaks of “following in the footsteps of the faith of Abraham,” a comment that is difficult to align with Hodge's interpretation of Gal 3:6-9.

While πιστός most often connotes “faithful,” it might be better here to translate it as “believing” or “having faith” (BDAG, s.v. “πιστός,” 2), as Paul has already defined Abraham's πίστις as his act of believing God in Gen 15:6. Paul gives no sign within the argument that his frame of reference has changed from “faith” to “faithfulness.” So rightly, ESV, HCSB, NIV, RSV; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 116. Hays, *Galatians*, 256, insists on the translation “faithful,” while at the same time attenuating it by saying “the root idea in both expressions is that Abraham placed his trust in God; that, for Paul, is the meaning of faithfulness.”

<sup>51</sup>Whereas Paul never mentions a single act of “faithfulness” performed by Abraham which might function as the source of blessing for the Gentiles, the epistle is littered with references to the manner in which Christ blessed them: he gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age (1:4); loved me and gave himself up for me (2:20); was crucified (2:19; 3:1, 13; 6:14); redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us (3:13); came from woman, under Law, to redeem those under Law and provide adoption (4:4-5); and set us free (5:1). By way of contrast, Paul does not even mention Abraham's circumcision or the Akedah, much less the traditional idea that he was a faithful observer of the Torah before it even arrived (see footnote 38, above).

<sup>52</sup>Abraham “was a blessing to others by generating the Redeemer” (De Roo, *Works of the Law' at Qumran and in Paul*, 204).

11:1), Hodge's argument would have been stronger.<sup>53</sup>

Nevertheless, Hodge is correct to point out that prepositional phrases with ἐκ can function as a record of origins, especially when combined with the article. Thus, οἱ ἐκ πίστεως does describe a group of people who share a common origin. However, these people identify with and originate from πίστις, not from Abraham. As Paul's wording stands, οἱ ἐκ πίστεως refers just as much to Abraham as to believers. This is why Paul is able to conclude that οἱ ἐκ πίστεως are blessed together with (σύν) believing Abraham.<sup>54</sup> They are members of the same group. Only in a secondary sense may οἱ ἐκ πίστεως be said to derive from Abraham, inasmuch as they share a common character trait of which he is regarded as the prototype.

Another problem with Hodge's reading is that by making the πίστις of 3:6-9 solely Abraham's, it omits the mechanism—πίστις—by which Gentiles are able to be included in the blessing of Abraham, thereby leaving unanswered the question of just how the Gentiles get to be “in” him in the first place.<sup>55</sup>

Additionally, Hodge's reading of 3:7 would more easily play into the hands of the opposing teachers than into Paul's argument. “Those who originate from [Abraham's] faithfulness, these are sons of Abraham”<sup>56</sup> would be used by the opponents to emphasize

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<sup>53</sup>Hodge is aware of this problem. She asks, “What does it mean when the preposition *ek*—which usually refers to descent from a particular lineage or being born out of a mother's womb—is not a specific ancestor but a concept, 'faithfulness'?” (Hodge, *If Sons, then Heirs*, 83). Unfortunately, the farthest she ever goes in explaining the apparent deviation is when she states that “it makes sense to talk of progeny descending from the ancestor's trust and faithful actions in light of a promise by God that that ancestor would produce an heir and then many heirs” (ibid., 89). Yet, she is unable to supply a single example in which “ἐκ + character trait” functions as a metonym for “ἐκ + person.”

<sup>54</sup>Williams, “Justification and the Spirit in Galatians,” 95, says, “To be blessed 'in' Abraham is to be blessed *as* he was, namely by being reckoned righteous.”

<sup>55</sup>This is, of course, a criticism commonly levied against the subjective genitive reading of πίστις Χριστοῦ. It is therefore not surprising that it would apply here as well.

<sup>56</sup>Hodge argues that Abraham's faithfulness to God is his “faithful response to God's promises,”

yet more forcefully that the only option available to become an heir of Abraham is to make oneself a Jew, thereby rendering Judaizing and Law-observance mandatory for Gentiles.

Fifth, Paul could easily have specified Abraham's πίστις as the source for Gentile blessing by saying ἐκ πίστεως αὐτοῦ or ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ, but in all three cases he never does this. The most logical explanation for this omission is that ἐκ πίστεως in 3:7, 8, 9 refers to the πίστις of believers as patterned after the πίστις of Abraham.

Finally, Hodge neglects the principal evidence for determining Paul's meaning, which is the original context of the Abraham narrative itself in Genesis. To interpret ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ as “was faithful to God” not only places too much lexical strain upon the verb πιστεύω, but also ignores the immediate context. Genesis 15 does not say anything about Abraham exhibiting “faithfulness.” It is, rather, that Abraham “believed” in a promise God made to him regarding the innumerable nature of his as-yet-unborn offspring. It is instructive that in all of Paul's references to Abraham in Galatians, he distances himself from passages in Genesis that could be construed as Abraham performing acts of faithfulness, such as his circumcision or the near-sacrifice of Isaac.<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless, Paul's quotation “In you all the nations will be blessed” does not clearly support a generic “justification by faith” interpretation. Scholarship is indebted to

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including his fathering of Isaac. She wisely avoids mention of his circumcision, presumably because she recognizes how easily this argument would play into the hands of Paul's opponents. See Hodge, *If Sons, then Heirs*, 85, 87.

The fact that Martyn, *Galatians*, 301, believes a locative interpretation of ἐν σοί is precisely what the false teachers were promoting demonstrates how difficult it is to imagine that Paul would use such a reading of Gen 12:3/18:18 here.

<sup>57</sup>Schreiner, *Galatians*, 194-95; Das, *Galatians*, 309. There was a tendency in Jewish tradition to interpret Abraham's πίστις in Gen 15:6 in light of his circumcision, near-sacrifice of Isaac, or even (anachronistically) his observance of the Mosaic law code (see above, note 38). Paul was surely aware of such traditions, which makes his silence with regard to such connections speak volumes.

interpreters such as Hodge and Hays, who have pointed out the weaknesses in traditional interpretations of verses like Galatians 3:8. This forces us to be more careful in our exegesis of such passages. In the case of this verse, there are two glaring difficulties. First, as Hodge has pointed out, the Genesis citation says ἐν σοί all the nations will be blessed, not σὺν. What motivates Paul's alteration in prepositions? The second difficulty with Galatians 3:8 is that the citation of Genesis 12:3/18:18 does not say anything about πίστις. Why then does Paul believe it supports his case that “God justifies the Gentiles from faith”?

In response to the first difficulty, it must be said, to her credit, that Hodge's interpretation points in the right direction. Paul was not overlooking the ἐν σοί of Genesis 12:3, for he did see a legitimate source of Gentile blessing by means of Abraham. Contrary to Hodge, however, it does not transpire through direct Gentile incorporation into Abraham, but through incorporation into the sole true seed of Abraham, who is Christ (3:16, 26-29).<sup>58</sup> As it turns out, this solution to the problem of the prepositions in Galatians 3:8 also happens to be the key to solving the second dilemma. Why does Paul believe Genesis 12:3/18:18 supports his assertion that God justifies the Gentiles from faith? Because latent in Abraham (ἐν σοί) was the one seed through whom the nations would be blessed, and they are to obtain that blessing by identifying with Jesus Christ through faith (3:26).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Nils Alstrup Dahl, *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1977), 131, argues that Paul substitutes “in Christ Jesus” in 3:14 for “in your seed” from Gen 22:18. Given its near proximity to the one seed argument of 3:16, Dahl may be correct. Paul was working with Christ in mind as the means of Abrahamic blessing throughout this entire passage.

<sup>59</sup>Hodge does not exclude being “in Christ” from her interpretation of Gal 3:8. In fact, she correctly states that “being 'in' Christ enables [gentiles] to be 'in' Abraham” (Hodge, *If Sons, then Heirs*, 103). The problem with her interpretation is that she views Gentiles as physically being “in” Abraham in a locative sense, in the same way that descendants are latent within their ancestors. There are four errors in this approach.

These two responses dovetail with Paul's concluding statement “those of faith are blessed along with (σύν) believing Abraham.” The blessing for both Abraham and “those of faith” is located in Christ Jesus, his sole true offspring to whom the promise ultimately referred. Just as Abraham heard a gospel message of promise regarding his future seed and believed, so also believers in Christ respond with πίστις to the gospel message regarding Christ the seed of Abraham.

### **Social Identity Theory and Galatians 3:6-9**

Social Identity Theory (SIT) provides helpful illumination for several aspects

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First, this reading is not consistent with the way that Paul uses his “in Christ” phrase. Hodge (*If Sons, Then Heirs*, 103) rightly observes, “Christ does not become an ancestor to the gentiles but a brother, a co-heir.” How then can she conclude that “in Abraham” has the sense of being a latent descendant within Abraham, even when “in Christ” does not carry the same idea, especially if being “in Christ” is the means by which one is “in Abraham?” If believers are not blessed “in Christ” as his descendants, is it possible or even likely that this is not the meaning of all the nations being blessed “in Abraham?” While the notion of whether Gentile believers can become “seed of Abraham” is not under dispute (that is, of course, Paul's major point—3:29), Hodge has read too much into a single preposition by arguing that future Gentile offspring are latent within Abraham at the moment of blessing. Perhaps it would be more accurate to speak of a metaphorical latency. This would explain why Paul later describes believers' entrance into the people of God as an adoption (υιοθεσία). They were never natural descendants of Abraham.

Second, it would simply have been untrue for Paul to say that Gentiles were latent within Abraham in the same sense that physical offspring are within their ancestors. For Paul simply to say that Gentiles also happened to be “in Abraham” in the same manner (cf. 2:15, “by nature”) as Jews were would only exacerbate the problem. The opposing teachers would have no trouble pointing out the weaknesses of such an argument. Thus, the ἐν σοί cannot refer to physical latency within Abraham as his direct offspring.

Another problem with Hodge's emphasis upon ἐν is that she has not demonstrated that the use of ἐν was a common motif to describe descent. Whereas she has ably shown the common use of ἐκ as a means of identifying patrilineal descent, she has not done the same for ἐν. The alleged pattern of ἐν + ancestor is not nearly as apparent as the pattern of ἐκ + ancestor. While Hodge points to several passages to prove her thesis (Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 99-100), when the debatable Genesis passages (12:3; 18:18; 22:17; 26:4; 28:14) are removed, only one instance might be construed as an example of ἐν as a marker of ancestry—Rom 9:7/Gen 21:12 (Ἐν Ἰσαὰκ κληθήσεται σοι σπέρμα). But even in the case of this passage, the ἐν does not signify descendants latent within a progenitor (for this one would expect an ἐν + ancestor, rather than ἐν + descendant, pattern). Instead, it specifies between two descendants which one will be considered the heir. Thus, more evidence is needed to warrant calling ἐν + ancestor a recognizable pattern.

Finally, this does not appear to be what the author of Genesis meant by ἐν σοί. At least two more likely interpretations exist for the use of ἐν in the “in Abraham/in you/in your seed” passages in Genesis and Gal 3:8. First, ἐν could be read as communicating agency (BDF §219 [1]): “By means of Abraham all the nations will be blessed.” Second, it could be read as locative with specific reference to Christ: “In you, that is, in Christ your offspring by direct physical descent, all the nations will be blessed.” Because it is questionable whether ἐν was an established means of locating offspring within their ancestry, the first option is the more likely of the two. Abraham is the agent of blessing for the Gentiles inasmuch as they are blessed by incorporation into his lineage through union with Christ, his offspring (“in Christ” is locative, but not in an ancestral sense [see 3:27]).



of Galatians 3:6-9. Nearly every phrase in this dense paragraph includes some element upon which SIT can shine some light. It might be helpful to categorize these elements under three headings: group identities, identity markers, and consequences of group membership.

Within the category of group identities, Galatians 3:6-9 contains three important designations. First, Paul speaks twice of οἱ ἐκ πίστεως (“the ones from faith”, 3:7, 9). Next, he speaks of “sons of Abraham” (3:7). Finally, he refers twice to “the Gentiles” (3:8). A close inspection of the text reveals that οἱ ἐκ πίστεως is the most important designation of the three. This is clear because being ἐκ πίστεως is what makes people “sons of Abraham.” Likewise, being ἐκ πίστεως is what brings blessing to the Gentiles.

Three important conclusions derive from this assessment of the three group designations. First, there is an implied outgroup. The exegesis of 3:7 above noted that the exclusive nature of the οὗτοι implies that those who are not ἐκ πίστεως are not “sons of Abraham.” This conclusion aligns with the juxtaposition Paul had already created in 3:1-5 between “works of the Law” and ἀκοῆς πίστεως. One might reasonably infer that Paul is continuing the opposition between the two here as well.<sup>60</sup> In this case, Paul is saying, “the ones from faith, these (and not the ones from 'works of the Law') are sons of Abraham.” A second conclusion deriving from the group designations is that ethnicity played a vital role in Paul's argumentation, for he emphasizes the position of Gentiles in relationship to Abraham.

A final conclusion deriving from the group designations in 3:6-9 is the unique

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<sup>60</sup>This line of reasoning better explains the discourse markers καθώς (3:6) and ἄρα (3:7) than alternative explanations.

relationship between the three groups. First, all those belonging to the οἱ ἐκ πίστεως social group also belong to the “sons of Abraham” group.<sup>61</sup> Secondly, the social group of “the Gentiles” overlaps the other two groups. That is, one may continue to be a member of the “Gentile” social group while also retaining “son of Abraham” status. This is because the entrance requirement—being ἐκ πίστεως—does not revoke or exclude their non-Jewish ethnic identity. It is because “God justifies the Gentiles *from faith*” that they may retain their Gentile identity.

A second analytical category is identity markers. Within this category is found one dominant characteristic, that of πίστις. Paul repeats the phrase ἐκ πίστεως three times (twice in the group identifier οἱ ἐκ πίστεως, once adverbially in describing how the Gentiles are justified by God), employs the verb πιστεύω once, and uses the adjective πιστός once. Thus, five times in four verses a πιστ- cognate occurs, which indicates that the central identity marker that Paul highlights in 3:6-9 is faith. Furthermore, πίστις is more than a simple descriptor of a character trait. It also functions as a membership requirement. Just as it was Abraham's faith that led to his justification, so also is it faith alone that leads to the justification of the Gentiles.

A third category is consequences of group membership. In this paragraph, Paul speaks of three results: Abrahamic sonship, justification, and blessing. In all three instances, these benefits result from πίστις. Both Abrahamic descent and blessing inhere to οἱ ἐκ πίστεως, while God justifies both Abraham and the Gentiles ἐκ πίστεως.

To summarize, in Galatians 3:6-9, Paul emphasizes how the social group of the Gentiles may attain group membership within the additional social group “sons of

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<sup>61</sup>Paul may imply, but does not explicitly state, that all members of the “sons of Abraham” group also belong to the οἱ ἐκ πίστεως group. Thus, it is not yet possible to state that the two groups are coterminous.

Abraham.”<sup>62</sup> The requirement for group membership is πίστις, and thus only those who are characterized by πίστις as an identity marker qualify as sons of Abraham, thereby obtaining the concomitant membership benefits of justification and blessing (along with the implied benefit of sonship—inheritance).

Abraham functions as a prominent part of Paul's argument in this passage. Paul uses the figure of Abraham in several ways. First, he is a potential ancestor for the Galatian believers. This is clearly an area of dispute, and thus one may conclude that the identity as “sons/offspring of Abraham” was either a prestigious identity, one that conferred desirable benefits, or both. Given Paul's focus upon the “blessing” of Abraham (3:8-9, 14), it appears that the Galatians' desire to identify with Abraham arose primarily due to its concomitant benefits (most likely inheritance, although at this point Paul has yet to mention it explicitly), yet one should not rule out the possibility that there was also an element of prestige in identifying as a “son of Abraham.”

A second way that Paul uses Abraham is as a prototype. Sociologists have recognized the importance of prototypes in the recategorization process, where two groups are joined into solidarity under a common superordinate identity.<sup>63</sup> The prototype

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<sup>62</sup>Recall that every individual simultaneously holds membership within a large number and variety of social groups. The sum total of group memberships combines with their relative value in relation to one another to comprise an individual's social identity. See Anthony P. Cohen, *Symbolic Construction of Community* (New York: Routledge, 1985), 108-9; John C. Turner, *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 44.

<sup>63</sup>Note that the harmonization of the two groups under a superordinate group identity does not necessarily dissolve their previous group identities; it merely deprioritizes them. Thus, in the case of becoming a member of the family of Abraham through πίστις, a new member does not shed his previous ethnic affiliation, whether it be Jew, Greek, Roman, etc. Rather, he retains it, but its importance is subordinated to that of the superordinate identity “son of Abraham.”

Sociologists have noted that some recategorization processes include the additional step of decategorization, in which the old identities are eradicated. However, they have found that the most successful recategorization attempts are the ones which retain previous identities in a subordinated position. See Samuel L. Gaertner et al., “The Common Ingroup Identity Model: Recategorization and the Reduction of Intergroup Bias,” *European Review of Social Psychology* 4 (1993): 20.

regularly functions as an exemplar of a character trait which serves as a predominant identity marker for the group he or she represents. In Paul's argument, Abraham serves to promote an identity which is shared by both Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ. Whereas the opponents probably used descent from Abraham in a nationalistic and exclusive manner which encouraged Gentile believers to shed and replace their ethnic identities, Paul focuses upon a different type of descent from Abraham—identification with a common character trait—which enables a pan-national membership.<sup>64</sup> For Paul, as many as are “from faith” are sons of Abraham. Thus, Paul attempts to sever the notion of Law observance/Judaizing from Abrahamic descent, and to replace it with faith. In doing so, Paul exhibits a classic example of the recategorization and reconciliation of two formerly disparate groups under a shared superordinate identity.<sup>65</sup>

This manner in which Paul can define descent from Abraham in a manner distinct from common primordialist ideas about ethnicity confirms the sociological theory that ethnicity is ascribed rather than primordial. According to this view, an ethnic group is any group that can be recognized as distinct from other social groups, and the “critical feature” is “the characteristic of self-ascription and ascription by others.”<sup>66</sup> Thus, Paul re-characterizes the Abraham social group around πίστις rather than being Jewish (2:14, Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῆν).

Paul uses the phrase οἱ ἐκ πίστεως to characterize the “sons of Abraham” social group. As mentioned above, many scholars recognize οἱ ἐκ πίστεως as a phrase that

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<sup>64</sup>Paul will later use the metaphor of adoption, transpiring through union with Christ, the physical descendant of Abraham, to describe this descent.

<sup>65</sup>For Paul, this is not merely a tour-de-force or a sociological trick. He finds warrant for this in the pan-national promise God made to Abraham in Gen 12:3/18:18.

<sup>66</sup>Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), 13.

denotes identity. However, there is some debate as to precisely how it functions to do so. This study spent considerable space refuting an incorrect reading of Paul's use of Genesis 12:3/18:18, promoted by Caroline Johnson Hodge. According to this reading, the ἐν in the quotation is locative, indicating that future Gentiles who would become descendants of Abraham were located “in” Abraham, and thus his act of “faithfulness” registered to their account, thereby granting them the Abrahamic blessing. Resultant of this interpretation, and her commitment to the “faithfulness” interpretation of πίστις, Hodge believes the ἐκ of οἱ ἐκ πίστεως refers to a moment of origin for Gentile believers—they generate from Abraham's act of faithfulness.

This reading of the passage fails to convince. Whereas Hodge attributes every instance of πίστις in Galatians 3:6-9 to Abraham, it is better to follow the clear markers that indicate Paul is using Abraham as a paradigm of faith. Beginning with the καθώς of 3:6, it is clear that Paul is making a comparison between Abraham and the Galatian believers. Therefore, πίστις in vv. 7, 8, 9 refers to the faith of the Galatian believers, and not to that of Abraham. This makes much better sense of the concluding statement: “Therefore, the ones from faith are blessed with Abraham the man of faith.” Abraham is paradigmatic for future believers. According to Hodge's interpretation, the concluding verse becomes redundant: “The ones from [Abraham's] faithfulness are blessed with faithful Abraham.” Paul's description of Abraham as πιστός is unnecessary if πίστεως refers to his faithfulness. However, if Paul is emphasizing a positive comparison between a character trait shared by Abraham and believers, the reiteration serves to summarize the whole paragraph.

Thus, it is better to recognize οἱ ἐκ πίστεως as a descriptor of a salient

characteristic which defines one's social identity.<sup>67</sup> Scholars recognize that the formula {οἱ ἐκ + character trait} serves as a marker for social grouping.<sup>68</sup> This fits well with the SIT notion of a prototype. Thus, Abraham serves as the exemplar of the salient character trait that defines membership within the social group he represents—οἱ ἐκ πίστεως. This is why Paul can say that Abraham shares in the blessing together with (σύν) “the ones from faith.” Abraham together with all those who are characterized by πίστις represent the constituency of this social group. Faith is not, therefore, an alternative path solely for Gentiles to follow to obtain Abrahamic descent; it is rather the means by which *all* people who are characterized by πίστις obtain the blessing God promised to Abraham.

The debate between Paul and the opponents focused not only upon the roles of faith and “works of the Law,” but also (perhaps more fundamentally) upon ethnicity. For this reason, the opponents were promoting Judaizing as the means of becoming “sons of Abraham” and thereby receiving the concomitant blessing of inheritance. Paul, however, did not view race as the means of creating a relationship to Abraham which qualified people to receive his blessing. Paul did not think that physical descent mattered at all as it pertained to obtaining descent from Abraham. For him, being Jew, Greek, or otherwise was *adiaphora*: “the ones from faith, *these* are sons of Abraham.” Judaizing had nothing to do with “getting in” the people of God.

At work here is the SIT principle of multiple, hierarchical identities. For Paul, it

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<sup>67</sup>Rightly James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1990), 221-22; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 226; Williams, *Galatians*, 87; Martyn, *Galatians*, 299; Garlington, “Paul's 'Partisan ἐκ' and the Question of Justification in Galatians,” 580; Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament*, 109; Das, *Galatians*, 306.

<sup>68</sup>Tarazi, *Galatians*, 112; Williams, *Galatians*, 87; Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament*, 109. Cf. “the one from faith of Jesus” (Rom 3:26); “the one from the faith of Abraham” (Rom 4:16); “those from Law” (Rom 4:14, 16); “those from the circumcision” (Rom 4:12; Gal 2:12).

was important that the Gentile believers not sacrifice their ethnic identities. They could receive the blessing of Abraham and δικαιοσύνη as Gentiles. They need not replace this important aspect of their identity; it merely needed to be subordinated to their most important identity—that of being οἱ ἐκ πίστεως. Whereas the opponents' strategy was to replace Gentile ethnicity with a Jewish one, Paul recognized from Genesis 12:3/18:18 that the People of God was a multi-ethnic social group from its very inception.<sup>69</sup>

The SIT principles of the permeability and malleability of social groups shed light on this Pauline teaching. Paul's gospel in Galatians demonstrates that the social group of “sons of Abraham” was clearly permeable. Despite the group's traditionally Jewish roots, people from any ethnic group were permitted to join without sacrificing their ethnic status. A key feature of this group's malleability is its rejection of primordialism as arbiter of membership. Membership is ascribed through members' having faith and being “in Christ” rather than inherited through physical descent.

### **Galatians 3:10-14**

The γάρ with which Paul begins 3:10 is somewhat difficult to explain. Paul appears to be making a clean transition from speaking of those who are ἐκ πίστεως being blessed with Abraham, to those who are ἐξ ἔργων νόμου being under a curse. How then does the γάρ function?<sup>70</sup> The γάρ in 3:10, true to its nature, is explanatory, elaborating

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<sup>69</sup>If all Gentile believers were to sacrifice their ethnic identities by becoming Jewish, as the opposition was suggesting, this would nullify God's promise to Abraham regarding πάντα τὰ ἔθνη.

<sup>70</sup>Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 116, notes the transition from inclusion of Gentiles to “severance” of those who are of “works of the Law” that occurs between vv. 9, 10. However, γάρ does not communicate disjuncture or contrast. Rather, it “adds background information that strengthens or supports what precedes” (Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010], § 2.7). Runge states that γάρ “does not advance the mainline of the discourse” but rather “supports what precedes by providing background or detail that is needed” (Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 52, 54). Therefore, Paul's use of γάρ in 3:10 indicates that one should seek an explanation in which 3:10ff.

upon an as yet unexplained contrast latent within 3:7-9. As argued above, Paul's use of οἱ in 3:7 indicates a division of the world into two groups. The “these” (i.e., “the ones from faith”) are “sons of Abraham.” This implies an outgroup—a “those” who are *not* “sons of Abraham.” In 3:10-12, Paul identifies this outgroup, and explains just what it is that causes them to be excluded from Abrahamic sonship and blessing.<sup>71</sup>

Ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου in 3:10 employs a modified form of the οἱ ἐκ τινος pattern, which identifies members of a particular social set, membership within which is determined by a salient character trait. Ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου is therefore a social identity group, comprised of those who in some manner derive their identity from their relationship to “works of the Law.”

To whom does Paul refer by the phrase ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου? Four ways of interpreting this phrase dominate the scholarly literature. Some maintain that it refers simply to Jews.<sup>72</sup> Others aver that it is a reference to those who rely on obedience to the Law's prescriptions as a means of attaining justification.<sup>73</sup> A third interpretation is that ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου refers to “those, whether Jew or Gentile, who define their group identity through deeds determined by the nationalistic covenant of Sinai.”<sup>74</sup> This third

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“strengthens or supports” what he has just said in 3:6-9.

<sup>71</sup>Rightly Moo, *Galatians*, 201, who describes 3:10 as “an explanation of an implied negative counterpart to verse 9.” Also R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 116; Lambrecht, “Curse and Blessing,” 279.

<sup>72</sup>Joseph P. Braswell, “‘The Blessing of Abraham’ versus ‘the Curse of the Law’: Another Look at Galatians 3:10-13,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991): 74-75.

<sup>73</sup>F. F. Bruce, “The Curse of the Law,” in *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett*, ed. M. D. Hooker and S. D. Wilson (London: SPCK, 1982), 28; Tarazi, *Galatians*, 124; Moisés Silva, *Interpreting Galatians: Explorations in Exegetical Method* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 261; Moo, *Galatians*, 202-3.

<sup>74</sup>James D. G. Dunn, “Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law,” in *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1990), 227; Normand Bonneau, “The Logic of Paul's Argument on the Curse of the Law in Galatians 3:10-14,” *Novum Testamentum* 39 (1997): 74; Norman H. Young, “Who's Cursed—and Why? (Galatians 3:10-14),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998): 81. See



interpretation is in actuality just a more nuanced version of the second reading, for the endgame of membership within the covenant community of Israel was to attain the benefits promised to them.<sup>75</sup> A fourth interpretation views the ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου as the teachers who are promoting circumcision and other “works of the Law” among the Galatians.<sup>76</sup>

The first and fourth interpretations are not difficult to dispense with. The first interpretation—that “as many as are of the works of the Law” is a simple reference to Jews—cannot work. Paul constantly pits the phrase ἐξ ἔργων νόμου against its counterpart ἐκ πίστεως; the two, in the context of this epistle, are mutually exclusive categories. The idea that Paul thought no Jewish people were members of the “from faith” group is ludicrous; Paul regarded himself as the paradigm of just such a person (Rom 11:1), and clearly believed in a “remnant” of Israelites who believed in Jesus (Rom 9-11). No less than Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, is the primary exemplar of

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Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 46: “The argument is that one need not be Jewish to be ‘righteous’ and is thus against the standard Jewish view that accepting and living by the law is a sign and condition of favored status.”

<sup>75</sup>Although Sanders would surely disagree with many of the above conclusions on this point, his comment is apropos: “the ruling topic of chapter 3 is how to become a descendant of Abraham, and the reason for discussing this is *the unspoken assumption that the true descendants of Abraham will be saved*” (Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 46, emphasis mine).

<sup>76</sup>Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 119; Jeffrey R. Wisdom, *Blessing for the Nations and the Curse of the Law: Paul’s Citation of Genesis and Deuteronomy in Galatians 3,8-10* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 160-62; Moisés Silva, “Faith versus Works of Law in Galatians,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 2, *The Paradoxes of Paul*, ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O’Brien, M. A. Seifrid (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 226.

Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 74; John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 88, argue for the minority position that ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου refers solely to Gentiles. Although Gaston and Gager are correct to argue that the phrases “from works of the Law” and “under Law” can include Gentiles, they are wrong to exclude Jews from the same predicament. If Paul’s confrontation with Cephas in 2:11-17 has not yet made this clear, then his use of general language (“no one is justified in the Law,” 3:11), his inclusion of himself in the same situation (“Christ redeemed us,” “we might receive the Spirit,” 3:13, 14), and the fact that Jesus, also a Jewish man, came “under Law” (4:4), should serve as proof that Paul included Jews in the phrase.

membership in the πίστις group.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, the phrase's appearance in a letter addressed predominantly to Gentiles and in the context of a battle between πίστις and “works of the Law” (3:2-5) indicates that at least some Gentiles might also be included in this category. The main reason Paul wrote the letter is that some of the Gentile Galatian believers desired to belong to the social group ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου.

The fourth interpretation—that the phrase refers specifically to the promoters of “works of the Law”—does not fit the context. While there was no love lost between Paul and the opposing teachers, his main concern in 3:10-14 was to warn the Galatian believers not to take on “works of the Law,” rather than to talk about the accursed status of the imposters. Furthermore, his discussion of Christ's death to redeem “us” from the curse of the Law would make little sense if the ones under the curse were merely the other teachers.

Therefore, the second and third explanations remain, both of which find support in the context. Paul was indeed warning the Galatians against taking the step of identifying with Israel by means of Judaizing and taking on the “works of the Law.” However, their ultimate objective was not mere identification with Israel, but to obtain “blessing,” “inheritance,” “justification,” and “life” as a result of that identification. There is thus a merit-based mentality to their motives. Paul's emphasis upon “doing” supports this conclusion, as does the fact that he refers to their source of identity as deriving “from works of the Law” rather than “from Israel.” The problem which brings the curse is the identification with and reliance upon the works themselves, not specifically the desire to identify with the covenant community. To argue that the main problem was the Galatians'

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<sup>77</sup>Silva, “Faith versus Works of Law in Galatians,” 225.

misguided desire to identify with Israel is to confuse the symptom with the malady. Instead, ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου refers to those who attempt to identify with Israel by means of “works of the Law” in an effort to obtain the blessings which inhere to the people of God. In this sense, Dunn's thesis is correct, but it fails to recognize the merit-based motivation which underlies the efforts of Gentile believers to identify with Israel.

In vv. 7-9, Paul had identified δικαιοσύνη and membership in the family of Abraham as “blessing” (εὐλογία). Having asserted three times that this εὐλογία results “from faith,” Paul next addresses the outgroup, those who are “of the works of the Law.” If faith brings blessing, Abrahamic lineage, and justification, what is the result for those who are ἐξ ἔργων νόμου?<sup>78</sup> 3:10-12 supplies two scriptural proofs to demonstrate that “works of the law” do not provide righteousness or life, but only result in the exact opposite of blessing—a curse.

### **Paul's Logic and Use of Scripture in 3:10-12**

In 3:10-12, Paul makes two related arguments to discourage the Galatians from identifying with “works of the Law.” The first argument, in 3:10, states what the Law does do. He argues from Deuteronomy 27:26 that the Law curses people who do not obey all of its commands. The second argument, in 3:11-12, shows what the Law cannot do.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Paul pits being ἐξ ἔργων νόμου against being ἐκ πίστεως. For the sake of his argument, he presents the two groupings as mutually exclusive (although not necessarily in direct opposition one to the other). Although in a different context he might have been able to use the phrase ἐξ ἔργων νόμου in a more positive fashion, the context seems to push toward the conclusion that ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου is the practical equivalent of “trying to be justified by the law” in 5:4. Many translations (ESV, NIV, RSV, NRSV) communicate this by interpreting the phrase as a “reliance” upon the law. See also Silva, “Faith Versus Works of Law in Galatians,” 222-26.

<sup>79</sup>Some commentators aver that Gal 3:11-12 highlights the incompatibility of the Law and faith (Tarazi, *Galatians*, 128; Williams, *Galatians*, 91; Martyn, *Galatians*, 310-11). While it is not incorrect to take 3:12 this way, the paragraph as a whole appears to follow the line of thought presented here. Therefore, the contrast Paul brings up between faith and “doing” in 3:12 serves to support the statement in 3:11 that

Paul argues from Habakkuk 2:4 and Leviticus 18:5 that the Law is incapable of providing δικαιοσύνη and life. He demonstrates this second point by accentuating the incompatibility of Law and faith; Law is based upon “doing,” and therefore cannot be from faith.

In 3:10, Paul asserts that “all who are from works of the Law are under a curse.” He extrapolates (γέγραπται γάρ) this conclusion from Deuteronomy 27:26, yet this creates an apparent tension within Paul's reasoning. Critics point out that Paul contradicts himself in this verse, for the Scripture pronounces a curse upon those who do *not* obey, whereas Paul directs the curse against those who allegedly do obey.<sup>80</sup>

The solution to this apparent contradiction lies the difference between “works of the Law” in 3:10a and “*all* the things written in the book of the Law” in 3:10b.<sup>81</sup> The citation of Deuteronomy 27:26 indicates that the curse lodges due to incomplete obedience.<sup>82</sup> However, those who are “of works of the Law” are not attempting full obedience to the Law; rather, they are only committed to specific aspects of Law

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“by Law no one is justified before God.” Paul's main point is the inability of the Law to justify. He brings up the fact that faith and “doing” are incompatible to corroborate this conclusion.

<sup>80</sup>Daniel P. Fuller, “Paul and the Works of the Law,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 38 (1975): 32; Michael Cranford, “The Possibility of Perfect Obedience: Paul and an Implied Premise in Galatians 3:10 and 5:3,” *Novum Testamentum* 36 (1994): 244; Lambrecht, “Curse and Blessing,” 281; Christopher D. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (T&T Clark, 2004), 124-25. Stanley notes the irony of the fact that Deut 27:26 would better serve the opponents' argument than that of Paul. As many scholars argue, he is probably right. Paul is overturning the proof texts of his opponents in order to dismantle their arguments. So Rapa, *Meaning of “The Works of the Law”*, 158; Bruce W. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham's God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 134; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 117; Martyn, *Galatians*, 311; Wisdom, *Blessing for the Nations and the Curse of the Law*, 140; Das, *Galatians*, 311.

<sup>81</sup>Contra Sanders (*Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 21-22), Paul's inclusion of πᾶσιν in the citation of Deut 27:26 is vital for the interpretation of Gal 3:10. His point is that “all those who are of works of the Law are under a curse” *precisely* because they do not offer perfect obedience to the Law. Rightly Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 164-65.

<sup>82</sup>Cranford, “The Possibility of Perfect Obedience,” 249, says, “Paul's use of [πᾶσιν] enhances the idea that works of law do not constitute real obedience to the law.”

observance such as circumcision, calendar, and dietary requirements.<sup>83</sup>

The most popular solution to the conundrum of 3:10 inserts an implied premise that no one fulfills “all the things written in the book of the law.”<sup>84</sup> Thus, the logic proceeds: (1) accursed is everyone who does not do all the things in the Law, and (2) no one actually does all the things in the Law, therefore (3) all who are of “works of the

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<sup>83</sup>Although Young, “Who’s Cursed—and Why? (Galatians 3:10-14),” 87; Hilary B. P. Mijoga, *The Pauline Notion of Deeds of the Law* (Lanham, MD: International Scholars Publications, 1999), 140; Fee, *Galatians*, 130; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 134-35, argue that the curse lodges because the Galatians are only attempting partial or selective obedience, none of them point to the discrepancy between “works of the Law” and “all the things written in the book of the Law.” De Roo, *Works of the Law’ at Qumran and in Paul*, 206, notes rightly that 3:10 criticizes “a selective attitude toward God’s law in which the importance of certain rituals, such as circumcision . . . is being stressed.” It is unclear how this correct interpretation of 3:10 fits with her larger thesis that “works of the Law” refers to meritorious works performed by Abraham.

Cranford, “The Possibility of Perfect Obedience,” 249, concludes that “works of law’ in 3:10a refers to something other than (in fact, something significantly less than) complete obedience to the law, but offered as sufficient in and of itself.” Dunn, *Galatians*, 172; Wisdom, *Blessing for the Nations and the Curse of the Law*, 163, also conclude that the “works of the Law” in 3:10a points to a subset of the Law, denoting specifically those identity markers which distinguish Jews from Gentiles, yet they believe that the error which brought on the curse was that a “favoured nation” mentality wrongly restricted Gentiles as Gentiles from receiving the blessings promised to Abraham. Thus, the incomplete obedience Paul castigates by citing Deut 27:26 is that of being disloyal to the covenant God made with Abraham to bless all the nations.

Although Paul does not address it yet, the implication of Deut 27:26 is not only that “those who are of works of the Law” are accursed, but also that all people are accursed by the Law, for all people, to some extent, are guilty of incomplete observance of the Law. Two lines of evidence point in this direction. First, Paul takes Lev 18:5’s promise of life seriously while still affirming that the Law cannot supply life and righteousness. Secondly, one of the major implications of Christ’s curse-bearing death is the actualization of the blessing of Abraham for Gentiles, who by definition do not obey the Law (3:13-14). For the moment, however, Paul’s point is to emphasize that even for those who rely on the Law, it cannot provide the necessary righteousness.

<sup>84</sup>Paul appears to affirm this premise elsewhere in Galatians, e.g., 2:17-18; 5:3; 6:13. In favor of this implied premise are Burton, *Galatians*, 164-65; Moo, “‘Law’, ‘Works of the Law’, and Legalism in Paul,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1983): 97-98; Thomas R. Schreiner, “Is Perfect Obedience to the Law Possible: A Re-Examination of Galatians 3:10,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 27 (1984): 151-60; Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck]: 1983), 94-95; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 118; Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, 135-41; Lambrecht, “Curse and Blessing,” 282; Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 145-70. Against this reading (for a variety of reasons) are N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ And The Law In Pauline Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 1993), 145; Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 22-23; Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 121; Young, “Who’s Cursed—and Why? (Galatians 3:10-14),” 83; Fee, *Galatians*, 118-19; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 134. Fee is correct, however, in pointing to the “total incompatibility of living on the basis of faith while also trying to live on the basis of doing the law.” This is a point Paul makes both here and elsewhere in the epistle.

Christopher Stanley, “‘Under a Curse’: A Fresh Reading of Galatians 3:10-14,” *New Testament Studies* 36 (1990): 481-511; Joseph P. Braswell, “‘The Blessing of Abraham’ versus ‘the Curse of the

Law” are accursed.

Detractors of the implied premise interpretation argue that Paul did not believe that it was impossible to fulfill the Law's demands.<sup>85</sup> This critique follows three primary lines of attack. First, Paul's own testimony of his life in Judaism before his conversion points to a conviction that he had satisfactorily fulfilled the Law. In Philippians 3:6, for example, Paul states that he had been “blameless according to the righteousness which is by the Law” (cf. Acts 23:1).<sup>86</sup> This—Paul's post-conversion assessment of his pre-conversion status—is not the angst of a guilt-ridden “introspective conscience.”<sup>87</sup>

A related line of evidence commonly adduced against the impossibility of perfect obedience interpretation is that the Law provided means for atonement, and as a result, never expected perfect, sinless obedience.<sup>88</sup> This probably explains why the pre-

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Law,” 73–91; Williams, *Galatians*, 89-90; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 233, attempt to avoid the implied premise by arguing that Paul really meant “under the threat” of a curse. Braswell (“The Blessing of Abraham' versus 'the Curse of the Law,’” 75-77), bases this argument upon an alleged distinction between ὑπὸ κατάραν and ἐπικατάρατος, but this is really a splitting of hairs. It is more likely that Paul intentionally uses ὑπὸ κατάραν because it aligns with his ὑπὸ (“under”) motif in the letter. Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 147-48, points out two crushing weaknesses which render the “threat of a curse” argument untenable. First, this position does not take seriously the “present actuality of the curse” communicated by Paul. The curse is not merely a potentiality, but a reality which was guaranteed in Deuteronomy and for which Christ has already died. Second, the mere threat of a curse would be no obstacle to the false teachers, who would merely use the threat as further impetus to press more vigorously the necessity of faithful Law-observance.

<sup>85</sup>Bruce, “The Curse of the Law,” 29; Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 27; Martyn, *Galatians*, 310; Fee, *Galatians*, 118; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 134.

It is impossible to detail the myriad of interpretations that have been proposed to resolve the difficulties with 3:10. For a good synopsis and critique of eight different views, see James M. Scott, “‘For as Many as Are of Works of the Law Are under a Curse’ (Galatians 3:10),” in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 188-94.

<sup>86</sup>Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 23-24; Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 145; Fee, *Galatians*, 118; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 134.

<sup>87</sup>See Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 78-87.

<sup>88</sup>E.g., Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 28; George E. Howard, *Paul: Crisis in Galatia: A Study in Early Christian Theology*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 53; Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 145; Dunn, *Galatians*, 171; Hays, *Galatians*, 257. Wisdom, *Blessing for the Nations and the Curse of the Law*, 177, states, “It is difficult to sustain the argument that Paul thought the violation of a single commandment would bring the curse when he knew that atonement and

Christ Paul was able to rest confidently in his “blameless” status according to the Law, inasmuch as he viewed the sacrificial system as atoning for his failures. After his Damascus Road experience, however, Paul's opinion of his “righteousness which is by the Law” transformed from “gain” to “loss because of Christ,” to the extent that he had come to regard his former righteousness as “excrement” (σκύβαλον, Phil 3:7-8)!<sup>89</sup>

Perhaps the strongest line of evidence against the implied premise of incomplete obedience interpretation is the fact that no implied premise is required to make sense of 3:10. As shown above, it appears that the link between 3:10a and 3:10b is not an implied “no one does all the things in the Law,” but rather that “as many as are of 'works of the Law' are not obeying the whole Law,” because by definition “the works of the Law” are a smaller subset of the Law (cf. 5:3; 6:13). This also makes better sense of the Galatian scenario, in which the Galatian believers were not undertaking to obey the entire Law, but only specific portions of it, known by the code “works of the Law.”<sup>90</sup>

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forgiveness were so near.”

A third argument sometimes levied against this interpretation is that Paul never explicitly mentions the idea that perfect obedience to the Law is impossible; rather, he highlights the incompatibility of the Law with faith by juxtaposing Hab 2:4 and Lev 18:5 to explain the cause of the curse (Martyn, *Galatians*, 310-11). This argument does not recognize, however, that Paul makes two points in 3:10-12 (notice the postpositive δέ in 3:11, rather than the γάρ that would be expected if 3:11-12 were supporting 3:10). Paul's first point is that the Law curses (3:10). His second is that the Law cannot justify (3:11-12). Martyn's reading fails to explain what Deut 27:26 accomplishes in Paul's argument.

<sup>89</sup>One additional argument against the implied premise view merits mention. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 146-47, suggests that Paul is not concerned here with individual sins or with the question of whether or not one may perfectly obey the Torah's regulations, but rather that the covenant curses spoken of in Deuteronomy (and *ipso facto*, by Paul as well) relate to Israel as a nation. Thus, Paul's line of reasoning is as follows: “a. All who embrace Torah are thereby embracing Israel's national way of life; b. Israel as a nation has suffered, historically, the curse which the Torah held out for her if she did not keep it; c. therefore all who embrace Torah now are under this curse.” Wright proceeds to argue that the specific curse of which Paul speaks is that of exile. For an assessment of this reading, see the excursus below, “What is the Curse of the Law?”

<sup>90</sup>While it is possible to explain 3:10 without the implied premise that no one actually obeys the Law, the exegesis below will show that this premise appears to supply the best explanation for 3:12 and other verses to follow (3:19, 21-22).

## Excursus: What is the Curse of the Law?

Recent scholarship is divided over what Paul means when he refers to the “curse of the Law.” Apart from the obvious fact that the curse functions as the logical antithesis to the “blessing” of Abraham referred to in the preceding verses, what exactly does Paul mean? This excursus will summarize three of the most likely interpretive options regarding what Paul meant when he referred to the Law's curse.<sup>91</sup>

One popular interpretation regards the curse of Galatians 3:10, 13 as the curse of exile with which Moses repeatedly threatens Israel throughout Deuteronomy 27-32. In support of this view is the fact that the threat (prediction) of exile derives from Deuteronomy, the same book which Paul cites in Galatians 3:10, 13 (Deut 28:36, 64). Although Deuteronomy threatens Israel with many different curses, James M. Scott argues that throughout this section of Deuteronomy, exile functions as the emphatic and ultimate curse.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, the history of Israel proved Moses' prophecies to be true. Israel was punished with exile.<sup>93</sup> Although Israel was eventually allowed to return to their homeland, there is evidence that many Jews believed the nation was still in exile even after their historical return to their homeland.<sup>94</sup> Several prophecies regarding the return from exile appeared still to await fulfillment. The Gentiles were not streaming to Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel, the temple was not yet filled with the glory of

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<sup>91</sup>Wisdom, *Blessing for the Nations and the Curse of the Law*, 165, argues for a fourth option—the curse in 3:10 is equivalent to the anathema Paul had already pronounced against the teachers of the false gospel in 1:8-9.

<sup>92</sup>Scott, “For as Many as are of the Works of the Law are Under a Curse' (Galatians 3.10),” 197.

<sup>93</sup>Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 146; Scott, “For as Many as are of the Works of the Law are Under a Curse' (Galatians 3.10),” 195.

<sup>94</sup>Scott, “For as Many as are of the Works of the Law are Under a Curse' (Galatians 3.10),” 198-213. See Ezra 9:6-15; Neh 9:36; Tobit 13:13; 14:5-7; Bar 3:6-8; 2 Macc 1.27-29.



YHWH, and Israel as a nation was still subject to foreign overlordship.<sup>95</sup> Of particular interest is Daniel 9:24, where the angel Gabriel tells Daniel to expect the exile to endure “70 weeks of years” before the “transgression is finished” and iniquity has been atoned for.<sup>96</sup> There was thus an expectation even prior to the return from Babylon that the exilic punishment would not be extinguished for an extended period of time. N. T. Wright concludes that no Jewish person living during Paul's day would maintain that the OT prophecies of the “real return from exile—the glorious future predicted in Isaiah or Ezekiel” had been fulfilled.<sup>97</sup>

Within Galatians 3, scholars point to several parallels that support reading the “curse of the Law” as the curse of exile. First is the verbal link between the curse (κατάρα) of Galatians 3:10, 13 and Deuteronomy (where κατάρα appears 10 times; cf. ἐπικατάρατος [17x], ἀρά [7x]).<sup>98</sup> A second piece of evidence is the use of the term ἐξαγοράζω in 3:13, which can refer specifically to the redemption of someone from slavery.<sup>99</sup> Finally, in 3:14 Paul ties the blessings promised to Gentiles through Abraham (Gen 12:3; 18:18; Gal 3:8) to the redemption from the curse of the Law in 3:13. By

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<sup>95</sup>Ezra 9:9; Neh 9:36; Isa 2:2-5 [Micah 4:1-4]; 25:6-8; 52:8; 56:3-8; 60:3-4; 66:18-24; Jer 16:19-21; Ezek 43:1-7; Zeph 3:9ff.; Zech 2:10-13; 8:20-23; Tobit 13:11; 14:5-7; 2 Macc 1:27-29.

Scott J. Hafemann, “Paul and the Exile of Israel in Galatians 3-4,” in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions*, ed. James M. Scott (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 352; Scott, “For as Many as are of the Works of the Law are Under a Curse' (Galatians 3.10),” 197-98; N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 268-70.

<sup>96</sup>See esp. Scott, “For as Many as are of the Works of the Law are Under a Curse' (Galatians 3.10),” 199-201.

<sup>97</sup>Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 148.

<sup>98</sup>Cf. Dan 9:11, where Daniel specifically refers to the exile as “the curse written in the Law of Moses” which “came upon us because we sinned.”

<sup>99</sup>James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ in the the Pauline Corpus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 172; Hafemann, “Paul and the Exile of Israel in Galatians 3-4,” 350.

interpreting the “curse” as exile, and the “redemption” as the return of Jews from exile, Wright is able to connect the blessing to the Gentiles with the prophetic promises of Gentile conversion as an accompaniment of the Jews' return.<sup>100</sup>

Despite this array of evidence, the case for the exile reading of the “curse of the Law” is not compelling. First, it is important to note what Paul never says. Not once does he explicitly speak of exile—here or in any of his other writings.<sup>101</sup> Because Paul does not specifically refer to an exile, it is necessary to establish that belief in an ongoing exile for Israel was pervasive among his Jewish contemporaries. While Scott and others have proven that an exile motif existed in the literature of the Second Temple period, this does not translate to the conclusion that the majority of Jews believed the Babylonian exile to be ongoing.<sup>102</sup> This being the case, would a Gentile audience like the Galatians be cognizant of such an idea? Is it possible to prove that Paul was capitalizing upon this presupposition in Galatians, in spite of the fact that he never explicitly refers to the exile? Would his readership in Galatia even recognize such an allusion? One must not simply assume he is alluding to it here.

Secondly, Paul's wording “as many as are of the works of the Law” appears to leave open the option that non-Jews are capable of experiencing the curse as well. If the curse were a national one—as Wright, Scott, and Hafemann argue—Paul could simply

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<sup>100</sup>Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 148, 154. Cf. Terrence L. Donaldson, “The 'Curse of the Law' and the Inclusion of the Gentiles: Galatians 3:13-14,” *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 94-112, for a similar analysis, with the exception that he defines the curse not as exile, but as the Law's pronouncement of sin as “transgression.”

<sup>101</sup>Schreiner, *Galatians*, 206. This is admitted by Hafemann, although he still favors the exile interpretation (Hafemann, “Paul and the Exile of Israel in Galatians 3-4,” 367).

<sup>102</sup>In fact, many Jews believed the exile had concluded. On this see Mark A. Seifrid, “Blind Alleys in the Controversy over the Paul of History,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 45 (1994): 86-89; idem, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification* (Downers Grove, IL: 2000), 23-25.

have said that *Israel* was under a curse. Furthermore, he would not have needed to emphasize the ubiquity of the curse by including  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$  in his citation of Deuteronomy 27:26.<sup>103</sup>

Third, if it were so axiomatic that Israel was experiencing the ongoing curse of exile, how are we to explain the Gentile Galatians' desire to join in through Judaizing? Why would the Galatians be so enamored of participating in the Jews' exilic plight?<sup>104</sup>

Next, Deuteronomy threatens Israel with many different curses for disobedience, not solely the punishment of exile.<sup>105</sup> It seems too narrow to limit the Deuteronomic curses to a single punishment, especially since the passage Paul cites does not specifically refer to exile.<sup>106</sup> Having said that, supporters of the exile view argue that exile was the “ultimate curse” threatened by Moses in Deuteronomy, and as such functioned in a representative capacity for the entire catalog of curses.<sup>107</sup> Daniel 9:11,

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<sup>103</sup>Seifrid, “Blind Alleys in the Controversy over the Paul of History,” 90, n. 53. Additionally, the corporate reading demanded by the exile interpretation falters against all the singulars in the passage: “everyone who,” “no one,” “the righteous one,” “the one who has done them.” Not once does Paul speak of the community as a unit, until Christ is found to redeem “us.” Paul derives this individual focus from Deuteronomy, where the focus is upon individual law-breakers: Deut 29:17-21 speaks of the “individual” who is cursed and ultimately “wiped out from under heaven” by the Lord; The Lord “will single him out from all the tribes of Israel for calamity.” Likewise, every curse in the “Shechemite Dodecalogue” (Deut 27:15-26) uses the singular, charging the curses against individuals rather than the nation as a whole. Das states, “Deuteronomy 27:26 is therefore situated in the context of a section concerned with the retributive divine curse that falls upon *individual* law-breakers for secret sins” (Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 152; also Wisdom, *Blessing for the Nations and the Curse of the Law*, 179). It is not that a corporate point of view is entirely absent from Deuteronomy, but that the exile interpretation places “overemphasis on the corporate dimension” (Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 153).

<sup>104</sup>Seifrid, “Blind Alleys in the Controversy over the Paul of History,” 90; idem, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 22.

<sup>105</sup>Cf. Deut 29:21 (29:20 LXX): “according to all the curses of the covenant written in this book of the Law.”

<sup>106</sup>Deuteronomy 28, which describes the curses more comprehensively than any other part of the book, speaks of many punishments, of which exile is only one. In this long chapter, only four of the fifty-five verses devoted to describing the curses refer to exile (28:36, 64-65, 68).

<sup>107</sup>Scott, “‘For as Many as are of the Works of the Law are Under a Curse’ (Galatians 3.10),” 195.

speaking of “the curse and the oath written in the law of Moses,” appears to corroborate this argument by speaking in terms of a single curse. Nevertheless, although Daniel 9:7 does refer to the Lord scattering some Israelites into foreign lands, much of Daniel 9 appears to be a lament and prayer concerning the desolate state of Jerusalem rather than a prayer for return from exile (9:12, 16-19).<sup>108</sup>

Sixth, supporters of the exile interpretation overemphasize Paul's use of ἐξαγοράζω. In the LXX, the term only appears once (Dan 2:8), and does not refer to a redemption from exile.<sup>109</sup> Two of the term's four NT occurrences are Galatians 3:13 and 4:5, both of which likely refer to the same event. The final two uses of ἐξαγοράζω are Ephesians 5:16 and Colossians 4:5, where Paul employs it in a metaphorical sense of “redeeming the time.” In summary, there is no evidence that ἐξαγοράζω supports an allusion to exile in Galatians 3:13.

Finally, the exile interpretation does not match the obvious meaning of its logical opposite—blessing—from the preceding paragraph. Since blessing obviously refers to justification (3:8), the curse should refer to something even worse than exile—a lack of justification, that is, condemnation. This reading makes far more sense of 3:13 as well. While it seems far-fetched to say that Christ endured the exile for us, it makes perfect sense to say that he experienced the Law's condemnation on our behalf.

It is possible that proponents of the exile reading of the curse of the Law may overcome these difficulties, but at this point there is not enough evidence to support their reading of Galatians 3:10-14. Therefore, it is unlikely that Paul was specifically referring

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<sup>108</sup>Seifrid, “Blind Alleys in the Controversy over the Paul of History,” 87.

<sup>109</sup>In the context of Galatians, ἐξαγοράζω does function to refer to freedom from slavery, yet it does not follow that this is the slavery of Israel's exile. In fact, Paul makes it clear that the slavery he has in mind is subjugation to the Torah (3:13, 22, 23; 4:3-7, 8-10, 23-25; 5:1, 13).

to an ongoing exile for Israel when he referred to the “curse of the Law.” While it is possible that he might have thought of events in Israel's history such as the exile (or, more likely, the Exodus) as a “heuristic paradigm”<sup>110</sup> for interpreting the present, it is unlikely that Galatians 3:13-14 refers to the final restoration of Israel from the physical exile which began in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.E. If anything, Paul saw Israel's redemption from slavery in Egypt and return to the Promised Land as physical, historical, and national types of what would happen later on a spiritual plane when Christ redeemed his people from their own form of slavery.<sup>111</sup>

A second explanation of the curse of the Law is that it refers to the necessity of complete obedience.<sup>112</sup> Several scholars argue that Galatians 3:10 counteracts a situation in which believers were considering only obeying certain parts of the Law.<sup>113</sup> Thus, Paul's argument is that with Torah observance, it is either all or nothing. As in the implied premise argument, this interpretation assumes that ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου *will not* do all the things written in the Law. However, the views are distinct in that the implied premise view usually assumes that people *cannot* do all the Law, whereas this view maintains that

<sup>110</sup>Hafemann, “Paul and the Exile of Israel in Galatians 3-4,” 330. Likewise, 4:21-31 may allude to an exile-like status for the enslaved “children of the present Jerusalem.” Paul's explicitly “allegorical” reading of this passage further confirms that he could use an exilic *topos* from Israel's history to describe contemporary spiritual realities.

<sup>111</sup>This is precisely where Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, 149-57, takes his version of the exile interpretation. Yet, he believes the antitype only begins in 4:3, and therefore that 3:10-13 and 4:1-2 refer specifically to Israel's history.

<sup>112</sup>Fee, *Galatians*, 118-19.

<sup>113</sup>Young, “Who's Cursed—and Why? (Galatians 3:10-14),” 87; Fee, *Galatians*, 118-19; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 134. Whereas Young, and Soards and Pursiful make no attempt at identifying the curse, Fee explicitly states that “the curse is that they *must* do so [i.e., obey the whole Law].” Fee combines his argument that the curse is the requirement to keep the entire Law with an affirmation of the “*total incompatibility* of living on the basis of faith while also trying to live on the basis of doing the law.” Thus, Fee argues, the curse is that in choosing to live by doing the Law, one is in consequence also choosing against living by the Spirit and faith. The problem facing the Galatians, according to Fee, is that by choosing to rely on partial Law observance, they have excluded themselves from both legitimate paths to life, faith and Law-observance.

they *choose* not to do all the Law.<sup>114</sup>

An important aspect of this view is its emphasis upon the incompatibility between Law-observance and faith. Paul juxtaposes the two in such a manner that one cannot live on the basis of both Law and faith. Thus, to choose to live by one is by implication to reject the other. Fee concludes, “the one who chooses to live by the law is thereby excluded from Christ, cut off from salvation altogether.”<sup>115</sup> Thus, an important aspect of the curse of doing the Law is its concomitant exclusion from faith.

An advantage to this interpretation is that it takes seriously Paul's assumption that the ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου will not obey all the things written in the Law. Young correctly states that Paul's citation of Deuteronomy 27:26 “demands” this conclusion.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, the assumption upon which this interpretation is based—that the Galatians were considering only partial observance—finds support in other parts of the letter (5:3; 6:13), and by the fact that Paul distinguishes between “works of the Law” and “all the things written in the book of the Law.”<sup>117</sup> Finally, this view is surely accurate in recognizing Paul's either-or contrast between “doing” and faith. The two are seen as totally incompatible for attaining righteousness and life.

There are, however, a few weaknesses to this interpretation. First, as its

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<sup>114</sup>The position of Byrne, *Sons of God—Seed of Abraham*, 152, falls somewhere between both of these. His view agrees with that of Young *et al.* in rejecting an implied premise that obedience is impossible, yet he does not go so far as to state that people *choose* not to obey all the Law's prescriptions. Instead, the fact that Scripture points to the way of faith as the sole path to righteousness (Hab 2:4) confirms the conclusion that all do not obey.

<sup>115</sup>Fee, *Galatians*, 118.

<sup>116</sup>Young, “Who's Cursed—and Why? (Galatians 3:10-14),” 86. The implied premise interpretation also respects this demand of the passage.

<sup>117</sup>Young, “Who's Cursed—and Why? (Galatians 3:10-14),” 87-88; Fee, *Galatians*, 119; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 134.

proponents recognize, this interpretation may also rest upon an assumption.<sup>118</sup> It assumes that the ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου do not intend to practice the whole Law. Yet, it is possible that Paul does not mean to distinguish between “works of the Law” and “Law” in general. The next two verses speak simply of “the Law” rather than of the “works of the Law,” therefore it is possible to maintain that the phrase “works of the Law” functions as a code referring only to a specific subset of Law-based practices rather than the Law in its entirety.

Secondly, Deuteronomy 27:26 pronounces the curse over those who do *not* do the things written in the Law. Since the curse is something the Law does to those who do not keep the Law, the requirement to observe the entire Law cannot, in and of itself, be the curse. Instead, it appears that the curse is a punishment for disobedience. It is unlikely that the punishment for disobedience is the requirement to obey.

Having analyzed and rejected two popular interpretations of the curse, it is necessary to supply an alternative explanation for what exactly Paul means by this term. This explanation will proceed in two steps. First, the OT source for Paul's idea of the curse will be examined. Then, Paul's statements regarding the curse will be analyzed to see what can be determined from Galatians.

In the OT context from which Paul derives his curse citations (Deut 21:23; 27:26), Moses speaks not of a single curse for breaking the covenant, but of a whole host of curses, including sickness, death, drought, defeat by enemies, poverty and debt, oppression, seizure of family and property, captivity, idolatry, disrepute, famine, subservience to foreigners, cannibalism, shrinking population, removal from the land, and

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<sup>118</sup>Ironically, the primary criticism they levy against the impossibility of complete obedience view is the same central problem to their own interpretation.

scattering among the nations.<sup>119</sup> Deuteronomy 27:26, which Paul cites in Galatians 3:10, functions as a summary curse which follows eleven specific curses related to various matters, including idolatry, disobedience to parents, sexual sins, theft, murder, and bribery. It appears to function in a comprehensive manner to refer to any violation of the covenant.<sup>120</sup> By contrast, the blessings of Deuteronomy include victory over enemies, prosperity, abundant crops and livestock, life, possession of the promised land of Canaan, and an expanding populace.<sup>121</sup>

In Galatians, Paul only names one of the specific curses of Deuteronomy. The only curse he describes is that of being hanged upon a tree, which clearly refers to Christ (Gal 3:13; Deut 21:23), and is unlikely to refer to the curse which applies to those who are ἐξ ἔργων νόμου. Likewise, he does not speak of any of the specific blessings of Deuteronomy. Although he does mention “life” (3:11, 21), it appears that his idea of “life” is eschatological rather than the physical life in Canaan promised in Deuteronomy 30:16-20. Is Paul's application of the curses in Deuteronomy legitimate?

Paul raises the subject of blessing and curse in the midst of his ongoing contrast of faith with “works of the Law.” According to Paul, faith brings blessing, and identifying with the Law brings curse. Thus, it is helpful to consider his explicit statements regarding

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<sup>119</sup>Deut 28:21-68; 29:20-28; 30:18. Of special interest are the curses of a shrinking populace and removal from the land, inasmuch as they counter the specific promises spoken to Abraham (Deut 28:62-63; 29:28; 30:18; cf. Gen 12:2, 7; 13:14-17; 15:5, 7, 18-21; 17:2-8; 22:17).

<sup>120</sup>Although scholars regularly group the twelve curses together under the heading “Shechemite Dodecalogue,” the final curse, which Paul cites in Gal 3:10, functions differently from the others, as a summary curse instead of relating a specific cause for cursing. In the context of Deuteronomy, although the final curse might refer specifically to the preceding eleven curses, it seems more likely that it evokes the entire Law code. Paul's citation supports this reading, inasmuch as the matters of the first eleven curses are not germane to the argument of Galatians 3, and that he quotes Deut 27:26 with specific reference to “works of the Law” and “the Law” in general.

<sup>121</sup>Deut 28:7-8, 11-12; 30:16.



what faith does, what the Law does, and what the Law does not do. First of all, faith brings δικαιοσύνη (2:16; 3:6, 8, 11, 24), Abrahamic sonship (3:7, 26-29), blessing (3:8-9, 14), life (3:11), the Spirit (3:2, 5, 14), the inheritance (3:29), the promise (3:22), and divine sonship (3:26). By way of contrast, the Law does *not* supply the Holy Spirit (3:2, 5), Abrahamic sonship (3:7), the promise (3:17-18), the inheritance (3:18), δικαιοσύνη (2:16, 21; 3:11, 21), or life (3:21). Finally, the Law *does* declare a curse (3:10), create transgressions (3:19), enclose all under sin (3:22), and enslave (4:3). Table 5, below, coordinates these Pauline arguments:

Table 5. Faith versus the Law

<i>What Faith Provides</i>	<i>What the Law Does Not Provide</i>	<i>What the Law Does<sup>122</sup></i>
Abrahamic sonship (3:7, 26-29) divine sonship (3:26)	Abrahamic sonship (3:7)	enslave (3:22-23; 4:3-5, 21-31)
δικαιοσύνη (3:6, 8, 11, 24; 5:5)	δικαιοσύνη (3:11, 21)	create transgressions (3:19, 22)
life (3:11)	life (3:21)	–
the inheritance (3:29)	the inheritance (3:18)	–
the promise (3:22)	the promise (3:17-18)	–
blessing (3:8-9, 14)	–	curse (3:10)
the Spirit (3:2, 5, 14)	the Spirit (3:2, 5)	–

When the faith/Law antithesis is viewed in this manner, three striking conclusions present themselves. First, all of the benefits affiliated with faith are part of a

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<sup>122</sup>The references in the first column are limited to verses which specifically mention faith as the source of the benefits. For example, 4:5 is not mentioned under divine sonship because it does not name πίστις as the cause for υιοθεσία. In the same way, the second and third columns are limited to instances where the Law is specifically named. The two exceptions to this are Abrahamic sonship in 3:7, where Paul overtly implies “and not works of the Law,” and slavery in 4:3, where it is apparent that the Law is categorized as one of the στοιχεῖα.

large matrix of terms, some of which appear to be synonymous in Paul's mind, and all of which are concomitants of one another. For example, Paul presents δικαιοσύνη, life, blessing, inheritance, and promise as essentially synonymous terms; they are nearly indistinguishable. Likewise, sonship (both divine and Abrahamic) and the reception of the Spirit function as the ground and proof, respectively, of the other faith benefits.<sup>123</sup>

Secondly, the cornucopia of benefits deriving from faith are all interpreted eschatologically in Galatians. That is to say, the OT blessings are interpreted as types of what has now come in the new age. Thus, “inheritance” no longer refers to the physical land of Canaan, and “life” refers not to life in the land, but to eternal, eschatological life. Δικαιοσύνη refers to an end-time juridical declaration (5:3). Even Abrahamic lineage is superseded by its greater antitype, divine sonship. All of this makes good sense in light of the fact that Paul writes from an apocalyptic perspective in Galatians, in which the “present evil age” is replaced “in the fullness of time” (signaled by the arrival of “faith” and Christ) with a “new creation” (1:4; 3:23-25; 4:4; 6:15). These facts suggest that Paul might also eschatologize the curse of Deuteronomy 27:26 into something distinct from the literal curses spoken of in Deuteronomy.

Finally, every faith benefit listed in Galatians finds its specific counterpart either in the list of things Paul explicitly claims the Law does not provide, or in the list of things the Law does. Therefore, he overtly states that the Law does not supply δικαιοσύνη, Abrahamic sonship, life, the Spirit, the inheritance, or the promise. Additionally, by creating transgressions, locking all up under sin, enslaving, and cursing, the Law performs the negative counterparts to faith's provisions of δικαιοσύνη, sonship,

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<sup>123</sup>Because sonship is the ground for the other benefits, it appears first in the benefits column. Likewise, because the Spirit functions as the proof of all the other blessings, it comes last in the column. This is not to imply that a chronological order exists. On this, see the discussion of 4:6, below, chap. 5.

and blessing.

So, to what does Paul refer when he speaks of the curse of the Law? Three arguments point to the conclusion that Paul was referring to judgment levied by the Law when he spoke of its curse.<sup>124</sup> First, in the context of Deuteronomy, the curses function as consequences for disobedience. Likewise, Paul's citation of Deuteronomy 27:26 clearly shows unsatisfactory obedience to be the cause for the curse.

Secondly, Paul's argument shows that the curse is likely the logical opposite of δικαιοσύνη. A careful reading of 3:8-9 demonstrates that Paul equates “righteousness” with “blessing.”<sup>125</sup> Fast on the heels of this equation, he introduces the idea of a “curse.” If “curse” is the opposite of “blessing,” and “blessing” = δικαιοσύνη, then it stands to reason that the “curse” = the opposite of δικαιοσύνη, i.e., condemnation.<sup>126</sup>

A third argument in favor of this reading is the fact that Paul treats the Law's curse as a punishment that is directly opposed to being justified. After stating that the curse lodges against those who do not continue in all the things written in the Law, Paul says that no one is justified (δικαιοῦται) before God by the Law (3:11). Thus, after indicating that the curse is the Law's punishment for disobedience or lack of full obedience, rather than directly describing the curse with a term such as κατακρίνω or a related term, Paul demonstrates what the curse is by elucidating its opposite. Πίστις brings

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<sup>124</sup>See also Moisés Silva, *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “ἄρα,” 384: “the curse of the law signifies being surrendered to the judgment and wrath of God.” Bruce, “The Curse of the Law,” 27.

<sup>125</sup>Δικαιοῖ τὰ ἔθνη ὁ θεός = ἐνευλογηθήσονται πάντα τὰ ἔθνη.

<sup>126</sup>Given the ethnic concerns in Galatians, it is tempting to read δικαιοσύνη as covenant membership or membership within the people of Israel (see Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 150). This, however, is an illegitimate transfer. The two concepts are closely related—one cannot be a member of the eschatological people of God without a status of δικαιοσύνη; likewise, all who have been justified are members of Abraham's lineage. Yet, this does not mean that the two concepts must be synonymous. When, on the other hand, the curse is interpreted as the Law's condemnation, a primary result of the curse is exclusion from the people of God, but it is not the curse itself.

δικαιοσύνη, whereas breaking the Law brings curse. Therefore, additional evidence that the curse refers specifically to condemnation lies within the immediate context of 3:10.

Finally, the numerous similarities between 3:10-14 and 3:19-22 show that the curse in the previous passage is likely to be the same as what the Law does in the latter. Both paragraphs explain the Law's role (to curse; enclose all under sin) and explain the cause for this act of the Law (lack of obedience; because of transgressions). Both note that Christ/the Seed comes only after the Law has performed this negative (yet preparatory) role. Both state that righteousness and life do not/cannot derive from Law. Finally, both point to Christ's coming as the solution to the plight created by the Law and as the source through which the promise is secured. Table 6 highlights the similarities between these two paragraphs:

Table 6. The similarities between Galatians 3:10-14 and 3:19-22

<i>Galatians 3:10-14</i>	<i>Galatians 3:19-22</i>
“As many as are of works of the Law are under a curse.”	“The Scripture shut up all under sin.”
“. . . does not remain in all the things written in the book of the Law. . .”	“. . . because of transgressions . . .”
“Christ redeemed us from the curse.”	“. . . until the Seed should arrive . . .”
“It is clear that no one is justified before God by the Law.”	“If a Law with the ability to make alive were given, truly righteousness would have been from the Law.”
“Christ redeemed us . . . in order that we might receive the promise.”	“. . . in order that the promise from faith in Jesus Christ might be given . . .”

Given the significant overlap between these two paragraphs, it is justifiable to equate the curse of 3:10 with its counterpart in 3:19-22. The primary active role fulfilled

by the Law in 3:19-22 is to shut up all under sin.<sup>127</sup> The curse, then, is the Law's act of condemning people for their sin.

What are the implications of this reading of the curse? Paul appears to have “eschatologized” the blessings of the OT, such that all the physical blessings promised to Israel for covenant faithfulness—inheritance, descent, “life,” and prosperity—are spiritualized. The people of “faith” receive a spiritual inheritance and prosperity rather than the flourishing land of Canaan, their lineage is now divine, and their “life” is eschatological. Just as Paul spiritualizes the blessings, he also does the curses. He does not speak of physical sickness, famine, death, captivity, and exile. Rather, he speaks of their spiritual counterparts when he talks about the curse. Thus, the curse refers to spiritual death, exclusion from the people of God, a lack of the Holy Spirit, and the absence of δικαιοσύνη—in a word, condemnation.<sup>128</sup>

### **Galatians 3:11-12**

At this juncture, Paul deviates from his consistent pattern of using the phrase “works of the Law,” replacing it instead with simply the “Law” (3:11, 12). He does this because he recognized that the citation of Deuteronomy 27:26 in 3:10 leaves open the possibility that one might attempt to obey the Law in its entirety for righteousness. Yet

<sup>127</sup>A secondary role for the Law in these verses is the preparatory dimension of the condemnation levied by the Law. The Law shuts up all under sin “*in order that* the promise might be given from faith in Jesus Christ to those who believe.”

Throughout this section, τὰ πάντα in 3:21 is translated generically as “all,” with the specific implication that “all” includes all people, whether Jew or non-Jew. As will be shown in the next chapter, however, Paul intended τὰ πάντα to include the entirety of the created order as well, such was his conviction regarding the pervasive impact of sin.

<sup>128</sup>This conclusion does not conflict with that of Wisdom, *Blessing for the Nations and the Curse of the Law*, 192: “the curse of the law is the place outside of the covenant blessings. Those under the curse are those who are cut off from life within the covenant. This is the place associated with the gentiles since they by nature are outside the covenant. This is also the place for apostates from the covenant. Those who have abandoned covenant loyalty are under the curse.” The interpretation presented here differs from Wisdom's in recognizing that Paul held to an eschatologized, apocalyptic interpretation of the curse.

Paul knew that the fundamental problem with the more specific “works of the Law” was the same as the problem with the “Law” in general. It was not simply that “works of the Law” were an incomplete obedience (which they were, as he implies in 3:10), but also that the “Law” as a whole can never supply life and righteousness.

It is precisely at this point that New Perspective interpretations focusing upon Jewish identity markers as the specific target of Paul's vitriol collapse. Paul does not use “the Law” as “shorthand” for “the works of the Law” interpreted as badges of national identity.<sup>129</sup> Instead, he intends to demonstrate that as a subset of the Law, the “works of the Law” share in its fundamental deficiency. Therefore, although the Galatians viewed “the works of the Law,” which were common identity markers of Jewish distinction, as a means of obtaining entry into the covenant people of God, Paul knew that “the works of the Law,” as a subset of the Law in general, were incapable of supplying life and righteousness. This is because the Law itself was incapable of doing so.

Galatians 3:10 and 3:11-12 look at the Law from different angles.<sup>130</sup> In 3:10, Paul demonstrates what the Law does do; it brings a curse for incomplete obedience. This is the purpose of the Law (3:19, 22). In 3:11-12, he takes a different approach, revealing what the Law does not do; the Law does not supply life and righteousness, even when one

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<sup>129</sup>Rightly Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 232; Das, *Galatians*, 313; Oakes, *Galatians*, 85. Contra especially Dunn, *Galatians*, 174.

<sup>130</sup>Lambrecht, “Curse and Blessing,” 273, notes a “heavy tension” between 3:10 and 3:11-12, because 3:10 appears to criticize the Law because of transgressions, whereas 3:11-12 focuses upon the Law's inability to justify at all.

Tarazi, *Galatians*, mistakenly argues that Gal 3:11-12 are a parenthesis in Paul's argument. He reaches this conclusion because he attempts to drive a wedge between the concepts of “blessing” and “justification.” Given Paul's near-equation of the two concepts in 3:8, it is clear that he uses the terms almost interchangeably. Thus, it should be no surprise that Paul can move from speaking of “under a curse” to “no one is justified” in consecutive verses.

attempts to obey it completely (3:21).<sup>131</sup>

3:11-12 constitutes a syllogism which Paul begins by stating the conclusion he intends to prove, than “by the Law no one is justified before God.”<sup>132</sup> Paul then cites Habakkuk 2:4 for proof: “the righteous one will live from faith.”<sup>133</sup> This text, of course, says nothing regarding the Law, and one might still argue that the Law and faith are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the problem facing the Galatian believers was that “Many

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<sup>131</sup>Similarly Moo, *Galatians*, 205. As in the previous verses Paul had closely associated “righteousness” and “blessing,” here in 3:11-12 he makes a near-equation of “life” with “righteousness,” as can be seen when the three main assertions are juxtaposed:

Οὐδεὶς	ἐν νόμῳ	δικαιοῦται
Ὁ δίκαιος	ἐκ πίστεως	ζήσεται
Ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ	ἐν αὐτοῖς	ζήσεται

This leads to the conclusion that Paul refers here to eschatological life (see Schreiner, *Galatians*, 207).

<sup>132</sup>The ἐν is most likely instrumental rather than locative (rightly Lambrecht, “Curse and Blessing,” 283-84; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 207; Moo, *Galatians*, 206; Das, *Galatians*, 218. Contra Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 121; Tarazi, *Galatians*, 127; de Boer, *Galatians*, 203). The juxtaposition of ἐν νόμῳ (= ἐν αὐτοῖς, 3:12) with ἐκ πίστεως calls for this reading.

The interpretation favored here follows the traditional reading (NA<sup>28</sup>; UBS<sup>5</sup>; SBLGNT) which places the comma after δῆλον rather than between θεῶ and δῆλον. The alternate reading says “and because no one is justified in the Law by God, it is clear that the righteous one will live from faith.” Therefore, the conclusion that no one is justified by Law derives from Deut 27:26, rather than from Hab 2:4. The difference between the two readings is that on the traditional reading defended here Paul relies upon the efficacy of faith for δικαιοσύνη in order to exclude “works of the Law.” On the alternate reading, Paul uses Deut 27:26 to exclude the “works of the Law,” so that faith remains as the only potential source of δικαιοσύνη.

The great merit of this alternate reading is that it follows the most common use of δῆλον ὅτι (BDF §127 lists Gal 3:11 as the sole NT example of a “reversed” δῆλον ὅτι). See Andrew H. Wakefield, *Where to Live: The Hermeneutical Significance of Paul's Citations from Scripture in Galatians 3:1-14* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 162-67, 207-14; B. Longenecker, *Triumph of Abraham's God*, 164; Hays, *Galatians*, 259; Das, *Galatians*, 317; assumed without argument by Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 234; N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013): 865, n. 259; Oakes, *Galatians*, 110-11. Moo, *Galatians*, 205, criticizes Wakefield's reading, averring that the logic “is not airtight: the negative claim that people are not justified in the law does not provide clear reason to conclude that they are justified by faith.” Moo's argument does not consider that Paul only weighs two options: either Law or faith (as argued by de Boer, *Galatians*, 203). Therefore, his logic only needs to be tight enough to exclude one option in order to prove the other. A more insurmountable difficulty for Wakefield's reading is that it relegates 3:12 to a mere tangent within Paul's argument, whereas the traditional interpretation depends upon 3:12 to complete the syllogism (rightly Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 165, n. 59; although Das's more recent commentary evinces an apparent change of mind).

<sup>133</sup>Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 132-41 (also Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 90; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 137) argues that the “righteous one” refers specifically to Christ, but the fact that “righteous one” in the citation is meant to contrast with “no one” in 3:11a disproves this hypothesis (rightly Dunn, *Galatians*, 174-75). Furthermore, Paul's deletion of the pronoun (either “his” or “my”) from both the Hebrew and Greek *Vorlagen* belies any reference to Christ, as the “Righteous One,” demonstrating “faithfulness” (Das, *Galatians*, 318).

Christian Jews believed, the righteous person can live by faith *and* in the Law . . . so Paul must argue that 'living in the Law' is fundamentally incompatible with 'faith.'<sup>134</sup> To that end, Paul cites Leviticus 18:5, “The one who has done them will live in them,” with the explanatory note, “The Law is not from faith.” Therefore, if it is true that (1) the righteous one will live from faith, and (2) the Law is not from faith, then (3) no one is justified before God by the Law.<sup>135</sup>

A brief word needs to be said regarding Paul's use of the OT here. Is he merely proof-texting in order to score rhetorical points? E. P. Sanders argues that Paul chose Habakkuk 2:4 simply because it brought together the key terms “righteous” and “faith.” Paul could then use “faith” as the bridge term to connect “righteousness” with “Gentiles.” Leviticus 18:5 then functions simply to exclude the Law. Yet, Sanders does not believe Paul took the texts seriously within their OT context.<sup>136</sup> He therefore does not have to wrestle with the question of how the OT can present two apparently opposing paths to life.

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<sup>134</sup>Williams, *Galatians*, 91; Tarazi, *Galatians*, 128.

<sup>135</sup>Bruce, *Galatians*, 162; Lambrecht, “Curse and Blessing,” 283; Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 165, n. 59; Moo, *Galatians*, 205.

Lev 18:5 and Hab 2:4 are, as Moo, *Galatians*, 209, notes, “antithetically parallel.”

Ὁ δίκαιος	ἐκ πίστεως	ζήσεται
Ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ	ἐν αὐτοῖς	ζήσεται

Paul situates the two Scriptures in opposition to one another, yet he clearly believes that Hab 2:4's path to life trumps that of Lev 18:5.

<sup>136</sup>Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 21-22: “It is a fairly common view that one should interpret what the proof-texts say in order to discover what Paul means. I think that what Paul says in his own words is the clue to what he took the proof-texts to mean.” I express full agreement with Sanders that interpreters should use Paul's own explanations to see how he interpreted the texts (see my exegesis of 3:9, above!), yet part ways with him when he concludes that Paul did not take the OT context seriously. This accusation should be demonstrated rather than stated. Sanders' flippant statement that the πᾶσιν in Deut 27:26 merely “happens to be there” demonstrates his disregard for the care with which Paul constructed his argument.

In response to Sanders' method of interpreting this passage, Cranford argues that Paul would not risk misinterpreting the OT passages because it would give his opponents an easy opportunity to discredit him before the Galatians. See Cranford, “The Possibility of Perfect Obedience,” 246.



If Paul is not proof-texting, how does one reconcile his use of the two passages “against” one another? Does Paul believe that Habakkuk 2:4 somehow trumps or supersedes Leviticus 18:5? There is a way of interpreting this passage in which Paul takes seriously the promises within both of these OT texts. Paul viewed the promise of Leviticus 18:5 as genuine; if anyone was able to “do” the things in the Law, he would live by them. Obedience would engender eschatological life.<sup>137</sup> He also believed that Habakkuk 2:4 described a true way to life, the way of faith. Logically, this leads to one of two conclusions: either (1) the Scripture contradicts itself, or (2) one of these paths to life is hypothetical.<sup>138</sup>

Galatians supplies evidence that Paul chose the second conclusion. First, Paul was convinced that it was impossible for righteousness to derive from the Law (2:21; 3:11, 21). Secondly, Paul believed the Law existed to convict people of transgressions and sins (3:19, 22). The first conviction follows from the second. Paul believed that everyone sinned, and therefore that the Law could not justify (cf. Rom 8:3). His citation of Leviticus 18:5 in conjunction with Habakkuk 2:4 “points to a factual non-fulfilment of the Law's demand on the part of all.”<sup>139</sup> Thus, because Paul believed that people always fail to live up to the Law's demands, he could conclude that Leviticus 18:5's path to life, in

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<sup>137</sup>Εν αὐτοῖς should be read as instrumental here, given its juxtaposition with ἐκ πίστεως. Rightly Schreiner, *Galatians*, 211; Das, *Galatians*, 322. The “life” spoken of in both texts is best interpreted as eschatological, contra Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, 140; Dunn, *Galatians*, 175; Rapa, *Meaning of “Works of the Law”*, 170-77; de Boer, *Galatians*, 207.

It is plausible to argue that Paul's opponents were using Leviticus 18:5 to great effect in adjoining the Galatian believers to shoulder the “works of the Law.” As a result, Paul would be constrained to find an explanation to refute this reading of Scripture. See Wisdom, *Blessing for the Nations and the Curse of the Law*, 140; Das, *Galatians*, 322.

<sup>138</sup>In theory, at least two other options exist. First, of course, is that Paul was misinterpreting or ignoring the context of one or both of the passages. Second is to claim that Paul was inconsistent or incoherent. These explanations should be reserved only as a last course of action when all other paths have proven to be dead ends.

<sup>139</sup>Byrne, *Sons of God—Seed of Abraham*, 152

practice, was only hypothetical.<sup>140</sup>

Paul therefore creates no real tension between Habakkuk 2:4 and Leviticus 18:5. He believed both offers to be legitimate, but only one to be attainable, the one that offered life by means of πίστις. The offer of Leviticus 18:5 could not be realized, for the same reason that as many as are from “works of the Law” are under a curse—people do not obey the Law completely, nor does the Law supply the ability to do so.<sup>141</sup>

The false teachers were propagating the idea that “works of the Law” and πίστις can work together. Paul, however, viewed the two in some way as mutually exclusive.<sup>142</sup> Did Paul have in mind a comprehensive exclusion, or could he envision some context in which the two could function side-by-side? The context clarifies that Paul is not speaking of a comprehensive incompatibility between πίστις and “works of the Law,” but only expresses their incompatibility when relied upon for the same purpose. He had a specific *telos* in mind: justification and eschatological life. The repetition of ζήσεται in both scriptural citations proves that the arena of contention between the two principles is that of life and justification.<sup>143</sup> For Paul, only faith can supply these blessings, while the Law, by contrast, can only bring curse.

“Faith,” although Paul does not explicitly spell it out here, must be faith in

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<sup>140</sup>Rightly Robert H. Gundry, “Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul” *Biblica* 66 (1985): 19, 25-26; Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 121; Lambrecht, “Curse and Blessing,” 284; Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment*, 60. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 251, also believes the offer of life in Lev 18:5 is genuine, yet the inability of complete obedience is not anthropological, but the consequence of an ongoing exile.

<sup>141</sup>Rightly Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 121.

<sup>142</sup>Paul had argued “that 'living in the Law' is fundamentally incompatible with 'faith.'” So Williams, *Galatians*, 91; also Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, 165.

<sup>143</sup>Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 121; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 120, says the two are “mutually exclusive as bases for righteousness.” Schreiner, *Galatians*, 211, rightly notes that Paul's argument does not lead to the Law's “wholesale rejection,” but that the Law still retains a legitimate role in believers' lives. That role, however, does not include provision of eschatological life.

Christ Jesus and in the proclamation of his death and resurrection. By repeating the genitive prepositional phrase ἐκ πίστεως in 3:11-12, Paul evokes a pattern he had established as early as 2:16, that “faith” has as its appropriate object Jesus Christ (2:16, “we believed in Christ Jesus”) and the “message” of his crucifixion (3:1-5). This is further confirmed in 3:23-25 when Paul speaks of πίστις “having come” and being “unveiled,” a clear reference to the arrival of the “Seed,” whom Paul identifies as Christ (3:16, 19). By speaking in this way, Paul makes clear that faith's true locus is Jesus Christ.

### **Galatians 3:13-14**

In 3:13-14, Paul announces that Christ's death is not only the remedy for the Law's curse, but also the means by which the blessing of Abraham might obtain for the Gentiles and the promise of the Spirit might come to all.

The first person pronouns in these verses have vexed many interpreters. Paul states that Christ, by becoming a curse *for us*, has redeemed *us* from the curse of the Law. This took place in order that the blessing of Abraham might come for the Gentiles, in order that *we* might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. The use of the first person pronouns and pronominal endings is perplexing to many scholars, who question the relationship of the “we” in 13ab, 14b to the surprising mention of “the Gentiles” in 14a. It is important to provide a solution for the conundrum of the logic in 3:13-14, for its interpretation will have a bearing upon the interpretation of 4:5-6. The best reading of these verses views the first person pronouns/personal endings of verses 13-14 as a universal reference to all believers, Jew and Gentile.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>144</sup>Rightly also Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 19-20; Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 148-51; Dunn, *Galatians*, 176-79; Lambrecht, “Curse and Blessing,” 286; Martyn, *Galatians*, 321-23; de Boer, *Galatians*, 214-15; Das, *Galatians*, 330-33; Soards and Pursiful,

3:13a, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law,” functions as the thesis for 3:13-14. Paul makes it clear that this redemption from the curse of the Law applies both to Jew and Gentile in two ways. First, the redemption most directly applies to those who are “of works of the Law” in 3:10. Jews are naturally included, inasmuch as they derive their social identity largely from these markers. However, Paul’s use of ὅσοι in 3:10 is inclusive of anyone who desires to identify with “works of the Law,” including Gentiles. The context of the letter, in which Gentiles are seriously considering taking on these works, suggests that Gentiles too may be subject to the Law’s curse.<sup>145</sup> Secondly, the Gentiles receive the blessing of Abraham as a direct result of Christ’s redemptive act, and believers of all ethnic designations receive the Spirit. Inasmuch as the outcomes of Christ’s becoming a curse impact both Jews and Gentiles, the “us” in 13a, therefore, encompasses all humanity, both Jew and Gentile.<sup>146</sup> All, whether Jew or Gentile, have

*Galatians*, 138.

<sup>145</sup>Lambrecht, “Curse and Blessing,” 286; Norman H. Young, “Pronominal Shifts in Paul’s Argument to the Galatians” in *Ancient History in a Modern University*, vol. 2, *Early Christianity, Late Antiquity, and Beyond*, ed. T.W. Hillard, R. A. Kearsley, C. E. V. Nixon, and A. M. Nobbs (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 213; Tarazi, *Galatians*, 124; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 215.

<sup>146</sup>Byrne, *Sons of God—Seed of Abraham*, 153; Charles A. Wanamaker, “The Son and the Sons of God: a Study in the Elements of Paul’s Christological and Soteriological Thought,” (PhD diss., Durham University, 1980), 314; Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 123; Lambrecht, “Curse and Blessing,” 286; Martyn, *Galatians*, 317; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 215; de Boer, *Galatians*, 209.

Contra Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 144, 154; idem, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2: 865; Donaldson, “The ‘Curse of the Law’ and the Inclusion of the Gentiles: Galatians 3:13-14,” 97-100; Scott, “‘For as Many as are of the Works of the Law are Under a Curse’ (Galatians 3.10),” 219-20; Frank J. Matera, *Galatians*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 120, who argue that the Jews had to be redeemed first, *in order that* the blessing might come to the Gentiles. While this interpretation has surface appeal, it does not account very well for 3:11-12. Why would Paul chase after a tangential point regarding πίστις, δικαιοσύνη, and the nature of the Law, since (according to this interpretation) he had already made the important point that the Jews were in exile?

It could be argued that because the curse of the Law derives from the covenant ceremony in Deuteronomy, the curse can *ipso facto* only apply to members of the covenant community, i.e., Jews. While this is technically true, it quickly becomes obvious that non-members of the covenant community are just as cursed by the Law as are the members. The Law was, in essence, a two-edged sword, cutting against both insiders and outsiders. While the curse is initially Jew-specific, in the end it is universal, for the Law was the means of entrance into the covenant community. It cursed Gentiles by defining them as outsiders. The insiders, on the other hand, those “from works of the Law” (including Jews, Judaizers, and proselytes), were cursed by that same Law for “not continuing in all the things written” in it. Therefore, Christ redeems all

been subject to the deleterious effects of the condemnatory curse pronounced by the Law.

After describing Christ's redemptive and vicarious (ὑπέρ) work in 13b,<sup>147</sup> Paul explains two implications of Christ's crucifixion. Because the curse of the Law has been removed through Christ's death, (1) Gentiles<sup>148</sup> may enjoy the blessing of the Abrahamic promise, and (2) Christ's work has unleashed the promise of the Spirit for all people, on the basis of faith.<sup>149</sup>

While many scholars staunchly maintain that the “us” who are redeemed from the curse of the Law in 13a is limited to Jews, there are multiple reasons why the first person pronoun also includes Gentiles. First, Gentiles are equally as capable of falling under the Law's curse by attempting to be justified by means of keeping the Law (referred to by Paul as ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου). This is precisely the scenario the Galatian (Gentile)

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when he redeems “us.” The Law's bane falls upon all, whether they choose to take up its yoke or not. The fact that Paul can make sweeping statements such as “the Law enclosed all under sin” provides further evidence that he believed the Law condemned all people, and not merely Jews (3:22; cf. Rom 3:19).

<sup>147</sup>To enter the academic debates swirling around the citation of Deut 21:23 would take this study too far afield from the task at hand. For the sake of simplicity, this study assumes that Paul viewed Christ's crucifixion as his becoming a curse in a representative capacity, in order that his people would not have to do so.

<sup>148</sup>In Paul's mind, Christ's death also allowed the blessing of Abraham to flow to believing Jews. His thematic statement in 2:15-17 (“because we know that a man is not justified from works of the Law . . . even we have believed . . . we ourselves are found to be sinners”) shows that he viewed all people, whether Jew or Gentile, to be in the same condition. All are “Gentile sinners.” Nevertheless, because his primary concern in this passage is to articulate how Gentiles (more specifically, Gentile Galatian believers) obtain the blessing of Abraham, the predominant emphasis falls upon non-Jews. The Galatians did not need to know about the implications of Christ's death for Jews, but what it could do for them as believing Gentiles. For this reason, Paul narrows the focus specifically to τὰ ἔθνη in 3:14a. He might just as easily and accurately have said, “in order that the blessing of Abraham might transpire for both Jews and Gentiles in Christ Jesus.” His focus upon τὰ ἔθνη here emphatically presses the point, “for the Gentiles *as Gentiles*.” He did not want the Gentiles to Judaize.

<sup>149</sup>A majority of scholars, even among those who believe “us” in 3:13 refers to Jews, conclude that the “we” of 3:14 refers to all believers, whether Jew or Gentile. Taking the minority view that “we” in 3:14 refers solely to Jews are Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 143, 154; idem, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, vol. 2: 863; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 236-40; John W. Taylor “The Eschatological Interdependence of Jews and Gentiles in Galatians,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 63 (2012): 303-6.

Because Paul has already established the pattern of faith's locus being Jesus Christ and his cross (2:16; 3:2, 5), “faith” here must also be faith directed toward the same (Wisdom, *Blessing for the Nations and the Curse of the Law*, 190-91).

believers were in danger of enacting, and is therefore the reason Paul broaches the subject of the curse. Second, because the curse falls upon *all* who do not do everything commanded in the Law, even those who do not attempt to obey the Law (which includes all Gentiles) fall under the curse. The Law's curse is universal.<sup>150</sup> Third, proponents of the view that the “us” in 3:13 refers solely to Jews struggle to supply a viable explanation for how Christ's redeeming Jews effects the blessing of Abraham for Gentiles.<sup>151</sup> Finally, from the perspective of the opponents' rhetoric, Deuteronomy 27:26 actually works better for their position than it does for Paul's. They were probably threatening the Gentile Galatians who had yet to submit to circumcision and other aspects of Law observance with the curse of this passage. Yet Paul turns their application on its head, declaring the curse not over those who are not “from works of the Law,” but over those who are.<sup>152</sup> On Paul's universal application of the curse, Das notes, “Paul appears to be obliterating the distinction between Jew and gentile in terms of the saving benefits in Christ.”<sup>153</sup>

When Christ came, he vicariously<sup>154</sup> endured the curse that the Law had

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<sup>150</sup>Πᾶς ὃς οὐκ ἐμμένει makes the universal nature of the curse apparent. In this regard, Silva (*NIDNTTE*, s.v. “ἄρᾶ,” 384), states, “Since both Jews and Gentiles who have come under the power of sin are not doers of the law (Rom 3:19), they remain under the curse.” Also Howard, *Paul*, 59; Martyn, *Galatians*, 311, 317.

<sup>151</sup>See Hays, *Galatians*, 261, who is forced to admit that “Paul does not explain the connection.” The most compelling explanation is the interpretation of the curse as the ongoing Jewish exile (see Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 146-54; Scott, “‘For as Many as are of the Works of the Law are Under a Curse’ (Galatians 3.10)”); Hafemann, “Paul and the Exile of Israel in Galatians 3-4”). The Jewish return from exile effected by Christ's death would then inaugurate an eschatological conversion of Gentiles into the people of God. Several reasons for rejecting this interpretation are given above in the excursus, “What is the Curse of the Law?”

<sup>152</sup>Das, *Galatians*, 331. This provides the best explanation for the apparent incongruity between 3:10a and the citation of Deut 27:26.

<sup>153</sup>*Ibid.*, 333.

<sup>154</sup>While ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν could be construed solely as “for us,” Paul's incorporative (esp. 2:19-20; 3:26-29) motifs in Galatians push to the conclusion that Christ's becoming a curse was both vicarious and incorporative. Thus, Wright is correct in saying, “Participation' does not of itself exclude 'substitution', however frequently that spurious 'either-or' is asserted.” See Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 153, n. 54;

pronounced upon all who did not and could not “abide in all the things written in the book of the Law.” Because the curse for non-abidance has been suffered by Christ, all who “through faith” are “in Christ Jesus” have thereby been redeemed from the curse which falls upon all due to their disobedience to the Law.

The next two statements in the sequence teach that the curse served in some way to restrain “the blessing of Abraham” and “the promise of the Spirit.” What is the nature of this hindrance brought by the Law's curse?

A popular recent interpretation suggests that the Law's curse was nationalistic, that the problem with the Law was that it separated Jews from Gentiles, thereby excluding Gentiles from the blessings of membership in Abraham's family.<sup>155</sup> Based solely upon 3:14a, which speaks of how the Gentiles benefit from the removal of the curse, this seems like a valid reading. However, 3:10-12 does not approach the Law's curse from this perspective. The curse does not fall upon those who are *not* “of works of the Law,” but upon those “who are of works of the Law.”<sup>156</sup> Therefore, it is difficult to see how Gentiles, who by this definition are not “of works of the Law,” fall under a curse of exclusion. The national separation interpretation of the curse cannot do justice to Paul's argument here, for if Paul were suggesting that the curse was Gentile separation/exclusion, he would not

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also Das, *Galatians*, 329-30.

<sup>155</sup>Howard, *Paul*, 61, speaks of the “discriminating suppression of the law.” See also Dunn, *Galatians*, 169.

<sup>156</sup>The explanation of Dunn, *Galatians*, 178, that “the effect of the 'from works of the law' attitude was to put those who held to it equally under the curse, outside the covenant” evinces the difficulty his nationalism view has in furnishing an explanation for 3:10. On the one hand, it is Gentiles who are under the curse of exclusion; on the other, it is also those Jews who believed Gentiles were excluded from the blessing of Abraham, “because it was a fatal misunderstanding of the fact that covenant status is 'from faith' first, foremost, and all the time.” Thus, Dunn immediately contradicts what he had said earlier in the paragraph, that “all this talk of 'curse' had to do with what prevented the blessing of Abraham coming to the Gentiles. So long as the 'outsider' was under a curse, the Gentiles could not participate in the blessing reserved for the 'insider'.”

argue also that Jews were accursed. Paul argues not that the Law curses because it excludes non-Jews, but that it curses because it restricts everyone from justification/life (3:11), the blessing of Abraham, and the promise of the Spirit (3:14).<sup>157</sup>

The first result of Christ's becoming a curse is “in order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus.” When Paul mentions τὰ ἔθνη here, he specifically addresses Gentiles, but his argument warrants the conclusion that Christ's curse-bearing likewise supplies the blessing of Abraham for Jewish believers. His theme statement in 2:15-18 intimates that even “Jews by nature” are, with respect to justification, on the same plane as “sinners from the Gentiles.” Submission to the Law can only render one a “transgressor.” 3:10-12 clarifies this situation by demonstrating that “as many as are of works of the Law are under a curse.” Apart from faith, they are not justified by God. They are, just as much as Gentiles, excluded from the covenant promises to Abraham, and therefore, “Gentile sinners.” Thus, when Paul says Christ's work allowed the blessing of Abraham to apply to the Gentiles, he also implied the return of that promise to “Jews by nature.”<sup>158</sup>

Why then, does Paul specifically say that the blessing comes about *for the Gentiles*? He could easily have omitted εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, leaving only “in order that the blessing of Abraham might come about in Christ Jesus.” He does this for two related

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<sup>157</sup>Dunn is certainly correct when he states that the Law distinguishes Jew from Gentile, “insider” from “outsider.” Where he errs is in concluding that this is what Paul means by the curse. Paul, of course, also believed that the Law distinguished Jew from Gentile, and even that it shut out Gentiles from the covenant community. This was a conviction he shared with the opposing teachers. Where they differed was in Paul's belief that the Law also shut out Jews (2:15-17; 3:22). Righteousness lay not in Judaizing and taking on the Law, but in faith in Christ. Put another way, righteousness was not a matter of being in Israel, as the opponents and Galatians believed, but of being “in Christ.”

<sup>158</sup>Cf. Mark A. Seifrid, “Scripture and Identity in Galatians,” in *All That the Prophets Have Declared: The Appropriation of Scripture in the Emergence of Christianity*, ed. Matthew R. Malcolm, (West Ryde, AUS: Paternoster, 2015), 13-14: “The ‘we’ who are Jews thus appear effectively as Gentiles, on account of their transgressions.” Also idem, *Christ, Our Righteousness*, 107.



reasons. First, because he is still speaking about the promise made to Abraham, “In you all the nations (τὰ ἔθνη) will be blessed” (3:8). Paul is signifying that Christ's becoming a curse on the cross has activated the international blessing promised to Abraham so long ago. Secondly, he is still applying the gospel in a Gentile context. The Gentile Galatians were not concerned with whether or not Jewish believers were heirs of Abraham; that much was assumed (as a result, Paul's statements regarding Jews becoming “transgressors” and being included “under the curse of the Law” up to this point would have shocked them). The very danger invoked by the false teachers was that of making a distinction between Jewish and Gentile believers such that Jewish believers were heirs of an additional blessing. By applying the blessing specifically to the Gentiles, Paul makes it clear that no such additional benefit accrues based upon ethnic categories. For this reason, Paul does not belabor the point of Jewish sinfulness and curse. He is writing to Gentiles, and his objective is to emphasize Gentile reception of the Abrahamic blessing.<sup>159</sup>

Often overlooked in the sea of discussion concerning the blessing of Abraham and the Gentiles is the fact that this blessing occurs “in Christ Jesus.” This phrase is supremely important for Paul's presentation, inasmuch as it sounds the death knell for the opponents' false gospel and the Galatians' misguided desire to come under the Law. For Paul, the blessing of Abraham can only come in one way—to and through the sole legitimate offspring of Abraham. He hinted at this in 3:8, when he quoted Genesis to the effect that all the nations would be blessed “in Abraham.” Yet his argument makes clear that he distinctly opposes the idea of the Gentiles Judaizing in any way for the purpose of

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<sup>159</sup>Williams, “Justification and the Spirit in Galatians,” 92; Martyn, *Galatians*, 322. Das, *Galatians*, 333, argues that Paul explicitly names the Gentiles as beneficiaries of the blessing of Abraham precisely because it “might easily be understood as the prerogative of the Jewish people.” This explains why Paul does not have to make such a clear statement with reference to the reception of the Spirit, because, as 3:1-5 indicates, this matter was not under debate.

becoming “sons of Abraham.” How then, may Gentiles receive the blessing of Abraham, if not by becoming Jews themselves? The blessing was, after all, promised to Abraham and to his offspring. Paul's answer, simply, is “in Christ Jesus.” While he leaves it unexplained here, this phrase points ahead to Paul's climactic statements in 3:26, 29—“*In Christ Jesus*, all of you are sons of God, through faith.” Furthermore, “if you are *of Christ* (εἰ δὲ ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ), then you are Abraham's offspring.”<sup>160</sup> These statements dovetail with 3:16, where Paul had excluded all—whether Jew or Gentile—from classification as “offspring of Abraham,” excepting one—“that is, Christ.” Thus, being “in Christ Jesus” is the only way for anyone, no matter their ethnicity or relation to the Law, to partake of the blessing of Abraham. They must identify with the sole true Seed of Abraham.<sup>161</sup>

The second implication of Christ's redemptive activity is “that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” The “we” (ἀπολάβωμεν) of 14b must refer to all, Jew and Gentile.<sup>162</sup> The curse which fell upon all (3:10-13) prevented all from receiving the promise of the Spirit. Neither group could receive this gift until after Christ had completed his curse-lifting work. The reception of the Spirit was reserved for the same eschatological time in which salvation would be extended to the Gentiles “through faith,” because only in this new eschatological era would redemption be made available through Christ.

Paul places the Gentiles' access to the blessing of Abraham into a tantalizing

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<sup>160</sup>“In Christ Jesus” probably also echoes “in your seed” from Gen 22:18.

<sup>161</sup>Consequently, Paul's exclusive statement in 3:16 corroborates the fact that he did not draw lines between the status of Jews and Gentiles, as it applied to obtaining the “blessing” of δικαιοσύνη. He believed that all—including Jews—were outside the seed of Abraham until they were incorporated “in Christ.”

<sup>162</sup>Contra Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 143, 154; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 236-40; Taylor, “The Eschatological Interdependence of Jews and Gentiles in Galatians,” 303.

grammatical parallelism with the reception of the Spirit by all through faith.<sup>163</sup> By relating in this manner the blessing of Abraham with the gift of the Spirit, Paul proves to the Gentile believers of Galatia that, before they had even considered the “works of the Law,” they had already become heirs of the Abrahamic blessing, and the proof of this is the presence of the eschatological Spirit in their lives.<sup>164</sup>

Thus, to summarize 3:13-14, Paul is making a universal argument in a highly contextualized situation. Christ became a curse to redeem everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, from this curse. The double, inseparable results of Christ's redemptive act are (1) everyone (Gentiles included!) may obtain the blessing of Abraham, and (2) everyone receives the Spirit. The reason many scholars confuse the identities of the recipients is that Paul directly applies the first result to the Galatian situation. Their concern was that

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<sup>163</sup>Scholars debate the relationship between the two ἵνα clauses in 3:14. Are they coordinate (as, e.g., Bruce, *Galatians*, 167-68; Fung, *Galatians*, 151; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 219) or subordinate (as in R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 123; Matera, *Galatians*, 120; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 240; Hays, *Galatians*, 262; Moo, *Galatians*, 215-16; implied by all proponents of the aforementioned exile interpretation [the preceding scholars vary in their interpretations of who Paul refers to by “we” in the second clause])? It seems difficult to say that the promise of the Spirit is subsequent to or dependent upon the Gentiles' reception of the blessing of Abraham (there are no grammatical markers to indicate either subordination or sequence), and this sequential reading depends too much upon the exile interpretation which was shown earlier to be unsatisfactory. What remains, therefore, is a coordinate parallelism, but one still must decide whether or not the clauses are in apposition one to another. A strict appositional reading (e.g., Schreiner, *Galatians*, 219) is doubtful inasmuch as Paul does not appear to be restricting the reception of the Spirit to the Gentiles; in that case one would expect the 3<sup>rd</sup> plural pronominal ending rather than the 1<sup>st</sup> plural ἀπολάβομεν. Furthermore, while Paul does equate “blessing” with δικαιοσύνη (3:8-9), he treats the Spirit as distinct from, yet concomitant to, the “blessing” (in the same way as the Spirit always goes together with δικαιοσύνη, yet the two are not the same). See 4:5-6 where the adoption and the Spirit are separate, yet integrally related results of redemption. As will be shown in chap. 5, υιοθεσία is proven by the Holy Spirit, just as Gentile reception of the blessing of Abraham is proven by the Spirit's work in their lives here in 3:14.

It is probably the case, therefore, that in 3:14 Paul uses a type of “constructive” synonymous parallelism in which the second clause echoes the first while at the same time building upon it (Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009], 393). In this case, the “blessing of Abraham” is so tied to the “promise of the Spirit” as to make the two indivisible, and the new information provided by the second clause is the surprising revelation that the Spirit whom the Galatians had already received (3:1-5) proved that they also had already become beneficiaries of the blessing of Abraham.

<sup>164</sup>“Paul 'proves' that the Galatians had already experienced the blessing connected with Abraham because they unquestionably had experienced the Spirit” (Wanamaker, “The Son and the Sons of God,” 315; Martyn, *Galatians*, 323).

they might receive the blessing of Abraham, which they mistakenly supposed only Jewish believers could obtain. Therefore, after beginning with a universal first-person plural pronoun to describe the beneficiaries of the redemption in Christ, Paul states that the blessing of Abraham obtains specifically for the Gentiles. Yet, when he proceeds to speak of the Spirit, he returns to the universal first-person perspective, because the Galatians needed no further proof that they had received the Spirit. Thus, Paul only alters the narrative of universal benefit in Christ in order to apply the one felt need to the Gentile audience. This does not change the fact that Paul also maintained that Jewish believers received the blessing of Abraham in exactly the same manner.<sup>165</sup>

### **Galatians 3:10-14 and Galatian Social Identity**

In Galatians 3:1-5, Paul created a contrast between “works of the Law” and ἀκοῆς πίστεως that prepares the reader for a further analysis of identities characterized by πίστις on the one hand, and by “works of the Law” on the other. In 3:6-9, Paul described the social group called οἱ ἐκ πίστεως, a group characterized by the identity marker of faith, who qualify as “sons of Abraham” and receive the benefit of justification/blessing. This leads naturally into 3:10-14, where he describes the “works of the Law” group.<sup>166</sup> Just as in the preceding paragraph, Paul focuses upon a specific group, describing their

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<sup>165</sup>Contra Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 864, who maintains correctly that both Jewish and Gentile believers receive the blessing of Abraham and the Spirit, yet believes that Paul preserves a distinction “between the two different routes by which these two groups came *into* the one, single family.” His argument overlooks the parallelism between the Gentile Galatians' reception of the Spirit in 3:1-5 and the “we” who receive the Spirit in 3:14. The efficacy and continuity of Paul's argument depends upon the fact that “we” in 3:14 include the Galatian believers, for the Spirit in 3:1-5 is the proof that Gentiles receive the blessing of Abraham in 3:6-9. Gal 3:13-14 simply brings the discussion full-circle.

<sup>166</sup>Although Paul uses the relative pronoun ὅσος instead of the expected article, ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου appears to follow the same group identifying pattern as οἱ ἐκ πίστεως (perhaps Paul used the relative pronoun in an effort to prevent his readers from concluding that he was referring specifically to Jews).

characteristic identity markers and summarizing the consequences of membership within the group.

Just as the οἱ ἐκ πίστεως group above was characterized by the identity marker of faith, the “works of the Law” group that Paul describes in 3:10-12 is characterized by its own identity marker, that of “works of the Law.” Paul quotes two OT passages which further describe the Law-based identity as one based upon “doing” (ποιεῖν, Deut 27:26; Lev 18:5).<sup>167</sup>

Membership within the “works of the Law” group brings its own unique set of results. Although the goal of those who identify with “the Law” and “works of the Law” is to attain Abrahamic descent (3:7, 29), justification (3:11) and life (3:12), Paul avers that members of this group are “under a curse” (3:10), “not justified before God” (3:11), and that their reliance upon “doing” is incompatible with the faith that brings life (3:11-12). Thus, although the Law offers the possibility of “living” by doing the things written in it, the tenor of the paragraph suggests that the “life” being spoken of is only truly accessible via faith (3:11).

Although the “works of the Law” group takes center stage in 3:10-14, Paul does mention a few other groups, along with their identity markers and membership consequences. First, there is the “righteous one” in Paul's citation of Habakkuk 2:4. Apart from being characterized by righteousness (in context, clearly referring to a “justified before God” status), this person carries the identity marker of πίστις, and receives the benefit of eschatological life. It is evident that this “righteous one” represents the οἱ ἐκ

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<sup>167</sup>In 3:10, Paul levies a criticism which applies specifically to those “from works of the Law.” In 3:11-12, his critique broadens to include “Law” in general. Because “the works of the Law” is a subset of the larger category of “Law,” any criticism of the Law applies equally to the “works of the Law.” Therefore, Paul can apply a critique of “the Law” in general in 3:11-12 to “as many as are of works of the Law.”

πίστεως group from the previous paragraph, and continues the contrast set up at the beginning of the chapter.

Next, 3:13-14 speaks (1) of an “us” who through Christ's becoming a curse have received redemption from the curse of the Law, (2) the “Gentiles” who “in Christ Jesus” experience the blessing of Abraham, and (3) a “we” who “through faith” receive the promise of the Holy Spirit. Three aspects of these verses demand attention. First, the fact that Gentiles receive the Abrahamic blessing shows once again that ethnicity does not determine membership in this family. Second, notice that in 14a where one might have expected πίστις as the criterion, Paul has said that this blessing transpires “in Christ Jesus.” Thus, Paul adds a new identity marker—being “in Christ”—which functions in the same manner as being ἐκ πίστεως. Finally, Paul speaks of a new benefit that comes to those who have faith—reception of the Holy Spirit.

Once again, Paul speaks of a dominant ingroup—οἱ ἐκ πίστεως—to whom considerable benefits accrue as a result of their character trait of faith. This ingroup is not only an ἐκ πίστεως group; they are also an ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ group. Finally, additional group benefits are spoken of—redemption from the Law's curse and reception of the Holy Spirit.

When Paul speaks of οἱ ἐκ πίστεως and ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, he is using ingroup/outgroup language. The ingroup is demarcated by their πίστις, related to Abraham as an ancestral prototype, and receives justification, blessing, life, and the Holy Spirit. The outgroup, on the other hand, are identified by their reliance upon (particular aspects of) Law observance for justification and life. Perhaps they also believed that their practice of “works of the Law” constituted them descendants of Abraham. That Paul pits these two groups against one another in such a way that the two are non-overlapping and distinct is

clear from the way he began the chapter: “did you receive the Spirit from works of the Law or from a message with faith?” The “or” makes it clear that there is only one means of receiving the Spirit, which Paul later relates inseparably to “righteousness,” “life,” and “blessing.”<sup>168</sup>

These two identity groups are eschatological. This is clear because the field of contestation is itself distinctly eschatological. That the two groups are two rival paths to obtaining the Spirit (3:2-5, 14), δικαιοσύνη (3:6, 8, 11), and “life” (3:11, 12) all point in this direction.<sup>169</sup> Furthermore, the Messiah himself is the one who provided redemption, opening up the blessing of Abraham and the promise of the Spirit. It is only “in Christ” that this transpires.

A final aspect of SIT that enhances our understanding of this passage is that of legitimation, or positive distinctiveness. Paul creates a positive identity for the οἱ ἐκ πίστεως ingroup. Their benefits include Abrahamic sonship, blessing, δικαιοσύνη, life, and the Holy Spirit. In contrast, Paul describes a terrible and undesirable scenario for those of the primary outgroup—ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου. They are under a curse, unjustified, and in dire need of redemption. Even if they did obey the Law in its entirety—which 3:10 makes clear they do not—they still would not attain justification and life, for the Law principle of “doing” cannot coexist with the principle of faith. This positive legitimation

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<sup>168</sup>The restrictive οὗτοι in 3:7, the repeated οἱ ἐκ pattern to delineate social groupings, and the γάρ in 3:10a all contribute to this contrast of two distinct groups. On this see the exegesis above.

<sup>169</sup>It is for this reason that Paul can take what were originally physical and national promises and curses for Israel, and apply them to the Galatian situation. While Abraham was promised a large progeny and an inheritance of land, Paul views these promise-blessings typologically. From an eschatological perspective, the Abrahamic blessing of progeny becomes a pan-national family, and the land promise becomes δικαιοσύνη, life, and the Spirit (Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, 132, identifies the land promise with the Spirit). Likewise, the covenant curses of Deuteronomy are eschatologized into exclusion from Abraham's family (whether one is a Jew or Gentile), a lack of δικαιοσύνη, no eschatological life, and no Spirit.

would serve to discourage the Gentile Galatians from attempting to identify with the “from works of the Law” group.

One final note should be mentioned regarding the Holy Spirit. The Spirit functions in 3:1-5 as the fundamental proof of the Galatians' membership within the ingroup. That Paul mentions the Spirit again in 3:14 as the final effect of the redemption brought by Jesus is no accident. He needs them to understand that because they have the Spirit, they have all the other benefits of membership as well. In this sense, the reception of the Spirit serves like a rite of passage through which believers pass upon their entry into the group.<sup>170</sup> After receiving the Spirit, believers experience his ongoing presence, which serves as a persistent marker of identity for the “in Christ”/“sons of Abraham” ingroup. In Paul's view, having the Spirit is the principal evidence to distinguish members of the “in Christ group.”

### Summary

The preceding chapter of this study showed how Paul's thesis statement in Galatians 2:15-21 established an eschatological antithesis between “faith” and “works of the Law.” Being on the correct side of this juxtaposition is a matter of life or death, justification or condemnation.

In Galatians 3:1-14, Paul builds upon this foundation by describing individuals who identify with either of these principal identity markers as members of two social groups—the “from faith” group, and the “from works of the Law” group. These two groups are distinct and non-overlapping; to identify with one group is necessarily to exclude oneself from the other. Membership within one or the other of these groups is not

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<sup>170</sup>Paul will refer to a related “rite of passage” experience in 3:27—their baptism into Christ.



determined by one's ethnicity; being a Jew or a Gentile is not what determines inclusion, because πίστις is the sole differentiating factor. Contrary to “the other gospel” which was being propagated in Galatia, true Abrahamic descent, which qualifies people for the blessing of Abraham and promise of inheritance, derives not from adherence to “works of the Law,” but from membership within the “from faith” group instead. Finally, the two groups are eschatological; membership within one or the other means the difference between blessing and curse, life and death, justification or condemnation, and possession or lack of the Holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER 4

### EXEGESIS OF GALATIANS 3:15-29

#### **Galatians 3:15-18—Separating the Law from the Promise**

In Galatians 3:15-18, Paul advances the argument that relying upon the Law for the Abrahamic inheritance is a futile endeavor. The reason for this is that the Law cannot replace the promise God made to Abraham. Because the inheritance was a part of the promise God made to Abraham, it is impossible for the Law, because it is completely separate from that promise, to usurp that role.<sup>1</sup> If, hypothetically speaking, inheritance came from the Law, then it could not come from the promise to Abraham (3:18; cf. 2:21; 3:21). Paul bases this conclusion upon the analogy of a human “covenant.”<sup>2</sup> Because “no

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<sup>1</sup>The point of Paul's “430 years later” comment is not to make an argument about “salvation-history,” but to separate the giving of the Law from the promise in such a way that it would be impossible to regard it as an additional “codicil” to the promise (cf. Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1979], 159; Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998], 243). To argue solely based upon chronological precedence that the Law could not add to the promise would have been a *non sequitur*. If it were true that precedence alone precluded supplementation, then the concept of adding a codicil would not have been available for Paul's (and his opponents') argumentation.

This is also the point of the angel and mediator arguments in 3:19-20. Because God and Abraham were not involved in the institution of the Law, the Law could not possibly be construed as a condition added to the promise.

<sup>2</sup>Richard N. Longenecker (*Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1990], 127), correctly notes that the analogy here is an argument from the lesser to the greater. Because Paul employs an analogy (which is probably what he means by *κατὰ ἄνθρωπον λέγω*, although the phrase is notoriously difficult), *διαθήκη* in 3:15 does not necessarily have to mean “covenant.” This explains why many scholars believe he simply refers to a “will” or “testament” (Betz, *Galatians*, 155; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982], 169-70; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 128; Frank J. Matera, *Galatians*, Sacra Pagina [Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992], 126; J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, The Anchor Bible [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997], 338; Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary*, New Testament Library [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011], 219;

one” adds a codicil to or revokes a previously ratified contract, neither could anyone revoke, replace, or add new stipulations to the promises God made to Abraham.<sup>3</sup>

A second case made by Paul in 3:15-18 is the exclusivity of the promise. “No one adds a codicil to (οὐδεὶς ἐπιδιατάσσεται) an already-effected contract,” he argues. With the *hapax legomenon* ἐπιδιατάσσομαι, Paul communicates that the Law, which not only does not negate or replace the promise, is incapable even of supplementing it. When the Mosaic Law arrived, it did not add a single stipulation to the promise-covenant that God had made earlier with Abraham.

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James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black's New Testament Commentaries [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011], 182).

Nevertheless, because Paul clearly refers to God's covenant with Abraham using the same word in 3:17, and because every other instance of διαθήκη in Paul means “covenant,” διαθήκη likely means “covenant” in 3:15 as well. This conclusion is bolstered by the fact that διαθήκη in the LXX almost exclusively means “covenant,” that Paul quotes the LXX in 3:16, and that twice in that same Abraham narrative the term διαθήκη, with the meaning “covenant,” coincides with the phrase τῷ σπέρματι (Gen 15:18; 17:19). Furthermore, it was *not* true that wills or testaments were unalterable, yet Paul affirms without caveat that κεκυρωμένην διαθήκην οὐδεὶς ἀθετεῖ. However, it was the case that covenants were unalterable (so Scott Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009], 259-60). Therefore, those who conclude that διαθήκη means “covenant” in Gal 3:15 appear to be on solid ground (e.g., John J. Hughes, “Hebrews IX 15ff. and Galatians III 15ff.: A Study in Covenant Practice and Procedure,” *Novum Testamentum* 21 (1979): 66-91; Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 256-59; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010], 227). In response to many scholars who argue that διαθήκη in 3:15 means “testament,” the use of “legal” terms (κυρώω, ἀθετέω, ἐπιδιατάσσομαι) cannot tip the scales in favor of either reading. The fact that κυρώω cognates recur twice in 3:17 (προκυρώω, ἀκυρώω) in reference to Abraham's covenant nullifies such an argument.

Paul's point in the paragraph is not to dissociate the term διαθήκη from the Law (for why would he then refer to the Law as a “covenant” later, in 4:24?), but to show that God's *promise-covenant* with Abraham could not be superseded or altered by his *Law-covenant* through Moses (contra Martyn, *Galatians*, 337). The two were discrete and dissimilar dispensations.

Outside of this pericope, Paul is reticent to refer to God's dealings with Abraham by the term διαθήκη. The second of the two διαθήκαι in 4:24 is never clearly identified with Abraham; it is, in fact, implied that this covenant should be identified with Sarah, and that it “corresponds” (συστοιχεῖ) with the “Jerusalem above.” The apocalyptic terminology suggests that Paul refers not to a covenant with Abraham per se, but with the “New Covenant” (or perhaps, the “new creation,” cf. 6:15) inaugurated with Christ's work (cf. 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; although it is doubtful that Paul would make a sharp distinction between the promise to Abraham and the so-called “New Covenant,” since he associates the “New Covenant” sign of the outpouring of the Spirit with the Abrahamic blessing [3:2-9, 14]). The plural διαθήκαι in Rom 9:4 is ambiguous. Eph 2:12 comes tantalizingly close with its διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, but never names Abraham.

<sup>3</sup>In the analogy, it is clear that the “previously ratified covenant” equates to the “promises made to Abraham and to his seed.” Likewise, “no one nullifies or adds a codicil” alludes to the inauguration of “the Law, which came 430 years later,” and the fact that it “does not annul so as to void the promise.”

This argument about “adding a codicil” is Paul's direct retort to the opposing teachers' presentation of the Law (or, at least, the “works of the Law”) as a necessary addition to the promise. It is unlikely that the teachers believed the Law canceled or replaced the promise; rather, they saw the Law as a legitimate addendum to it. Paul's analogy, however, clarifies that the Law should not be perceived in this way.

Paul makes an additional statement in this paragraph that has confounded interpreters. In saying, “It does not say, 'and to seeds,' as over many, but as over one: 'and to your seed,' who is Christ,” Paul effectively excludes all people, save two, from the inheritance promised to Abraham.<sup>4</sup> Although often treated as tangential,<sup>5</sup> this statement applies directly to the ongoing theological dispute in Galatia. The opposing teachers were upsetting the Galatian Christ-believers by telling them that they needed to submit to certain “works of the Law” in order to become full members of the covenant and qualify for the blessing of inheritance.<sup>6</sup> They built their argument around the premise that one needed to be an “offspring” of Abraham in order to obtain the inheritance (Gen 12:7;

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<sup>4</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 157; Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 106-7; de Boer, *Galatians*, 223.

<sup>5</sup>Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 229, calls it “tangential to Paul's focus in this paragraph.” A. Andrew Das, *Galatians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014), 351, calls it an “apparent interruption.”

Adding to the problem, Paul's argument regarding the singular τῷ σπέρματι rather than plural τοῖς σπέρμασιν recipients of the promises distracts many scholars, who entirely neglect to address the way in which 3:16 fits into the immediate context. Instead, most simply affirm that Paul is looking ahead to the climax in 3:29.

<sup>6</sup>R. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 107; G. Walter Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1989), 127; Jeffrey D. Siker, *Disinheriting Paul: Abraham in Early Christian Controversy* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 39; Martyn, *Galatians*, 343-44; de Boer, *Galatians*, 222-23. Betz, *Galatians*, 157, says Paul “rejects the traditional interpretation,” which he describes as “the heirs include the Jews, and to a certain degree, the proselytes.” Unlike the other scholars cited in this note, Betz does not ascribe this teaching to the opponents in Galatia.

13:15; 15:18; 17:8).<sup>7</sup> According to the other teachers, one could attain this “offspring” status in one of two ways: physical descent from Abraham (see 2:15, φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι), or Judaizing (see 2:14, Ἰουδαΐζειν). Because the Galatian believers were (at least predominantly) Gentiles, the second option was the one the teachers were pressing upon them. This took the form of shouldering “works of the Law,” which most likely refers at minimum to circumcision, observance of certain food laws, and following the Jewish calendar (2:3-5, 11-14; 4:10; 5:2-5; 6:12-15)—in short, to “live like a Jew” (2:14, Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῆν).

In response to the opposing teachers' contention that Judaizing was the only option for Gentile believers who desired to qualify for the inheritance of Abraham, Paul averred that only two people in history qualified for it: Abraham himself, and his singular seed, who Paul identifies, not as Isaac, but as Christ. Not only would Judaizing fail to earn the inheritance; even direct physical descent from Abraham could not do so.

This statement would have been startling and controversial among not only the Jews of Paul's day, but also among his Gentile recipients. In narrowing the outflow of the promises to a mere two people—Abraham and his sole seed, Christ—Paul effectively excludes both Jewish descendants of Abraham and proselytes from the promises!<sup>8</sup>

Scholars have struggled to grasp Paul's “seed” argument in 3:16. Particularly problematic is the fact that Paul insists upon the singularity of the σπέρματι in his quote

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<sup>7</sup>In the context of the Genesis narrative, the “inheritance” referred to the land of Canaan (Gen 15:7; 28:4). For Paul and probably also the opposing teachers, the referent had changed (Gal 5:21; Rom 4:13; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 15:50; cf. Eph 5:5; Titus 3:7). The way that Paul transitions from speaking of the promise providing inheritance in Gal 3:18 to the provision of life and righteousness in 3:21-22 demonstrates that Paul saw justification and eschatological life as at least a part of the inheritance.

<sup>8</sup>Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 129.

of Genesis.<sup>9</sup> Although grammatically singular, the term “seed” (σπέρμα) regularly functions as a collective term.<sup>10</sup> Was Paul, then, misrepresenting the original Genesis texts in which the Lord made the land promise not simply to Abraham and Isaac, but to all their progeny?

One potential solution to the difficulty lies in the suggestion that Paul relies upon a rabbinic midrash which uses the term “seed” to refer specifically to Isaac. As David Daube points out, Paul may have been familiar with a rabbinic analysis of Genesis 15:13 which attempted to harmonize its “400 years” with the “430 years” of Exodus 12:40. Some rabbis argued that the 430 year period began with God's promise to Abraham, whereas the 400 years began with the birth of Isaac (the rabbis purported a 30 year interval between the covenant with Abraham and Isaac's birth). The upshot of the rabbis' interpretation was that Genesis 15:13 was broken into two prophecies—one which portrayed Isaac (τὸ σπέρμα σου as a specific singular) as “a stranger in a land not his own,” and another which represented all Israel as being enslaved, ill-treated, and humbled for 400 years. As support for the individual reading of “seed,” the rabbis appealed to Genesis 21:12—“in Isaac will your seed be called.” This rabbinic midrash thus supplied a precedent for Paul to refer to Abraham's σπέρμα as an individual rather than as an entire

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<sup>9</sup>Paul's quote echoes a refrain that resonates throughout the Abraham narrative (Gen 12:7; 13:15; 15:18; 17:8; 24:7; cf. 17:19), although if καί is included, the possibilities of a direct quote are narrowed to Gen 13:15; 17:8; 24:7. It is more likely that Paul refers to the entire complex of promises to Abraham and his seed than that he refers to a single specific text. Das, *Galatians*, 350, suggests that Paul's surprising use of the plural ἐπαγγελία in 3:16 is explained by the multiple instances of the same promise in Genesis. Each instance of the phrase τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ occurs in the context of the promise to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his progeny.

<sup>10</sup>R. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 106, describes the phenomenon of the “targumic plural”: “The Targums, in fact, take this corporate understanding of the promise so much for granted that they uniformly and unequivocally cast the expression into the plural: 'and to your sons.'”

posterity.<sup>11</sup>

A second defense of Paul's argument avers that Paul depends upon the inherent ambiguity of the term "seed."<sup>12</sup> Because it is grammatically singular, yet often refers to a collective whole, Paul makes a "rhetorical play" on the term.<sup>13</sup> The collective use of σπέρμα in 3:29 demonstrates Paul's familiarity with the traditional use of the word. Furthermore, the type of argument Paul uses is consistent with certain rabbinic exegetical methods of that time.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, a "rhetorical play" would certainly not win a debate against the opponents in Galatia. Just because σπέρμα *can* refer to a single person doesn't mean that it *does* in the Genesis text(s) to which Paul refers. Since Paul is attempting to refute the opponents' argument regarding Abrahamic ancestry and the recipients of the promises, his argument depends upon the fact that σπέρμα demonstrably refers to an individual.<sup>15</sup> Otherwise, the opponents could pull the rug from under Paul's argument by demonstrating that σπέρμα refers to Abraham's posterity as a whole (excluding, of course,

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<sup>11</sup>David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 440.

<sup>12</sup>Siker, *Disinheriting Paul*, 39; Dunn, *Galatians*, 184; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 244.

<sup>13</sup>This argument can be bolstered by several examples of the individual use of σπέρμα, e.g., Gen 3:15; 4:25; 21:12, 13; 22:17; 24:60; 1 Sam 1:11; 2 Sam 7:12. On this, see especially Jack Collins, "A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman's Seed Singular or Plural?," *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 (1997): 139-48; T. Desmond Alexander, "Further Observations on the Term 'Seed' in Genesis," *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 (1997): 363-67.

<sup>14</sup>E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), 70; Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, 438-44; Roy A. Harrisville, *The Figure of Abraham in the Epistles of St. Paul: In the Footsteps of Abraham* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 12; Dunn, *Galatians*, 184; Moisés Silva, "Galatians," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 807; Moo, *Galatians*, 229. Cf. m. Šabb. 9:2; Gen. Rab. 22:9.

<sup>15</sup>Ellis's comments (*Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, 71) are apropos: "If this is Paul's argument, then it must be confessed that its baseless caprice out-rabbis the rabbis. . . . It puts Paul in the role of a charlatan fooling his audience with a bit of chicanery. But Paul was neither naïve nor deceitful."

the lines of Ishmael and Esau).<sup>16</sup>

Another solution sees Paul following a typological trajectory that was already in motion within the OT itself. This trajectory begins at Genesis 3:15, with the promise of a “seed” of Eve who would defeat the “seed” of the Serpent. It continues through the promises to Abraham and his “seed,” and on to the promises regarding a successor to the Davidic throne in 2 Samuel 7:12. As Schreiner explains,

Paul reads the Genesis promises in light of the story line of the OT, which narrows the promise down to a son of David and finds its fulfillment in the one man, Jesus of Nazareth. The “offspring” texts should be interpreted, then, in terms of corporate representation. Jesus is *the representative* offspring of Abraham and David and the fulfillment of the original redemptive promise in Gen 3:15.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, viewing the Abrahamic promises through the lens of typology and from the perspective of eschatological fulfillment, Paul sees Christ as the consummation of the “seed” motif throughout the entire OT.<sup>18</sup>

A key aspect of this interpretation is the concept of corporate solidarity, in which an entire group is represented by one member.<sup>19</sup> Just as King David individually could represent the entire nation of Israel, so also could his eschatological “seed,” Jesus the Messiah, represent the eschatological community of faith—all those who have been

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<sup>16</sup>Martyn, *Galatians*, 340. Some scholars deduce that the opponents used the “and to your seed” passages in Genesis to convince the Galatian believers that they must Judaize in order to qualify for the inheritance. Cf. R. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 107; de Boer, *Galatians*, 223.

<sup>17</sup>Schreiner, *Galatians*, 230, italics original. Also Jason S. DeRouchie and Jason C. Meyer, “Christ or Family as the ‘Seed’ of Promise? An Evaluation of N. T. Wright on Galatians 3:16,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 14 (2010): 40.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. also Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” 363-67; James M. Hamilton, “The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 58 (2007): 253-73.

<sup>19</sup>Ellis, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament*, 72; Harrisville, *The Figure of Abraham in the Epistles of St. Paul*, 12-13; R. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 107; Martyn, *Galatians*, 340; Bruce W. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham’s God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 133; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 244; S. M. Baugh, “Galatians 3:20 and the Covenant of Redemption,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 66 (2004): 59; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 229; de Boer, *Galatians*, 223.



incorporated into him by faith. Paul's use of this “many in the one” approach in 3:29 to describe how those who are “of Christ” are “seed of Abraham” lends support the idea that this is his approach in 3:16 as well.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, because Paul does not refer to believers' incorporation into Christ until 3:26, this idea should not simply be read into 3:16. Taking Paul's argument in 3:16 at face value leads to the conclusion that he aimed to limit the effect of the promise to Abraham and his “seed.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, 3:29's use of corporate σπέρμα should not be permitted to nullify Paul's insistence against “many” (ὡς ἐπὶ πολλῶν) offspring in 3:16.

Scholars suggest a variety of typological readings to explain Paul's argument here. For some, the term “seed” evokes God's covenant with David regarding his posterity (2 Sam 7:12-16). In context, the passage refers specifically to a singular seed, Solomon (7:13, “and he will build for me a house for my name”), yet Jewish tradition interpreted the passage messianically as well.<sup>22</sup> Richard Hays has advanced the notion that because 2 Samuel 7:12 uses the term “seed” to refer to a future messianic leader, it “authorizes, by

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<sup>20</sup>N. T. Wright has argued for an idiosyncratic approach to the corporate solidarity interpretation. In *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ And The Law In Pauline Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 1993), 162-68, Wright suggests that the contrast between a plurality and singularity of “seed” refers not to individuals, but to families or nations. According to this reading, the problem with the Law is that it creates multiple families rather than the single family promised to Abraham, with the effect that the Law would “undercut the promise” because it would create two family lines. Wright's interpretation has several weaknesses. First, it does not recognize that this argument would actually help the Judaizing mission of the opposing teachers, since they could argue in response that the only way to create a single family is for all who desire to become Abraham's offspring to Judaize by observing “works of the Law.” Secondly, Wright's reading interprets the term σπέρμα with the unlikely meaning of “nation,” a reading with scant evidence to support it. Finally, Wright's interpretation assumes that the Galatian audience would recognize that Paul was using the term Χριστός to represent an entire nation of people rather than the single individual Jesus Christ. Wright reaches this conclusion by reading backwards from 3:29, yet he ignores the closer reference to σπέρμα in 3:19, which clearly refers to the historical arrival of Jesus, and cannot refer to a family. For this and other criticisms of Wright's interpretation, see DeRouchie and Meyer, “Christ or Family as the 'Seed' of Promise?,” 36-48.

<sup>21</sup>Das, *Galatians*, 352, states: “The emphatically singular Seed in 3:16 is a rhetorical move that denies the collective interpretation at this stage of the developing argument.” Contra Dunn, *Galatians*, 185; de Boer, *Galatians*, 223.

<sup>22</sup>E.g., 4QFlor 1:10-11.

means of *gezerah shawah*, a messianic reading of other promissory texts in which the key word *seed* appears,” such as the “seed of Abraham” passages in Genesis.<sup>23</sup> Such a reading would also authorize other prominent “seed” passages to be brought into the messianic equation as well, most notably Genesis 3:15.<sup>24</sup>

Hays is on the right path in seeing Paul performing a “christocentric exposition” of the Abrahamic “and to your seed” promise. It appears, however, that the connection Paul makes is even tighter than a single-word link by way of 2 Samuel 7:12. As mentioned above, Genesis 3:15 had already created a much earlier precedent for a messianic figure referred to by the singular use of σπέρμα.<sup>25</sup> Most importantly for Galatians 3:16 is a probable connection between Paul's individual σπέρμα and references to Isaac in the Genesis narrative using the same term.

Several lines of evidence suggest that Paul followed an Isaac-Christ typology in Galatians 3:16. First, the Genesis narrative sometimes refers to Isaac with an individual use of σπέρμα (Gen 21:12; 22:17). This detail is suggestive, given Paul's stringent insistence that “seed” in his citation refers to an individual rather than a collective. A second line of evidence is that Genesis 21 separates two lines of Abraham's “seed,” a fact upon which Paul capitalizes later in Galatians (4:21-31; cf. Rom. 9:7-9).<sup>26</sup> Rather than both of Abraham's sons being his collective σπέρμα, Isaac and Ishmael become two

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<sup>23</sup>Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 85; also Nils Alstrup Dahl, *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1977), 130.

<sup>24</sup>Dahl, *Studies in Paul*, 130-31, n. 12, suggests that the LXX translator(s) interpreted Gen 3:15 messianically, because it uses the masculine singular personal pronoun αὐτός.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Collins, “A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15),” 145; Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” 367; Hamilton, “The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham,” 260-62; DeRouchie and Meyer, “Christ or Family as the ‘Seed’ of Promise?,” 40.

<sup>26</sup>Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 263.

discrete “seed” of Abraham. Genesis 21:12-13 states: “In Isaac will a seed (σπέρμα) be called to you. But as for the son of this slave-girl, I will make him into a great nation, for he is your seed (σπέρμα).” The next time the term σπέρμα comes up in the Genesis narrative, Ishmael is not in the picture (22:17). A third clue from the Genesis narrative is that the “seed” of Abraham in 22:17 “will inherit the gates of his enemies.” This vision of a σπέρμα conquering his enemies broadens the link between the “seed” of Abraham and the “seed” of Eve in 3:15.<sup>27</sup>

The final two lines of evidence aver that Paul had already begun alluding to the Isaac narrative in 3:13-14. First, in 3:13, when Paul quotes Deuteronomy 21:23 (“cursed is everyone who has been hanged upon wood [ἐπὶ ξύλου]”) to refer to Christ, there may be an echo of the Aqedah, where Abraham places Isaac “over the woods” (ἐπάνω τῶν ξύλων, Gen 22:9).<sup>28</sup> Early Christians regularly referred to Christ's crucifixion with a ξύλον motif.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, Paul echoes the Aqedah narrative elsewhere in reference to Christ's death (Rom. 8:32). Finally, in 3:14 there is a probable allusion to Genesis 22:18. First, εἰς τὰ ἔθνη echoes πάντα τὰ ἔθνη in the Genesis passage.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, ἐν Χριστῷ

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<sup>27</sup>See the study of Collins, “A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15),” 139-48, which demonstrates that the LXX translator of Gen 3:15 was consistent with the intent of the Hebrew original in referring to a specific individual. Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term 'Seed' in Genesis,” 367, builds upon Collins' study, noting that Gen 22:17-18 and 24:60 continue a trajectory in which singular instances of σπέρμα envision “a unique line of descendants” that would eventually lead to the promised ruler who would “conquer his enemies and mediate God's blessing to the nations of the earth.”

<sup>28</sup>Wilcox, “‘Upon the Tree’—Deut 21:22-23 in the New Testament,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (1977): 98; Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 254. Jewish exegetes had already connected Deut 21:23 with crucifixion. Cf. Gen. Rab. 56:4, which likens Isaac's carrying of the wood for the sacrifice to one who carries his cross upon his shoulder.

<sup>29</sup>Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; 1 Pet 2:24; Barn. 5:13; Tertullian, *Adv. Jud.* 10:6.

<sup>30</sup>It was argued in chap. 3 that Gal 3:8 amalgamates Gen 12:3 and 18:18. Paul does not evoke the Isaac narrative at that point, because there he emphasizes Abraham's faith. It is not until a few verses later, when he speaks of Christ, that he introduces the Isaac motif.

Ἰησοῦ evokes ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου from Genesis.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, it is perfectly reasonable for Paul, who probably viewed Isaac as a type of Jesus (cf. Rom 8:32), to see the promises to Abraham's seed as referring to Jesus, a singular “seed” of Abraham (cf. Gen 21:12; 22:17; Rom 9:6-8). In summary, Paul is able to do this for three reasons. First, there is evidence that Jewish tradition before Paul saw a messianic motif within some of the OT “seed” passages, especially Genesis 3:15 and 2 Samuel 7:12. This motif legitimizes (via *gezerah shawah*) a messianic reading of the “and to your seed” passages in Genesis as well. Secondly, the individual uses of σπέρμα to refer to Isaac in Genesis 21:12; 22:17 enable Paul to argue for the individuality of the “seed” in the promise passages (Gen 13:15; 17:8; 24:7). Finally, because Paul writes from an eschatological—that is to say, post-cross and resurrection of Christ—perspective, he is able to interpret the Scriptures through a more explicitly Christological lens. The time of fulfillment has come, and for those with eyes to see, the Scriptures testify about Christ (cf. Jn 5:39).

This Isaac-Christ typology is consistent with the interpretation presented above—that Paul wanted to narrow down the recipients of the promise—and fits well with the situation in Galatia. By typologically applying God's promise to Abraham's “seed” to a single eschatologically climactic Seed—Jesus—Paul could effectively refute the heresy that applied the promises of Abraham solely to those who Judaized or were Jews by natural descent.

Up to this point, then, Paul has used at least three arguments to demonstrate to the Galatians the futility of turning to the Law for δικαιοσύνη. First, he showed that the

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<sup>31</sup>Dahl, *Studies in Paul*, 131; Wilcox, “Upon the Tree,” 96-97; Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 255.

Galatians had already received the Spirit by πίστις, without “works of the Law” (3:1-5). This reality was corroborated by the scriptural example of Abraham, who received righteousness by believing, so that Abraham is the premier exemplar of one who receives God's blessing through faith alone.

In the second argument, Paul showed that righteousness and life derive from faith, and therefore not by “works of the Law” (3:6-14). On the contrary, the Law only brings a curse. The Scriptures attest to the fact that righteousness is based upon faith, but that the Law is not based upon faith, and curses those who do not completely obey. In support of this argument is the fact that Christ died as a curse for the purpose of redeeming Jews and Gentiles alike from the curse of the Law, so that Abraham's blessing and the promised Spirit are received in Christ Jesus and through faith.

In the third argument, Paul points to the separation of the promise which God made to Abraham from the Law (3:15-18). The Law, because it was distinct from the promise, had no ability to unseat or supplement the covenant God made with Abraham.

### **Galatians 3:19-20—Why the Law?**

The preceding paragraph (3:15-18) brought two immediate concerns to the fore. First, if Paul has excluded all (save Abraham and Christ) from the inheritance, then how may anyone else, Jew or Gentile, obtain it? This question Paul will address in 3:26-29. Secondly, if the Law is not meant—as the rival teachers have been arguing—to supply the inheritance, then why does it exist at all?<sup>32</sup> Thus, Paul turns in 3:19 to attend to the question of the Law's purpose.

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<sup>32</sup>Daniel B. Wallace, “Galatians 3:19-20: A Crux Interpretum for Paul's View of the Law,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990): 232, observes, “in his diatribe toward the Judaizers, he must somehow sense that he has argued effectively against the law's *raison d' être*.”

Employing the diatribe style of rhetoric, Paul begins 3:19 with the trenchant inquiry, “Why, then, the Law?” His response to this question appears excruciatingly vague, so each part requires careful attention. First, Paul affirms that the Law “was added for reason of transgressions.”<sup>33</sup> At this point in Paul's exposition, almost nothing may be said for certain regarding the meaning of this obscure statement; he does not explain his meaning until 3:22-23, but it will be necessary to determine its meaning before moving on.

### **Excursus: Παραβάσεων Χάριν**

Five major interpretations of παραβάσεων χάριν are representative of the views of most scholars.<sup>34</sup> They are as follows: (1) the Law “restrains” people from committing transgressions,<sup>35</sup> (2) the Law provides the means of atonement for transgressions,<sup>36</sup> (3) the Law reveals transgressions,<sup>37</sup> (4) the Law “turns sin into” transgressions,<sup>38</sup> and (5) the

<sup>33</sup>Technically, this is the only part of 3:19 in which Paul responds to the question of “Why?” (τί). The two clauses which follow provide supplemental and supportive information.

<sup>34</sup>This list is meant to be broadly representative of the current discussion. For a more exhaustive enumeration, see Das, *Galatians*, 358-61.

<sup>35</sup>David J. Lull, “‘The Law Was Our Pedagogue’: A Study in Galatians 3:19-25,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105 (1986): 485; Joseph P. Braswell, “‘The Blessing of Abraham’ versus ‘the Curse of the Law’: Another Look at Galatians 3:10-13,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991): 85; Daniel Boyarin, “Was Paul an ‘Anti-Semite’? A Reading of Galatians 3-4,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 47 (1993): 56; Peter Oakes, *Galatians*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 122-23.

<sup>36</sup>Dunn, *Galatians*, 189-90.

<sup>37</sup>Richard N. Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25 (1982): 58-60; Matera, *Galatians*, 128, 132; Sam Tsang, *From Slaves to Sons: A New Rhetoric Analysis on Paul's Slave Metaphors in His Letter to the Galatians* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005), 106; Marion L. Soards and Darrell J. Pursiful, *Galatians*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2015), 148.

<sup>38</sup>Brendan Byrne, *Sons of God—Seed of Abraham: A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1979), 161; Wallace, “Galatians 3:19-20,” 236; Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 172; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 256; William B. Barclay, “The Law and the Promise: God's Covenant with Abraham in Pauline Perspective,” in *Perspectives on Our Father Abraham: Essays in Honor of Marvin R. Wilson*, ed. Steven A. Hunt (Grand

Law incites transgressions.<sup>39</sup>

Several statements within the broader context of 3:19-24 illuminate the relationship of the Law to transgressions.<sup>40</sup> First, the Law does not work against God's promises (3:21). Second, the Law was not able to give eschatological life and righteousness (3:21).<sup>41</sup> Third, the Law (or “Scripture”)<sup>42</sup> enclosed all things under sin (3:22). Fourth, the end result of this enclosure is in order that (ἵνα) “the promise might be

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Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 151; Moo, *Galatians*, 234; Das, *Galatians*, 361.

<sup>39</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 165-66; Bruce, *Galatians*, 175; Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 144-45; In-Gyu Hong, *The Law in Galatians* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 150-51; Martyn, *Galatians*, 354-55; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 239-40; de Boer, *Galatians*, 230-31.

Scholars sometimes debate whether χάριν indicates “goal” or “reason.” The first three interpretations fall into the “reason” category. The Law was given because transgressions already existed, and aimed at either restraining, dealing with, or revealing these transgressions. The other two readings indicate “goal.” The Law arrived to accomplish the “goal” of turning sin into transgressions or of provoking transgressions. On this distinction, see Moo, *Galatians*, 233-34.

<sup>40</sup>At this point many scholars, armed with a full canon, point to passages in other letters, such as Rom 3:21; 4:15; 5:13, 20; 6:14; 7:5-8:4; 1 Cor 15:56; 2 Cor 3, to supplement their interpretation of Gal 3:19-23. While not neglecting the legitimacy and necessity of such an enterprise, the preference here is to interpret the passage contextually, taking into account only what Paul wrote to the Galatians on this particular occasion. While it is possible that Paul alludes to additional, fuller teaching that he had presented to the Galatians at an earlier time, it would be mere speculation to assume that they already knew some of Paul's ideas regarding the Law that are only clarified in his letters to other churches. As it is, Paul says enough here, precluding the need to import ideas from his other writings.

<sup>41</sup>Eschatological ζωή is referred to here. Rightly Betz, *Galatians*, 174; Byrne, *Sons of God—Seed of Abraham*, 162; Bruce, *Galatians*, 180; G. Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 131; Matera, *Galatians*, 135; de Boer, *Galatians*, 233. The near-equation of δικαιοσύνη and ζωοποιῆσαι in 3:21 essentially demands this soteriological sense. Contra Dunn, *Galatians*, 192-93, the differentiation between ζωοποιῆσαι here and ζήσεται in 3:12 (Lev 18:5) does not indicate that Paul is speaking of two different types of “life.”

<sup>42</sup>Paul frequently uses the singular ἡ γραφή in reference to a specific passage of Scripture (Rom 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; Gal 3:8; 4:30; 1 Tim 5:18). In fact, Gal 3:22 is Paul's only use of ἡ γραφή that does not directly introduce a quotation. While it is possible that Paul had a specific passage, such as Deut 27:26 (cf. Gal 3:10) in mind (Bruce, *Galatians*, 180; G. Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 130; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 144; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 156), it is more likely that Paul thinks here of the broad and consistent witness of Scripture which renders all humanity subject to sin (cf. Rom 3:10-20; Dunn, *Galatians*, 194; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 244; de Boer, *Galatians*, 234; Moo, *Galatians*, 239). Thus, within the present context, the best explanation of ἡ γραφή in 3:22 is that it functions as a near synonym for νόμος. This interpretation is not at odds with the conclusion of some scholars that Paul uses ἡ γραφή as a metonym for God himself or for the will of God as expressed in the Scriptures (Linda L. Belleville, “‘Under Law’: Structural Analysis and the Pauline Concept of Law in Galatians 3:21-4:11,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26 [1986]: 56; Matera, *Galatians*, 135; Paul Nadim Tarazi, *Galatians: A Commentary*, Orthodox Biblical Studies [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999], 155; cf. Das, *Galatians*, 367-68, who appears to affirm both positions).

given by faith in Jesus Christ to those who believe” (3:22). Finally, Paul uses the metaphor of a παιδαγωγός, or “guardian,” to describe the Law's role (3:24-25).<sup>43</sup> Given these contextual clues, which interpretation supplies the most accurate reading of παραβάσεων χάριν?

The first reading, that παραβάσεων χάριν means the Law “restrains” transgressions, has two strengths. The first is that it fits well with the παιδαγωγός metaphor of 3:24-25. The second is that it accounts for the fact that Paul is in 3:21-24 defending the Law as positively fulfilling its historical role. However, in light of 3:22-23, it seems best to conclude that “restraining” transgressions is not primarily what Paul has in mind with the phrase.<sup>44</sup> There are several reasons for this. First, the end result of the Law is that people are “locked up under sin.” If the Law were intended to restrain transgressions, then the end result of “imprisoning all under sin” would indicate a failure on its part, but Paul implies that the Law succeeded in performing its divinely ordained role.<sup>45</sup> Secondly, the stated goal of the Law is “in order that the promise might be given from faith in Jesus Christ.” If the Law functioned only to restrain people from transgressions, it would not accomplish the ultimate objective of leading them to faith in Christ, for then they would not see the need to move on from the Law toward its goal, πίστις Χριστοῦ.<sup>46</sup> Finally, Paul views the Law as a power which enslaves and curses, from

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<sup>43</sup>The interpretation and translation of παιδαγωγός are areas of fierce debate. For a defense of the translation “guardian” for παιδαγωγός, see the excursus below.

<sup>44</sup>The Law does not serve to restrain people from transgressions so much as it serves to restrain people under them. Contra Boyarin, “Was Paul an ‘Anti-Semite’? A Reading of Galatians 3-4,” 56.

<sup>45</sup>Tsang, *From Slaves to Sons*, 106, points out the dearth of evidence from Israel's history that the Law actually succeeded, if its primary function was to restrain people from transgressions.

<sup>46</sup>Rightly Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, 150-51. While some commentators aver that Paul's argument here is solely temporal, it is difficult to explain away the purposive aspect of the ἵνα clauses in 3:22, 24 (contra Kari Kuula, *The Law, the Covenant and God's Plan*, vol. 2, *Paul's Treatment of the Law*



which people require redemption (3:10-13; 4:5). Were the Law solely designed to curb transgressions, it is difficult to imagine that people would need redemption from its thrall.

If it cannot be said that παραβάσεων χάριν means to restrain transgressions, is it possible to understand it as meaning “to provide some sort of remedy for transgressions,” as Dunn does?<sup>47</sup> Dunn criticizes scholars who import Romans 5:20 into their interpretations of Galatians 3:19, while pointing to the fact that the sacrificial system was a “major function of the Law.” The Law, on this reading, provided forgiveness and atonement for trespasses. This view, like the first one, respects the fact that Paul defends, rather than criticizes, the Law in 3:21-24. There are, however, some major problems with this interpretation. First, this interpretation cannot explain how the Law ultimately served to “lock all things up under sin.”<sup>48</sup> Secondly, this reading does not provide sufficient reasoning for the stated goal of the Law: “in order that the promise might be given from faith of Jesus Christ.” If the Law already dealt with transgressions through the sacrificial system, it is difficult to see how it could accomplish the purpose of bringing people to faith in Jesus so they might receive the promise. The Law would then simply be a rival to the cross of Christ as a means of atoning for sin.<sup>49</sup>

Having ruled out the first two major options for παραβάσεων χάριν, one must

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*and Israel in Romans* [Helsinki: The Finnish Exegetical Society, 2003], 130-31). This increases the likelihood that εἰς in 3:23, 24 probably carries both a temporal and a telic aspect. Rightly Byrne, *Sons of God—Seed of Abraham*, 163-64.

<sup>47</sup>Dunn, *Galatians*, 189-90.

<sup>48</sup>Barclay, “The Law and the Promise,” 151.

<sup>49</sup>This interpretation illustrates the dead-end conclusion of E. P. Sanders, who cannot find a satisfactory distinction between “covenantal nomism” and faith in Christ: “This is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism: it is not Christianity” (Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 552).

conclude that the phrase carries some less “positive” meaning in the context of Galatians.<sup>50</sup> At the very least, the context leads to the conclusion that παραβάσεων χάριν means the Law functioned in some way to position all people<sup>51</sup> “under sin.”<sup>52</sup> Paul's description in 3:22-23 demands such a reading. This leaves three potential interpretations.

The first of the remaining options is that παραβάσεων χάριν simply indicates that the Law points out existing transgressions. Richard Longenecker argues that “The Law brings home God's judgment on us,” thereby providing “the standard necessary for an intelligent and realistic act of repentance.”<sup>53</sup> While this view makes good sense of the

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<sup>50</sup>Paul is not arguing that the Law did not have a restraining function. In fact, the discussion of 5:13-25 indicates that the Law did fulfill this role for a time. Within the context of 3:19-25, however, Paul is describing the Law as a power of a former age which enslaves people under sin, and from which they need redemption. Any explanation that finds only a “positive” function of the Law seems to be swimming upstream against many contextual indicators within the passage.

A word must be said regarding the language of “positive” and “negative” purposes for the Law, because many scholars use this terminology. Dunn, *Galatians*, 189, argues that χάριν has a “positive ring” to it, and concludes thereby that the Galatians would never interpret it in a causal sense. Contrary to Dunn's reasoning, however, this does not mean that Paul thinks only of a positive-sounding role for the Law, such as providing atonement or restraining transgressions. For Paul, the fact that the Law served to accomplish its God-given role is positive (rightly Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 256). Therefore, if Paul believed the Law's role was to increase, expose, or condemn transgressions, and the Law had succeeded in accomplishing its task, then it was, by definition, “positive.” Therefore, Ronald Y. K. Fung's (*The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988], 160; also G. Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 130) description of Paul's presentation as “an entirely negative one” is probably not a characterization with which the apostle himself would concur (cf. Rom 7:13). Moreover, the fact that Paul also sees the end result of the Law's work as believers' reception of the promise through faith in Jesus Christ (3:22) means that the Law, viewed correctly, was nothing short of a resounding success. Charles H. Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit: A Study in the Argument and Theology of Galatians* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 64, strikes the right balance when he states that Gal 3:19-25 is “qualified polemic against what for Paul are inflated views of the law.”

<sup>51</sup>Τὰ πάντα in 3:22 is surprising, but necessary within Paul's argument. He wants to demonstrate that the Law's imprisoning jurisdiction extended beyond Israel to hem in all people, and therefore that the redemption found only in Christ was necessary for both Jews and Gentiles (2:15-16). See G. Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 131.

<sup>52</sup>The language of being “under” (ὑπό τινα; 3:10, 22, 23, 25; 4:2, 3, 4, 5, 21; 5:18) is a persistent motif throughout Galatians. In every instance in Galatians (even 4:4) it carries a negative nuance of restriction, oppression, enslavement, or condemnation (see also Rom 3:9; 6:14, 15; 7:14; 1 Cor 9:20). The idea conveyed is that of dominion, and the negative connotation is the result of being subject to the wrong master. In other contexts, Paul can use ὑπό τινα to describe a positive position “under” (e.g., Rom 6:14, 15, “under grace” as contrasted with “under Law”).

<sup>53</sup>R. Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7,” 58. Also, Tsang,

expressed purpose of the Law leading to justification from faith in 3:22-24, it has been criticized for two primary weaknesses. The first is that it does not adequately reckon with Paul's lexical choice of παράβασις rather than ἁμαρτία (on this, see below). The second criticism of this view is that it brings in a potential anachronism. If a transgression is a violation of a known standard, and the Law entered to point out already-existing transgressions, then against what standard would the transgressions have been a violation?<sup>54</sup>

The second remaining explanation of παραβάσεων χάριν is that the Law makes sin into transgressions. Paul's use of the term παράβασις evokes this reading. As many scholars note, παράβασις may function here as a technical term referring to a violation of a known law.<sup>55</sup> In this context, παράβασις indicates that the Law's arrival turned existing “sin,” ἁμαρτία, into “transgression,” παράβασις.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the Law does more than simply

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*From Slaves to Sons*, 106.

<sup>54</sup>So Barclay, “The Law and the Promise,” 151; Moo, *Galatians*, 234. It might be argued that Paul's use of παράβασις in Rom 5:14 to refer to Adam's transgression supplies evidence that παράβασις can exist without the Law, yet the context in Romans clearly demarcates Adam's παράβασις as the violation of a known standard (cf. 1 Tim 2:14). This is what Paul means when he states in Rom 5:13 that ἁμαρτία οὐκ ἐλλογεῖται μὴ ὄντος νόμου. The existence of an official standard, such as God's command not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil or the Mosaic law code, renders violations more egregious than sins not addressed by any law.

<sup>55</sup>BDAG, s.v. “παράβασις”; Johannes Schneider, “παραβαίνω, παράβασις, παραβάτης, ἀπαράβατος, ὑπερβαίνω,” in *TDNT*, vol. 5: 740. Every instance of παράβασις in the Pauline corpus refers to a violation either of the Mosaic law code (Rom 2:23; 4:15; Gal 3:19) or of God's command to Adam and Eve not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Rom 5:14; 1 Tim 2:14).

<sup>56</sup>C. E. B. Cranfield, “St. Paul and the Law,” in *New Testament Issues*, ed. Richard Batey (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 150; Betz, *Galatians*, 165; Byrne, *Sons of God—Seed of Abraham*, 161, n. 98; Donaldson, “The ‘Curse of the Law’ and the Inclusion of the Gentiles: Galatians 3:13-14,” *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 104; Fung, *Galatians*, 159; G. Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 130; Wallace, “Galatians 3:19-20,” 236; Martyn, *Galatians*, 354; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 256; Tarazi, *Galatians*, 148; Barclay, “The Law and the Promise,” 151; Moo, *Galatians*, 234.

BDAG, s.v. “παράβασις,” interprets Gal 3:19 as “in the interest of transgressions i.e. to make them poss[ible] and numerous.” Romans 4:15 functions as the standard proof text for such an understanding of παράβασις. The “cognitive” reading does not give enough credit to Paul's consistent distinction between παράβασις and ἁμαρτία. The Law does not stop at simply pointing out sin. It actually makes sin more egregious. Contra R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 138-39.

point out sin. It may not necessarily cause people to sin more, but it does increase the severity of their sin (“locking them up under it”) by making it a violation of a known command of God.

The final option left for consideration is that the Law actually increases the number of transgressions. Is this a legitimate conclusion regarding παραβάσεων χάριν?<sup>57</sup> Many scholars reach this conclusion, yet most of them rely on the external witness of Romans to do so. Would the Galatian audience, who did not have Paul's letter to the Romans, have understood the phrase in this manner? Hong argues that they would, because the enslavement brought about by the Law attests to a sin-causing function.<sup>58</sup> However, the enslavement “under sin” can be explained equally well with either of the two previous interpretations. Additionally, no statement within Galatians directly indicates that the Law increases transgressions. Therefore, the primary criticism of this conclusion is that it relies too heavily upon Paul's other writings (e.g., Rom 5:20; 7:5-23).

Each of these three explanations has its strengths. For example, Longenecker's view that the Law reveals God's righteous standard, thereby leading to repentance, ably accounts for the ἵνα clauses of 3:22, 24. The view of Räisänen, Hong, and Schreiner recognizes that Paul's more detailed comments on the Law from Romans (and perhaps his earlier teaching among the Galatians?) may very well have been what Paul had in mind when he employed the phrase παραβάσεων χάριν. However, while not excluding the possibility of this second option, the best reading of the phrase within its context in Galatians is that the Law served to translate existing “sin” into “transgression,” thereby

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<sup>57</sup>As, for example, Cranfield, “St. Paul and the Law,” 150 (Cranfield subscribes both to this view and the preceding one); Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 144-45, 148; Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, 150-55; Martyn, *Galatians*, 354; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 240.

<sup>58</sup>Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, 151.

increasing its severity (cf. Rom 5:13-14).

### Exegesis of Galatians 3:19-20

In 3:19, Paul states that “the Law was added.” Contextual indicators from the previous paragraph preclude any notion that the “addition” (προσετέθη)<sup>59</sup> of the Law makes it a supplement to the promise; Paul has already rejected the possibility that the Law was a codicil added to the promise (οὐδεὶς . . . ἐπιδιατάσσεται). Rather, προσετέθη advances the argument that the Law was a subsequent and separate act, and therefore that it accomplished a role entirely distinct from that of the promise.<sup>60</sup>

The second portion of Paul's response, ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ τὸ σπέρμα ᾧ ἐπήγγελται, accomplishes three functions in the argument. First, it sets a clear temporal limit upon the Law's role.<sup>61</sup> The importance of this for Paul's presentation cannot be overstated. Paul explicitly states the temporary nature of the Law's task no fewer than three times in the near context (3:19, 25; 4:4-5), while alluding to the Law's expiration several other times

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<sup>59</sup>In spite of the appeals of a handful of scholars, this is most likely a divine passive. Rightly Dunn, *Galatians*, 189; Matera, *Galatians*, 128; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 255; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 239; Moo, *Galatians*, 233; Christopher R. Bruno, *'God is One': The Function of Eis ho Theos as a Ground for Gentile Inclusion in Paul's Letters* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 176; Das, *Galatians*, 357. Contra Räsänen, *Paul and the Law*, 129-31; Martyn, *Galatians*, 354; de Boer, *Galatians*, 228-30. The divine passive διαταγείς serves to distance God from the Law so that Paul may contrast it with God's direct involvement with the promise. The use of διά (which here expresses intermediate agency, although διά does not always express intermediate agency—cf. Gal 4:7) rather than ὑπό in reference to the angels supports this reading. So Dunn, *Galatians*, 191; Tarazi, *Galatians*, 151; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 257; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 241; Moo, *Galatians*, 235; Das, *Galatians*, 357.

Contra R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 138, there is no “nuance of disparagement” in προσετέθη. Nor does it indicate that the Law was “derivative, not part of God's original design,” as Sam K. Williams, *Galatians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 97; Das, *Galatians*, 356, argue. Paul is not disparaging the Law so much as articulating its divinely ordained purpose, which was distinct from the promises.

<sup>60</sup>Bruce, *Galatians*, 176; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 255.

<sup>61</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 167-68; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 139; Matera, *Galatians*, 128; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 241; Moo, *Galatians*, 232-33.

within the epistle (3:2-3, 22-24; 4:6-7; 5:1, 5, 18, 25).<sup>62</sup>

The second function of this clause is equally as important as the first. Paul identifies the expiration date of the Law as the arrival of the aforementioned “Seed” of the promise, previously identified in 3:16 as Christ alone.<sup>63</sup> The clear implication is that Christ's coming has ushered in a new age in which the Law no longer holds sway, because it has already fulfilled its purpose.<sup>64</sup> The fact that Paul clearly viewed the Law's role as expired, while the Galatians were in danger of seeing it as obligatory, explains his whole purpose for writing the epistle.

Finally, the mention of the “Seed to whom the promise had been made” once again distinguishes the Law from Christ with reference to obtaining the promise. Paul reminds his readers of what he had said in the previous paragraph, limiting the beneficiaries of the promise to Abraham and Christ. Because the promise had been made to Abraham and one Seed—Christ—the inheritance remained unclaimed until Christ's arrival. Paul's statement here reiterates the Law's disconnect from the inheritance, which essentially lay dormant during the eon of the Law, only to reappear upon the arrival of

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<sup>62</sup>In saying this, Paul opposes a steady stream of Jewish tradition which maintained that the Law was eternal: Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.277; Jub. 1:27; 3:31; 6:17; Wis 18:4; 2 Esd 9:37; Bar. 4:1; 1 En. 99:2; cf. Matt 5:18. See Betz, *Galatians*, 168; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 139; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 254.

<sup>63</sup>This affirmation stands in direct opposition to any idea that either physical descent from Abraham or “fictive” descent through Law observance/Judaizing could render one a “seed” and therefore a recipient of the promised inheritance. Not only has the legitimate offspring of Abraham been narrowed to a single individual, but the possibility of becoming an offspring of Abraham through observance of the Law (“Judaizing”) has been eliminated through the Law's *terminus ad quem*.

<sup>64</sup>R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 139; Matera, *Galatians*, 133; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 254; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 241; Das, *Galatians*, 361. In Galatians, the Law is not even said to retain an ongoing role as a moral guide for the people of God (rightly Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 266). Paul clearly announces the Holy Spirit as the new and superior pedagogue (5:13-25) who leads God's people to crucify the flesh, not by giving them new strength to submit to the Law's demands, but by means of replacing the Law himself and enabling them to live by faith and love (2:20; 5:14), thereby fulfilling the “Law of Christ” (6:2). In contrast to the way in which people formerly ordered their lives under the στοιχεῖα of false worship or Torah, they now receive their guidance (5:18) and ordering (5:25) from the Spirit.

Christ.

The third clause in Paul's explanation for the Law is the puzzling “put in place through angels by the hand of a mediator.” The best way to approach this phrase is to analyze it within the immediate context and ask how it contributes to the purpose of the letter. It has already been argued that Paul disavows any integral relationship between the Law and the promise, both by excluding the Law from the equation for obtaining the inheritance, and by locating it within an already-expired temporal limit. Two verses later, Paul will reject outright any claim that the Law can grant life or righteousness (3:21; see also 2:21; 3:11). In order to be consistent with all of these contextual clues, and with the overall purpose of the epistle, any acceptable interpretation of “put in place through angels by the hand of a mediator” will likely continue to sever the Law from any direct role in supplying δικαιοσύνη.

In response to the query, “Why then the Law?” Paul has averred that it was established for transgressions, it was temporary, and it was expired. Now, it appears that he is demonstrating its difference in nature from the promise. Paul uses affirmations about the Law upon which all Jews (including the opposing teachers) would agree—it was instituted through angels and by the hand of a mediator.<sup>65</sup> These affirmations point out yet again the incompatibility of Law and promise. The mention of angels here is not

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<sup>65</sup>The tradition of angels on hand at the institution of the Law likely derives from the LXX rendering of Deut 33:2 (cf. Ps. 67:18 LXX; Jub 1:27-2:1; Philo, *Somn.* 1.140-143; Jos. *Ant.* 15.136). It was a common and uncontroversial affirmation even among early “Christian” theologians (Acts 7:38, 53; Heb 2:2). Acts 7:53 corroborates Paul's use of διαταγείς by referring to the Law as διαταγάς. See esp. Terrance Callan, “Pauline Midrash: the Exegetical Background of Gal 3:19b,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980): 550-53.

Although Paul does not name Moses as the “mediator,” he is the obvious candidate here (Philo, *Mos.* 2.166; Philo, *Somn.* 1.142-143; Test. Mos. 1.14). The LXX uses the phrase ἐν χειρὶ Μωϋσῆ twenty-one times, often referring to Moses' role in the Law's institution (e.g., Lev 26:46; Num 15:23; 36:1). So Moo, *Galatians*, 235; cf. Betz, *Galatians*, 170; Callan, “Pauline Midrash,” 555; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 140-41; Tarazi, *Galatians*, 152; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 150-51. Bruno, “*God is One*,” 180-83, argues that Paul specifically alludes to the single verse Lev 26:46.

disparaging; in fact, the Law's affiliation with angels in tradition added glory to its inception.<sup>66</sup> Paul supplies no reason for us to think he uses the tradition differently here.<sup>67</sup> Nor is the association with Moses as mediator meant to demean the Law. Instead, by noting the roles of angels and a mediator at the giving of the Mosaic code, Paul points out the fact that the Law arrived in a different fashion than the promise.<sup>68</sup> As such, the Law is incompatible with the promise.

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<sup>66</sup>Rightly Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 108; Das, *Galatians*, 362. Andrew John Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World: An Exegetical Study in Aspects of Paul's Teaching* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 151-55, agrees that the angels add glory to the Law's inception, but also argues that they are regarded as the enforcers of the Torah, implying that they apply judgment for the transgressions mentioned earlier in the verse (cf. Heb 2:2).

A small line of interpreters has taken the reference to angels in a highly disparaging direction, believing that Paul views the Law as a negative intrusion in history. This interpretation suggests that Paul so distances the Law from God as to lay the blame for its harmful existence at the feet of ignorant or malicious angels. See Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 69-73; Bo Ivar Reicke, "The Law and This World According to Paul: Some Thoughts Concerning Gal 4:1-11," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 (1951): 259-76; Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 182; John W. Drane, *Paul: Libertine or Legalist? A Study in the Theology of the Major Pauline Epistles* (London: SPCK, 1975), 113; Hans Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1984), 26-28.

Martyn takes a less aggressive approach, arguing that although Gal 3:19-20 does not suggest the angels were demonic, it nevertheless does absolve God of all responsibility for the Law's existence: "God played no part at all in the genesis of the Sinaitic Law" (Martyn, *Galatians*, 357, 364-67 [quote from 366]; de Boer, *Galatians*, 228-29). Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 68 (following Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 130-33), believes Paul denies in Gal 3:19 that God gave the Law, but that it was an emotional over-reach "in the heat of debate" that "does not represent an actual change of mind which is systematically carried through." Gal 3:19 thus represents for Sanders and Räisänen one of many "contradictions" in Paul's comments about the Law.

Several contextual considerations belie the interpretations described above. The passives προσετέθη and διαταγείς imply that God was behind and ultimately responsible for the giving of the Law (cf. 3:21, ἐδόθη), as does the syntactically subordinate position of διαταγείς, and the use of the preposition διὰ to express intermediate rather than ultimate agency. Finally, Paul never states that the angels originated the Law, and apart from those who believe Paul contradicted himself, these interpretations do not account for Paul's positive statements regarding the Law (e.g., Rom 7:12, 14, 16, 21; cf. 1 Tim 1:8) or those that explicitly associate it with God (Rom 7:22, 25; 8:7). See Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World*, 151; Callan, "Pauline Midrash," 554; Wallace, "Galatians 3:19-20," 235, 241; idem, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 164, 434; B. Longenecker, *Triumph of Abraham's God*, 59; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 257.

Marcion and some post-Pauline Gnostics used the tradition of the angels' association with the Law's genesis as evidence that the Law did not come from God. However, Paul's approach never disconnects the Law from God (rightly, Callan, "Pauline Midrash," 554). Instead, the mention of angels is one of Paul's several positive affirmations regarding the Law. "Why then the Law?" The answers that follow—for reason of transgressions, for a specific time period, instituted through angels—are meant to be taken in a positive light. The Law had a purpose, and came with glory (cf. 2 Cor 3), but its purpose was not the same as the promises.



The enigmatic verse 20 holds the key for interpreting Paul's point. In saying, "Now the mediator is not of one, but God is one," Paul refers to an intrinsic aspect of God's salvific dealings with his people; they are unilateral grants. God's autonomy in the working of salvation is consistent with his character as one.<sup>69</sup> The Mosaic dispensation consistently came through a mediator (Exod 34:34-35) and was contractual, requiring affirmation by its recipients (Exod 19:8; 24:3, 7; Deut 5:27). The promise to Abraham, on the other hand, was direct and guaranteed by God. When YHWH made his promise to Abraham, he alone passed through the carcasses, symbolically swearing by his life that he would effect the inheritance promises he had made (Gen 15:17-21).

The nature of promise is gift without obligation. The nature of Law, by contrast, is *quid pro quo* expectation. The Law was a bilateral covenant, with requirements for both sides: "The one who does these things will live by them" (Lev 18:5; cf. Deut 30:15-20). For Paul, Moses' role as mediator between God and the people demonstrates this contractual aspect of the Law covenant. The covenant with Abraham, by contrast, was promissory, direct, and unilateral. The fact that God dealt directly with Abraham illustrates this for Paul.

Therefore, the difficult phrasing of Galatians 3:19b-20 serves to demonstrate

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<sup>67</sup>Because the association of angels with the Law traditionally lent glory to the Law, interpreters who argue that Paul is here disparaging the Law have a difficult time interpreting this phrase. E.g., Moo, *Galatians*, 235, cannot escape the contradiction in his comments: "In none of these texts does the mention of angels suggest any question about its divine origin; on the contrary, the emphasis, if anything, is on the holiness and majesty of the law. Nevertheless, this kind of emphasis seems out of keeping with Paul's depreciation of the law's importance in this context, leaving open the question of why he adds this idea here." Similarly, R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 140; Matera, *Galatians*, 133.

<sup>68</sup>Dunn, *Galatians*, 190, summarizes the two phrases as "an elaboration of the contrast between the law and the promise already clearly stated in iii.18."

<sup>69</sup>Das, *Galatians*, 366. This is not the only place where Paul appeals to God's oneness when making arguments regarding the nature of his salvific activity. See, for example, Rom 3:29-30.

yet another way in which the Law is intrinsically incompatible with the promise. The mention of angels and a mediator proves that the Law is fundamentally not the same type of divine dealing with humanity as was the Abrahamic promise. The Law is not a life-giving institution, and this is shown by the fact that it is not given apart from mediation. When God gives life and δικαιοσύνη, he does it directly and unilaterally. This interpretation of verses 19-20 is consistent with what Paul has been saying since 3:10. The Law is unable to grant life, righteousness, or inheritance, because that is not its God-given function. To prove this, Paul has presented several arguments to demonstrate that the Law is different in nature from the promise, and therefore cannot function in the same way as the promise does. This is why Paul responds to the rhetorical question of 3:21 with the conclusion, “For if a Law with the ability to grant life had been given, then righteousness would have derived from Law.”

### **Galatians 3:15-20 and Social Identity**

As Paul develops his argument, the discussion continues to center on Abraham. When 3:15-18 is viewed through the lens of Social Identity Theory, several aspects of the Abraham conversation stand out. First, the identity coveted by the Galatian believers is that of descendants of Abraham. Although the terminology has shifted from “sons” (3:7) to “seed” (3:16), the idea is the same. The Galatian believers desired to become members of the social group “offspring of Abraham.”

Why would the Galatians deem association with Abraham so valuable that they would be willing to Judaize—including the painful rite of circumcision—in order to obtain it? Social Identity Theory supplies two explanations. In SIT, affiliation with a prestigious predecessor increases the value of one's social identity, so the simple act of

identifying with Abraham might be motivation enough to seek this identity. Nevertheless, it does not seem fitting for Gentile believers in Christ to desire this relationship with Abraham so strongly, without some additional incentive. This motivation surfaces in 3:18, when the “promises” and “covenant” of which Paul had spoken in 3:16-17 referred to an inheritance granted to Abraham. Although it is unclear precisely what the Galatians believed the inheritance signified for them—in the Genesis narrative, it usually refers to the “Promised Land” of Canaan<sup>70</sup>—their desire for it clearly motivated them to take extreme measures in order to obtain it.

Therefore, in SIT terms, the Galatian believers were motivated to seek an identity associated with a prestigious ancestor—Abraham—but not simply for the sake of the name recognition. They also desired to become official “offspring of Abraham” so that they might obtain the group member benefit, the Abrahamic inheritance.

At the instigation of the other teachers, the Galatians believed they needed to perform certain entrance requirements in order to become members of the social group “offspring of Abraham.” Previous segments of Paul's argument clarify that the rival teachers taught that Gentile believers could perform “works of the Law” in order to become members of this social group. Implicit in this arrangement is the concept of permeable boundaries, meaning that there was a means provided for outsiders to become members of the preferred ingroup “offspring of Abraham.” Earlier in Paul's argument, he had declared that the only means of crossing the boundary into this ingroup was through

<sup>70</sup>Gen 15:7-8, 18; 17:8. In 22:17, the offspring of Abraham “will inherit the cities of his enemies.” In the argument of Galatians, Paul implies that the inheritance refers to the Holy Spirit (3:14; 4:5-7), but he also speaks of inheriting “the kingdom of God” (5:21). These equations are likely Paul's rejoinder to whatever claims the rival teachers were making regarding the Abrahamic inheritance. Clearly, the other teachers were not claiming that the Holy Spirit was the inheritance.

Elsewhere in Paul, Abraham is said to have become “heir of the world” (Rom 4:13), and believers inherit the “kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:9, 10; 15:50). Most often, Paul does not specify the content of believers' inheritance (Rom 4:14; 8:17; Eph 1:18; 5:5; Col 3:24; Titus 3:7).

πίστις (3:6-9). In 3:16, however, he appears to build an impenetrable wall around this group, for here he limits the “offspring of Abraham” social group to a single individual—Christ. Thus, at this phase in Paul's argument, the boundaries for becoming a “seed of Abraham” have become uncrossable, even for those of Jewish descent! Paul's main point, however, continues to be that performance of the Law is not, and never has been, a means of becoming a member of Abraham's lineage.

### **Galatians 3:21-25—What the Law Does and Does Not Do**

Paul's tour de force against the Law might lead to the conclusion that it was in fact opposed to God's promises. After all, Paul has gone to great pains to separate the Law from the promise. Galatians 3:21 counters this erroneous conclusion by pointing out that the only way the Law could work contrary to the promises of God is if it worked precisely in the manner in which the opposing teachers claimed it did!<sup>71</sup> Only by usurping the role of granting life and righteousness could the Law work against the promises. Unbeknownst to the Galatian believers, the teaching being proffered by the intruders, and not that of Paul, was the one that created conflict between the promise to Abraham and the Law.

Up to this point, Paul's statements regarding the Law have largely been negative. That is to say, he has been at pains to demonstrate what the Law does not do: it does not justify, nor does it supplement or replace the promise. Having done that,

<sup>71</sup>Thus, Martyn, *Galatians*, 368, appropriately criticizes interpretations that view Paul's discussion of the Law as a mere comparison in which Paul argues that the promise is superior to the Law. Many commentators argue in this manner (for example, Betz, *Galatians*, 169-70; Callan, “Pauline Midrash,” 554-59; Bruce, *Galatians*, 177; Matera, *Galatians*, 133). Paul's point is not that the promise is better than the Law at supplying life and righteousness; rather, it is that the promise is the *only* means of life and righteousness, whereas the Law had a different role entirely. As R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 149, explains, the Law “operates in the divine economy . . . in a different sphere than God's promises.” Similarly Wallace, “Galatians 3:19-20,” 239-43; Baugh, “Galatians 3:20 and the Covenant of Redemption,” 52.

however, he recognizes the need to rehabilitate the Law's image by showing that the Law was not pointless. Therefore, in 3:22, unpacking the otherwise indecipherable παραβάσεων χάριν of 3:19, he affirms that the Law did play a vital role.

In 3:22, Paul explains the Law's purpose in God's plan when he says that “the Scripture locked up all things under sin, in order that the promise from faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.” This thesis functions as a replacement (ἀλλά) for the false assumption that the Law was meant to supply life and righteousness (3:21). Paul is here arguing against a misunderstanding of God's purpose for the Law. He removes the misunderstanding, and replaces it with a correct evaluation: the Law's role was to “lock up all under sin.”<sup>72</sup> By itself, this phrase paints a dreary picture which makes the Law appear to operate contrary to God's purposes (cf. 3:21).<sup>73</sup> Paradoxically, however, the subjection of all things (τὰ πάντα)<sup>74</sup> to sin and thus condemnation (equivalent to the Law's “curse,” 3:10-13), results in the granting of the promise to those who believe in Jesus. In the end, the Law's purpose (ἵνα) was to prepare the way, through imprisonment, for the promise to be enacted.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup>This phrase is almost synonymous with the ambiguous παραβάσεων χάριν of 3:19.

<sup>73</sup>As concluded above, παραβάσεων χάριν can mean no less than that the Law not only exposed sin, but also worsened its effects by transforming it into transgression of God's revealed will. There also exists the possibility that Paul had in mind an increase of transgressions brought about by the Law.

<sup>74</sup>Some have suggested that the neuter τὰ πάντα here refers not only to all humanity (as R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 144; Tarazi, *Galatians*, 158-59; Fee, *Galatians*, 134) but also includes creation itself (Bruce, *Galatians*, 180; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 260; Moo, *Galatians*, 239; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 157). Such a conclusion aligns with Paul's statements elsewhere, especially Rom 8:19-22. Without question, Gal 3:22 subjugates all humanity, Jew and Gentile alike, under the enslaving power of sin (cf. Rom 11:32, where Paul uses the masculine τοὺς πάντας, clearly referring to Jews and Gentiles combined, as the objects of συγκλείω). Perhaps the use of the neuter here indicates that he has in mind a cosmic enslavement here as well. This would mesh well with some of his other statements in the epistle (1:4; 6:14, 15).

<sup>75</sup>The ἵνα clauses in 3:22, 24 express purpose (cf. the double ἵνα clauses in 3:14; 4:5; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 145; Fee, *Galatians*, 134; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 245; Moo, *Galatians*, 240; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 158; Das, *Galatians*, 369). Contra Matera, *Galatians*, 135, who claims it only communicates result. Although it is plausible for ἵνα to function this way, ὅστε would have served such a

## Excursus: Πίστις Χριστοῦ

The ongoing debate regarding πίστις (Ἰησοῦ) Χριστοῦ almost needs no introduction. While there is not enough space to revisit all of the arguments here, because πίστις is a prominent motif in Galatians 2-4, it will be necessary to supply a brief survey of the problem, along with some conclusions.

The πίστις Χριστοῦ debate has traditionally revolved around whether or not to regard the genitive references to Christ,<sup>76</sup> when following πίστις, as objective genitives (“faith in Christ”)<sup>77</sup> or as subjective genitives (“the faith/faithfulness of Christ”).<sup>78</sup> The

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purpose much better.

<sup>76</sup>Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Rom 3:22; Gal 2:16; 3:22), Ἰησοῦ (Rom 3:26), τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ (Gal 2:20), Χριστοῦ (Gal 2:16; Phil 3:9). Cf. also Eph 3:12 (πίστεως αὐτοῦ), and 1 Thess 1:3 (μνημονεύοντες ὅμων τοῦ ἔργου τῆς πίστεως καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς ὑπομονῆς τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), which are generally overlooked in the conversation. Note that all of the disputed passages also occur within prepositional phrases. Διὰ (3x; Eph 3:12 would add a fourth) and ἐκ (3x) are most frequent, followed by ἐν (1x). In every case except for Gal 2:20, the genitive reference to Christ is anarthrous (the lone exception probably being generated by the circumlocution “son of God”). Adding to the confusion are the many references to πίστις which do not specify whether or not they are “of Christ,” several of which are apparently anaphoric, referring to earlier mentions of πίστις Χριστοῦ.

<sup>77</sup>So, for example, Arland J. Hultgren, “The *Pistis Christou* Formulation in Paul,” *Novum Testamentum* 22 (1980): 248-63; James D. G. Dunn, “Once More, ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ,” in *Pauline Theology*, vol. 4, *Looking Back, Pressing On*, ed. E. Elizabeth Johnson and David M. Hay (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 61-81; Roy A. Harrisville, “Pistis Christou: Witness of the Fathers,” *Novum Testamentum* 36 (1994): 233-41; idem, “Before Pistis Christou: The Objective Genitive as Good Greek,” *Novum Testamentum* 48 (2006): 353-58; R. Barry Matlock, “Detheologizing the ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ Debate: Cautionary Remarks from a Lexical Semantic Perspective,” *Novum Testamentum* 42 (2000): 1-23; idem, “Even the Demons Believe’: Paul and πίστις Χριστοῦ,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64 (2002): 300-18; idem, “The Rhetoric of πίστις in Paul: Galatians 2.16, 3.22, Romans 3.22, and Philippians 3.9,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30 (2007): 173-203; Moisés Silva, “Faith Versus Works of Law in Galatians,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 2, *The Paradoxes of Paul*, ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O’Brien, M. A. Seifrid, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 219-33; Mark W. Elliot, “Πίστις Χριστοῦ in the Church Fathers and Beyond,” in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 277-89.

<sup>78</sup>Douglas A. Campbell, *The Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans 3.21-26* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 58-69; idem, “The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Romans 3:22,” in *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 57-71; Ardel B. Caneday, “Galatians 3:22ff—a *Crux Interpretum* for ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ in Paul’s Thought,” in *Papers Presented at the 47<sup>th</sup> National Conference of the Evangelical Theological Society, Philadelphia, PA, November 16-18, 1995* (Portland, OR: Theological Research Exchange Network, 1999); idem, “The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ as a Theme in Paul’s Theology in Galatians,” in *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 221-46; Hung-sik Choi, “Pistis in Galatians 5:5-6: Neglected Evidence for the Faithfulness of Christ,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124 (2005): 467-90; Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans

inherent ambiguity of the genitive construction, combined with the semantic range of the term πίστις (which may alternatively be glossed as either “faith” or “faithfulness”), permits either reading.<sup>79</sup>

Scholars who support the subjective genitive (“faithfulness of Christ”)<sup>80</sup> make several convincing arguments. First, they note that in other contexts in Paul, the formulation {πίστις + a *personal* genitive modifier} is clearly rendered subjectively. For example, in Romans 3:3 Paul speaks of “the faithfulness of God,” and in 4:12 he refers to “the faith of our father Abraham.”<sup>81</sup> A second argument for the subjective genitive is

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Publishing Company, 2002), 157-74; Morna D. Hooker, “ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ,” *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 321-42; George E. Howard, “On the 'Faith of Christ,’” *Harvard Theological Review* 60 (1967): 459-65; idem, “Faith of Christ,” *Expository Times* 85 (1974): 212-14; Ian G. Wallis, *The Faith of Jesus Christ in Early Christian Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Sam K. Williams, “Again *Pistis Christou*,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49 (1987): 431-37; Chris Kugler, “ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ: The Current State of Play and the Key Arguments,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 14 (2016): 244-55. Although Hooker and Williams nuance their presentations in such a way that places them under both the subjective and objective genitive categories, they are categorized with the subjective genitive proponents because their explanations place the emphasis firstly upon the πίστις of Christ.

Two alternative views merit attention here and will be discussed in more detail below. First, Preston Sprinkle suggests that πίστις Χριστοῦ represents an “eschatological event.” See Preston M. Sprinkle, “Πίστις Χριστοῦ as an Eschatological Event,” in *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 165-84. Secondly, Mark A. Seifrid argues for πίστις Χριστοῦ as a genitive of authorship or source. See Mark A. Seifrid, “The Faith of Christ,” in *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 129-46. Both of these views wield explanatory power for some of the debated passages, but are ultimately unworkable as a comprehensive explanation for every instance of πίστις Χριστοῦ.

<sup>79</sup>Stanley Porter and Andrew W. Pitts (“Πίστις with a Preposition and Genitive Modifier: Lexical, Semantic, and Syntactic Considerations in the Πίστις Χριστοῦ Discussion,” in *The Faith of Christ*, 33-56) attempt to demonstrate from a grammatical perspective that the objective genitive should be the preferred reading. On the other hand, Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 115-16, maintains that the subjective reading is the most likely grammatical possibility. Most scholars agree that grammatical arguments are incapable of determining the matter with finality.

<sup>80</sup>Some scholars refer to the subjective genitive as the “Christological” or “theological” reading, and the objective genitive as the “anthropological” reading (see esp. Campbell, *The Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans 3.21-26*, 58-69; idem, “The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Romans 3:22,” 57-71; Kugler, “ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ: The Current State of Play and the Key Arguments,” 245). This terminology is unhelpful, for it unnecessarily predisposes the interpreter to the subjective reading by creating a false impression of superiority. The idea that proponents of the subjective genitive focus upon God's activity in Christ, while supporters of the objective genitive merely emphasize the human side of the equation, is at best a misrepresentation, and at worst, a devious rhetorical ploy, and should be abandoned.

<sup>81</sup>George E. Howard, “On the 'Faith of Christ,’” *Harvard Theological Review* 60 (1967): 459-60, argued that in all of the Pauline occurrences of πίστις with a personal genitive modifier (excluding the phrases under debate), the obvious reading is the subjective one. While this argument at first appears

theological. Paul teaches elsewhere of the manner in which Jesus' obedience obtained salvation for us. "Faithfulness of Christ," then, would simply be an alternate way of speaking of Christ's obedience to the Father on our behalf.<sup>82</sup> The most ubiquitous argument made by proponents of the subjective genitive is that certain phrases regarding believers' faith (Rom 3:22; Gal 2:16; 3:22; Phil 3:9) are rendered tautologous if Paul's reference to πίστις Χριστοῦ in the same verse is interpreted objectively. On the other hand, if in these verses πίστις/πιστεύω carries a dual reference, first to Christ's faithfulness, and then to the faith of believers, they appear to make much more sense.<sup>83</sup>

Although the cumulative weight of these arguments is significant, defenders of the objective genitive ("faith in Christ") have supplied rebuttals to each of them. With reference to the first argument, all scholars recognize that the {πίστις + genitive} constructions in Romans 3:3; 4:12 are examples of the subjective genitive. However, the subjective nature of the genitive in these instances is clarified by contextual indicators, something that does not happen in the disputed texts. Further, it is poor logic to suppose that Paul's use of the subjective genitive in Romans 3:3; 4:12 thereby restricts him to the

insurmountable, critics point out that who but Christ or God (God only appears as the genitive modifier of πίστις once, where the context clearly marks the genitive as subjective, in Rom 3:3) could function as a legitimate personal object of faith for Paul? Therefore, by eliminating all references to πίστις with Χριστοῦ as modifier, Howard essentially eliminates all legitimate opportunities for the modifier to be construed as objective. Even some impersonal genitive modifiers demonstrate the use of the objective genitive with πίστις in Paul (Phil 1:27; Col 2:12; 2 Thess 2:13).

<sup>82</sup>Hooker, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ," 322.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 322. In three of these four verses, Paul juxtaposes πίστις Χριστοῦ with the cognate verb, πιστεύω, which in each case clearly refers to belief exercised by Christians. In Phil 3:9, the subject of the "faith" or "faithfulness" referred to by ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει is unspecified and difficult to determine. The tautology allegation founders in this passage, because the presence of the article calls for an anaphoric interpretation, in which case either reading could be construed as "tautologous." So Matlock, "The Rhetoric of πίστις in Paul," 180.

The monograph of Richard Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, supplies a fourth major argument. Hays finds a narrative substructure in Galatians which contains the early Christian proclamation of Christ's faithfulness on behalf of believers. Ardel Caneday builds upon this concept in a similar way in his contributions to the discussion (see Caneday, "Galatians 3:22ff;" idem, "The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ as a Theme in Paul's Theology in Galatians").



same pattern in every other case of {πίστις + personal genitive}. Next, scholars who support the objective reading emphasize that, although Paul does refer to Christ's obedience in other ways (cf. Rom 5:18-19; Phil 2:5-8), there is no indisputable evidence that he ever uses πιστ- terminology to refer to Christ's activity.<sup>84</sup> With reference to the tautology argument, defenders of the objective reading point out that the repetition in these verses is used for emphasis<sup>85</sup> or expansion.<sup>86</sup> In these passages, the repetition serves to confirm, rather than exclude, an objective reading. Additionally, the tautology argument founders upon the fact that these passages supply no clues that would justify a shift of meaning of between πίστις and πιστεύω when they occur in tandem, or a change of reference with regard to who is exercising πίστις (from believers to Christ).<sup>87</sup> If Paul had intended a change in referent, surely he would have clued his readers in on the alternation in some manner.<sup>88</sup>

The strongest positive arguments for the objective genitive are contextual. Two passages in Galatians 3 will serve to demonstrate the point. First, Galatians 3:2-9 correlates the concept of πίστις with Abraham's action (ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ) in Genesis 15:6. The context within both Genesis and Galatians clearly demonstrates that Paul is

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<sup>84</sup>Silva "Faith Versus Works of Law in Galatians," 232-33; Das, *Galatians*, 250. Seifrid, "The Faith of Christ," 146, adds another criticism: the "faithfulness of Christ" interpretation misses the central importance of the resurrection in Paul's soteriology.

<sup>85</sup>Dunn, *Galatians*, 139; Fee, *Galatians*, 85; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 165; Das, *Galatians*, 252. Fee notes that the second clause in Gal 2:16, "even we have believed in Christ Jesus," "makes very little sense" if it follows a subjective genitive.

<sup>86</sup>Hultgren, "The *Pistis Christou* Formulation in Paul," 254-55; Matlock, "The Rhetoric of πίστις in Paul," 187; Das, *Galatians*, 251. Silva, "Faith Versus Works of Law in Galatians," 232, argues that the middle phrase καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν in Gal 2:16 confirms the objective reading of the two ambiguous genitive constructions which envelop it.

<sup>87</sup>Matlock, "The Rhetoric of πίστις in Paul," 173-203, supplies exegeses which aim to show that the structure and rhetorical function of these passages point invariably toward the objective reading.

<sup>88</sup>Das, *Galatians*, 250.

referring to Abraham's belief in God (and not his *faithfulness*), and this faith in God is paradigmatic (καθώς) for Christians. No indication is given that the πίστις referred to in 3:2, 5 is regarded as anything different from Abraham's act of belief as expressed in 3:6, and, subsequently, the πίστις of the “sons of Abraham” in vv. 7, 8, 9. In fact, the logic of the argument breaks down if a transition in meaning occurs between 3:5 and 3:6 or between 3:6 and 3:7.<sup>89</sup> A second passage which confirms the objective genitive reading is Galatians 3:11-12, in which Paul contrasts the doing of the Law with faith. If πίστις here were a reference to *faithfulness*, the contrast collapses, with Paul pitting one form of “doing” (our “doing” the “works of Law”) against another (living “from faithfulness”).<sup>90</sup> While neither of these passages refers specifically to Christ's πίστις (the genitive Χριστοῦ is absent), they are flanked on both sides by debated πίστις Χριστοῦ texts (2:16, 20; 3:22).<sup>91</sup> It is difficult to imagine that Paul would flip back and forth between references to a πίστις exercised by Christ and one which characterizes believers without signaling that a change of referent is intended.

A second substantial argument that weighs in favor of the objective reading is

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<sup>89</sup>Rightly Dunn, *Galatians*, 163; G. Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 113, who refers to the references to πίστις/πιστεύειν throughout this section as “an unbreakable chain.” Debbie Hunn, “Pistis Christou in Galatians 2:16: Clarification from 3:1-6,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 57 (2006): 32, states that “human faith is the only possibility that the context offers.”

An additional piece of evidence in favor of this understanding of πίστις in 3:2, 5 is the fact that Paul alludes to Isa 53:1—τίς ἐπίστευσεν τῇ ἀκοῇ—where, once again, the πίστις being exercised is “belief in” and not “faithfulness of.”

<sup>90</sup>Supporters of the subjective genitive sometimes argue that Paul's contrast here is between human and divine action. Therefore, the πίστις of Gal 3:11 refers to divine faithfulness (with ὁ δίκαιος potentially functioning as a reference to Christ) rather than human faith/faithfulness. Christ's redemptive act in 3:13 would then function as a description of the “faithfulness” referred to in what precedes. While this response weakens the appeal to Gal 3:11-12 in support of the objective reading, its Achilles' heel is that it offers no satisfactory explanation of Paul's reference to Abraham's πίστις in the preceding verses. The context of the entire argument in Gal 3:2-12 suggests a consistent reference to human-exercised πίστις.

<sup>91</sup>Moreover, πίστις in 3:2, 5 is contrasted with ἔργα νόμου, just as πίστις Χριστοῦ is in 2:16, indicating that the referent of πίστις has not changed in 3:2-14. Rightly Hunn, “Pistis Christou in Galatians 2:16,” 32-33.

the history of interpretation. The πίστις Χριστοῦ debate did not really begin in earnest until Hays published his monograph in the early 1980s.<sup>92</sup> A handful of scholars debated the meaning of πίστις Χριστοῦ prior to Hays, but most are in agreement that the discussion probably does not predate by much Johannes Haußleiter's 1891 treatment.<sup>93</sup> When the Apostolic Fathers mention the phrase, they appear consistently to have regarded πίστις Χριστοῦ as believers' faith in Christ.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, the question of a subjective genitive interpretation never even arises when the Fathers discuss the texts which are now so hotly disputed. The objective reading is simply assumed. Therefore, the extant testimony from the earliest interpreters of Paul appears to support the objective reading. Additionally, the dearth of discussion throughout 1800 years of church history should sound a warning to those who pursue a novel approach to interpreting the phrase.

A third view has recently begun to gain traction within the πίστις Χριστοῦ discussion. This view is that πίστις Χριστοῦ is neither a subjective nor an objective

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<sup>92</sup>Although the appearance of the πίστις Χριστοῦ controversy happened to coincide with the rise of the “New Perspective” on Paul, the two debates are not coterminous, and scholars from opposing sides of the “New Perspective” are represented on both major sides of the πίστις Χριστοῦ discussion.

<sup>93</sup>Johannes Haußleiter, “Der Glaube Jesu Christi und der christliche Glaube: Ein Beitrag zur Erklärung des Römerbriefes,” *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift* 2 (1891): 132-34. Also predating Hays (on both sides of the debate) are Gerhard Kittel, “Πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ bei Paulus,” *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 79 (1906): 419-36; A. G. Hebert, “‘Faithfulness’ and ‘Faith,’” *Reformed Theological Review* 14 (1955): 33-40; C. F. D. Moule, “The Biblical Conception of ‘Faith,’” *Expository Times* 68 (1957): 157; Thomas F. Torrance, “One Aspect of the Biblical Conception of Faith,” *Expository Times* 68 (1957): 111-14; James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 161-205; Howard, “On the Faith of Christ”; Markus Barth, “The Faith of the Messiah,” *Heythrop Journal* 10 (1969): 363-70; Donald W. B. Robinson, “Faith of Jesus Christ: a New Testament Debate,” *Reformed Theological Review* 29 (1970): 71-81. On the history of the discussion, see Debbie Hunn, “Debating the Faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Twentieth-Century Scholarship,” in *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 15-31; Benjamin Schliesser, “‘Exegetical Amnesia’ and ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ: The ‘Faith of Christ’ in Nineteenth-Century Pauline Scholarship,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 66 (2015): 61-89; Morna D. Hooker, “Another Look at Πίστις Χριστοῦ,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 69 (2016): 46-62.

<sup>94</sup>See especially Harrisville, “Pistis Christou: Witness of the Fathers”; Elliott, “Πίστις Χριστοῦ in the Church Fathers and Beyond.” For a dissenting view, see Wallis, *The Faith of Jesus Christ in Early Christian Traditions*. Sprinkle, “Πίστις Χριστοῦ as an Eschatological Event,” 180-82, adduces a handful of examples that might plausibly be regarded as supportive of his “third view.”

genitive, but that the phrase as a whole connotes an eschatological event that has transpired in Christ.<sup>95</sup> Preston Sprinkle, the foremost advocate of this perspective, notes that some of Paul's references to πίστις Χριστοῦ do not seem to refer to an activity performed by Christ or believers, but to a reality brought about by the Christ-event.

Sprinkle appeals especially to two passages in Galatians for support of viewing πίστις Χριστοῦ in this manner. First, he notes that ἀκοῆς πιστεῶς in 3:2, 5 is best translated as “report of faith.”<sup>96</sup> Secondly, Sprinkle points to the way in which πίστις is “revealed” and “arrives” in 3:23-25 as evidence that πίστις refers to an event.<sup>97</sup> The pronouncement of the arrival and revelation of πίστις combines with the temporal terms which permeate 3:19-25 to indicate that the πίστις referred to is an eschatological phenomenon rather than a mental disposition held by believers.<sup>98</sup>

Sprinkle recognizes that his explanation of πίστις Χριστοῦ carries significant weaknesses. First, he notes that this view does not mesh well with Paul's use of Genesis 15:6 as an illustration of the πίστις of which he speaks.<sup>99</sup> Secondly, he realizes that the eschatological event interpretation cannot explain πίστις Χριστοῦ in all of the debated passages. Furthermore, his interpretation is difficult to concretize. The nebulous terminology of “eschatological event” is not specific enough, and at times the line

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<sup>95</sup>Sprinkle, “Πίστις Χριστοῦ as an Eschatological Event,” 165-84; Benjamin Schliesser, “‘Christ-Faith’ as an Eschatological Event (Galatians 3.23-26): A ‘Third View’ on Πίστις Χριστοῦ,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38 (2016): 277-300. Cf. Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit*, 57-58.

<sup>96</sup>Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 148-49, arrives at the same conclusion, yet his reading of πίστις in these verses differs from that of Sprinkle.

<sup>97</sup>See also 1:23; 6:10, where πίστις, presumably by metonymy, stands in as name for the “Christian” movement.

<sup>98</sup>Seifrid's genitive of source view also provides a solid explanation for the subtle shift in Paul's πίστις terminology in Gal 3:23-25. On this, see below.

<sup>99</sup>Sprinkle, “Πίστις Χριστοῦ as an Eschatological Event,” 183-84. Sprinkle observes that the same criticism may be levied against the subjective genitive reading.

between this reading and the subjective genitive view is blurred. Nevertheless, his “third view” recognizes an element of complexity in Paul's πίστις terminology that has not always been acknowledged, and he supplies a cogent explanation especially of Galatians 3:22-25.

Coming to a decision regarding πίστις Χριστοῦ is extremely difficult. Scholars on all sides have levied excellent lexical, grammatical, exegetical, and theological arguments for their solutions. Having surveyed and assessed the major arguments for each view, the best explanation is still the objective genitive. Paul's use of Genesis 15:6 in his discussions of πίστις is too steep a slope for proponents of the subjective genitive to climb. Furthermore, the witness of tradition is a classic instance where silence speaks louder than words. It appears that 1800 years of interpretation simply assumed the objective genitive was the correct reading; the question was not even debated.<sup>100</sup>

It is perhaps wise to allow that some further explanation must be provided for those instances where Paul begins to speak of πίστις in more objective terms. With reference especially to Galatians 3:23-25 (cf. 1:23; 6:10), it appears necessary to supply a more nuanced explanation for the manner in which Paul subtly alters his use of πίστις. In saying “faith came” in 3:25, Paul clearly evokes “until the Seed comes” of 3:19. Therefore, the arrival of “faith” somehow matches the arrival of the Seed, who is Christ (3:16). Does Paul mean to say here that πίστις = Christ? Clearly he does not, for this would make nonsense out of πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in 3:22. The subjective genitive view would have Paul saying that “(Christ's) faithfulness came.” This does not appear to

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<sup>100</sup>It is true that Athanasius (*C. Ar.* II.6, 9) debated πιστ- terminology with reference to Jesus, but his quarrel with the Arians concerned Heb 3:2, which uses the adjective πιστός and not πίστις. The Pauline πίστις Χριστοῦ passages do not arise in the discussion. Cf. R. Barry Matlock, “Saving Faith: The Rhetoric and Semantics of Πίστις in Paul,” in *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 87-88.

be a coherent way of describing the faithfulness of Christ. With reference to Sprinkle's view, without question Christ's arrival on the scene qualifies as an “eschatological event.” However, it also seems unnatural to speak of the “arrival” and “unveiling” of an event, or even of the gospel message (especially given that Paul believes the gospel had already been preached to Abraham, 3:8). If, however, one remains within the normal semantic range of πίστις, a viable explanation still exists, that Paul speaks by way of metonymy. Paul can say both that “the Seed” came, and that “faith” came, because the Seed—Christ—brings πίστις in its ultimate eschatological manifestation. Πίστις as God ultimately intended it is πίστις directed toward Jesus Christ, and as such Paul can say (without fear of anachronism) that the arrival of Christ is the arrival of faith. Christ is not only the proper object of faith, but he is also its bringer, the seed whose arrival can also be equated with the coming of faith itself.<sup>101</sup> In this sense, Seifrid's suggestion that Χριστοῦ functions somewhat like a genitive of source is helpful.<sup>102</sup> This reading does not endanger the broader conclusion that πίστις Χριστοῦ in Paul refers consistently to the faith that believers have in Christ. The πίστις of 3:22-25, therefore, is properly a faith directed toward Christ, and it “came” and was “revealed” when its proper object arrived on the scene of eschatological history.<sup>103</sup>

### **Exegesis of Galatians 3:23-25**

In 3:23-25, Paul elaborates on three aspects of the Law's role. First, he

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<sup>101</sup>In the end, this view is not far distant from the explanation given by Sprinkle. The primary difference lies in Sprinkle's equation of the Christ-event itself with πίστις, whereas the view presented here has Paul speaking metonymically of the coming of Christ as the coming of faith itself, because the Christ-event evokes faith. As a result, Christ can be both source and object of faith.

<sup>102</sup>Seifrid, “The Faith of Christ,” 129-46.

<sup>103</sup>Das, *Galatians*, 374.

reiterates that being “under Law” entails imprisonment. Paul does not so much argue this point as simply restate it (“guarded,” “locked up,” “under a παιδαγωγός”). His previous comments (3:10-13, 22) have already made the point well enough. The confinement is an imprisonment rather than a “protective custody,” as demonstrated by its locus—“under sin”—which is nearly synonymous with the previous strong language about being “under a curse” and the resultant need for redemption.<sup>104</sup> Paul's second and third points in 3:23-25 are (a) that the Law's ultimate purpose was to bring about faith in Jesus Christ,<sup>105</sup> and (b) that the imprisonment under Law had a limited duration.<sup>106</sup>

Verse 23 introduces the paragraph by summarizing its three main points. Πρό, εἰς, and μέλλουσιν emphasize the temporal dimension of Paul's argument. The middle phrase ὑπὸ νόμον ἐφρουρούμεθα συγκλειόμενοι describes the imprisonment. Finally, Paul alludes to the purposive aspect of the Law with the εἰς. Then, in verses 24-25, Paul works all three points into a neat chiasm:<sup>107</sup>

A	ὥστε ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν
B	εἰς Χριστόν
C	ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν

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<sup>104</sup>Bruce, *Galatians*, 180; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 144-45; Tarazi, *Galatians*, 125; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 246-47; Moo, *Galatians*, 239-40; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 160. Contra esp. Dunn, *Galatians*, 197; also Belleville, “Under Law,” 70; Norman H. Young, “Paidagogos: the Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor,” *Novum Testamentum* 29 (1987): 170-71; David T. Gordon, “A Note on Paidagōgos in Galatians 3:24-25,” *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 153-54; Matera, *Galatians*, 136.

Likewise, the similarities between 3:13 and 4:5 clarify that when Paul speaks of being “under Law,” he speaks of a situation which brings a curse and requires Christ's redemption. The correlation between a “locking up” (συγκλείω) both “under sin” in 3:22 and “under Law” in 3:23 shows that the concepts are basically the same. The fact that this “locking up” called for a “redemption” demonstrates that its subjects were effectively rendered prisoners, with no means of escape apart from external intervention.

<sup>105</sup>Fee, *Galatians*, 137-38; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 249.

<sup>106</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 178; Bruce, *Galatians*, 183; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 149; Matera, *Galatians*, 140; Tarazi, *Galatians*, 164; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 269; de Boer, *Galatians*, 241; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 249; Das, *Galatians*, 375.

<sup>107</sup>Moo, *Galatians*, 243, notes correctly that the ὥστε here demarcates 3:24-25 as a summary of what precedes.





so that justification and life might only be granted through faith in Christ.

### **Excursus: What is the Meaning of the Παιδαγωγός Metaphor?**

Interpreters quarrel about the meaning of Paul's παιδαγωγός metaphor. It could be read as complimenting or criticizing the Law. Additionally, the idea of a παιδαγωγός could evoke a bevy of implications, including the ideas of protection, guidance, discipline, restriction, and moral development. A healthy understanding of the way metaphors work should prevent the error of illegitimate totality transfer; that is, one should not import every idea associated with a παιδαγωγός into Paul's conception of the Law.<sup>110</sup> Instead, one should depend upon the context to illuminate the aspects of the metaphor that the author intends to highlight. Within the context, the παιδαγωγός metaphor describes three aspects of the Law: its temporary nature, its restrictive character, and its telos of leading to justification by faith.

Paul's primary point in using the παιδαγωγός metaphor is to illustrate the temporary (and expired) character of the Law.<sup>111</sup> Paul introduced this idea in 3:19 with ἄχρις οὗ, and continues it in 3:23 with πρὸ τοῦ and μέλλουσιν. The παιδαγωγός metaphor takes up the theme with εἰς Χριστόν, in which the εἰς likely carries some temporal freight, in 3:24. Finally, the genitive absolute ἐλθούσης τῆς πίστεως, followed by οὐκέτι (“now

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<sup>110</sup>Rightly Gordon, “A Note on Paidagōgos in Galatians 3:24-25,” 150; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*; 265; Tsang, *From Slaves to Sons*, 113.

<sup>111</sup>R. Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7,” 56; Young, “Paidagogos,” 174; Gordon, “A Note on Paidagōgos in Galatians 3:24-25,” 152; Matera, *Galatians*, 161; Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 78-79; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 265; Jeffrey R. Wisdom, *Blessing for the Nations and the Curse of the Law* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 152; Tsang, *From Slaves to Sons*, 114; Michael J. Smith, “The Role of the Pedagogue in Galatians,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (2006): 207-8; Martinus C. de Boer, “The Meaning of the Phrase Ta Stoicheia Tou Kosmou in Galatians,” *New Testament Studies* 53 (2007): 211; Oakes, *Galatians*, 127.

that faith has come, no longer. . .”), concludes the temporal theme.<sup>112</sup> This temporal aspect of Paul's argument fits the image of a παιδαγωγός well, for παιδαγωγοί only supervised their charges during their childhood.<sup>113</sup> After the child matured, the παιδαγωγός necessarily relinquished this role in the child's life.<sup>114</sup>

A second point of the παιδαγωγός metaphor is to convey the idea of the Law's restriction.<sup>115</sup> The verbs φρουρέω and συγκλείω make this plain. Although it is likely that the subject of these verbs is not (an implied) ὁ νόμος, but rather ἡ γραφή from 3:22, the result is the same.<sup>116</sup> The Scripture, which is distinct from the Law, uses the Law as its

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<sup>112</sup>When Paul elaborates on this word picture in 4:1-4, the temporal theme once again proliferates (ἐφ' ὅσον χρόνον . . . ἄχρι τῆς προθεσμίας . . . ὅτε ἡμεν νήπιοι . . . ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου).

<sup>113</sup>The παιδ- root in παιδαγωγός evinces this temporary role. Once a boy or girl came of age, he or she would no longer be referred to as a παῖς or παιδίον (cf. 4:1-2, where νήπιος functions as a technical legal term with the same meaning). Paul avoids referring to individuals “under Law” as υἱοί throughout this section. It is only “in Christ Jesus, through faith” that people become “sons.” In 4:1-2, the child is described as an “heir,” but not as a “son.” It is only after Christ's arrival and redemption in “the fullness of time” that υἰοθεσία is granted (4:4-5).

<sup>114</sup>BDAG, s.v. “παιδαγωγός”: “When the young man became of age, the π. was no longer needed.” Also David John Williams, *Paul's Metaphors: Their Context and Character* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 62.

<sup>115</sup>BDAG, s.v. “παιδαγωγός”; R. Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7,” 56; Belleville, ““Under Law,”” 60; Young, “Paidagogos,” 171; Hong, *Law in Galatians*, 160; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 268; Tarazi, *Galatians*, 163-64; Wisdom, *Blessing for the Nations and the Curse of the Law*, 150; de Boer, “The Meaning of the Phrase Ta Stoicheia Tou Kosmou in Galatians,” 211-13; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 162.

<sup>116</sup>Because ἡ γραφή is the subject of συγκλείω in 3:22, it is likely also the subject of the same verb in the next verse. Paul was probably making an intentional distinction between ἡ γραφή and ὁ νόμος in these verses, for he never uses ἡ γραφή as a synonym for ὁ νόμος anywhere in his writings. Additionally, ὁ νόμος does not function as the subject of 3:23. Instead, νόμος is the object in the prepositional phrase “under Law,” describing the location where people are “locked up” until faith is revealed.

Lull, “The Law was Our Pedagogue,” 487, argues that the Law is the implied grammatical subject of ἐφρουρούμεθα, while ἡ γραφή is the subject of συγκλειόμενοι. He believes that συγκλειόμενοι is either concessive (“although we were locked up, we were being guarded”) or causal (“because we were locked up, we were being guarded”) in relation to ἐφρουρούμεθα. Although Lull's reading of the grammar is possible, it is improbable. In support of this interpretation, he argues that the δέ which introduces 3:23 has a “slightly adversative note” which hints at a tension between συγκλείω and φρουρέω. However, it is better to read the δέ as functioning in its customary discourse capacity of continuation and development (Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010], 28-31). An adversative δέ does not align well with 3:22, and renders the final phrase of 3:23—εις τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι—tautologous.

instrument of restraint. Thus, to be “under Law” is to lack the freedom of decision-making and self-determination. Just like a *παιδαγωγός*, the Law restricted and restrained its charges. According to Paul, Scripture placed all “under sin” by subjecting them to the Law. Furthermore, the Law restrained by its inability to supply life, righteousness, sonship, and inheritance. Just as a child who was still “under a *παιδαγωγός*” was not yet capable of controlling his estate, so also those “under Law” have not yet received their “inheritance” of righteousness and life.

Although many interpreters stop at this point, the *παιδαγωγός* metaphor also points toward a third aspect of the Law, indicating that justification from faith is a *telos* of the Law. This is not to say that the Law accomplishes justification (2:21; 3:21); rather, the Law's imprisoning role has the ultimate purpose of leading toward faith. Just as a child under a *παιδαγωγός* would long for the day when he becomes free of his guardian's control, the Law restricts in order to point its prisoners toward freedom. The *ἵνα* clauses in 3:22, 24 show that this is an implication of the metaphor.<sup>117</sup> As a result, the *εἰς* phrases in 3:23, 24 also include the nuance of purpose.<sup>118</sup> This does not preclude the interpretive

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Moreover, if Paul meant to communicate a concessive idea through the participle, he would likely have positioned it before *ἐφρουρούμεθα*. Its position after the verb separates *ἐφρουρούμεθα* from the prepositional phrase which, according to Lull's reading, would adverbially modify it. Another problem with Lull's reading is that *νόμος*, rather than being the grammatical subject of *ἐφρουρούμεθα*, is the accusative object of the preposition *ὑπό*. If the Law were indeed the subject of the “guarding” action, Paul should have used the genitive *ὑπὸ νόμου* (cf. Rom 3:21) or simply made *ὁ νόμος* the grammatical subject of the clause and used the active voice, third person singular of *φρουρέω*. Finally, the context does not commend any tension between *ἡ γραφή* and *ὁ νόμος*. Rather, the fact that the Law is “certainly not” against the promises of God (3:21) suggests that the Scripture (which may be a metonym for the divine will as expressed through the entirety of the Scriptures) and the Law are working together to create a state in which the promise might be granted to those who believe. Thus, the traditional reading of 3:23, in which “we were being guarded” supplies an exegetical explanation for “locked up” in both 3:22 and 3:23, remains the best interpretation.

<sup>117</sup>Because *ἵνα* clauses rarely convey simple result, the best interpretation of them here is that they indicate purpose as well. In the parallel passage 4:1-5, Paul does not include a purpose statement like the ones in 3:22, 24. Because *τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου* is not coterminous with the Law, Paul cannot say that “the elementary principles of the world” have the purpose of leading to faith.

<sup>118</sup>Byrne, *Sons of God—Seed of Abraham*, 163-64; Moo, *Galatians*, 242-43.

option of a temporal aspect for εἰς; the two nuances work together. Precisely because the Law's imprisoning function was meant to direct people toward faith in Christ (telic), once that purpose had been accomplished through the arrival of Christ/faith, this aspect of the Law's role came to an end (temporal). It is likely that Paul chose εἰς rather than ἄχρι or ἕως “to hint at” this aspect of the Law's role.<sup>119</sup> This telic interpretation of the παιδαγωγός metaphor aligns with a common role shared by most παιδαγωγοί, the task of leading children to school. The etymology of the term itself points in this direction, as the embedded αἰ- root speaks of the role of leading or bringing.<sup>120</sup>

Many interpreters view Paul's παιδαγωγός metaphor as implying a protective role for the Law. While protection may have been a common task of παιδαγωγοί in Paul's day, and it is easy to find evidence that Jews viewed the Law as a protector (cf. *Letter of Aristeas* 142), Paul provides no clues in Galatians that the Law functioned in this way. It is therefore unlikely that the παιδαγωγός metaphor implies a protective function for the Law.<sup>121</sup>

Thus, Paul used the παιδαγωγός word picture to illuminate three primary facts regarding the Law: its restrictive nature, the temporal limit of this restriction, and the Law's ultimate purpose of leading to faith in Christ. One other potential nuance of the

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<sup>119</sup>The phrase comes from Moo, *Galatians*, 243. This explains Paul's shift from the strictly temporal ἄχρι in 3:19 to the more versatile εἰς in 3:23. Paul already emphasizes the temporal argument in 3:23 with πρὸ τοῦ and μέλλουσιν.

This also matches the best interpretation of Romans 10:4. Rightly Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 638-41. There is not space here to deal with this highly contested passage in any detail.

<sup>120</sup>BDAG, s.v. “παιδαγωγός,” describes the duty of the παιδαγωγός as “to conduct a boy or youth to and from school.” Cf. Williams, *Paul's Metaphors*, 61. Perhaps also in Paul's mind is the idea of the παιδαγωγός conducting his ward through the uncertainties and difficulties of youth, with the ultimate objective of safely bringing him to mature adulthood.

<sup>121</sup>Contra Dunn, *Galatians*, 198; Gordon, “A Note on Paidagōgos in Galatians 3:24-25,” 153-54; Matera, *Galatians*, 136; Smith, “The Role of the Pedagogue in Galatians,” 210-11.

metaphor presents itself; the παιδαγωγός word picture may imply moral guidance. This was a regular role of παιδαγωγοί, and it meshes with Paul's argument in 5:13-25 about how the Spirit, rather than the Law, serves as the moral guide for believers.<sup>122</sup>

Nevertheless, the immediate context of Galatians 3 shows no concern over the matter of moral guidance, so if the metaphor conveys this idea, it is only a secondary implication.

It is almost impossible to translate παιδαγωγός. The English transliteration “pedagogue” is inadequate both because it implies a teaching role, and because it fails to convey the ideas of restraint and guidance.<sup>123</sup> A suitable alternative should communicate the idea of an overseer who exercises restrictive control over his charge, whose oversight is limited to the time of his ward's minority, and whose goal is to guide them safely through the hazards of youth. The παιδαγωγός is more than a babysitter, caretaker, leader, or guide. In this instance, any “translation is treason.” Perhaps the least unsatisfactory English counterparts might be “guardian”<sup>124</sup> or “custodian.”<sup>125</sup>

### **Summary of Galatians 3:19-25**

Paul's objective in 3:19-25, where he describes the Law's function, duration, and purpose, is to demonstrate to the Galatians that the Law's role in their lives is distinct from what the false teachers had taught them, and, furthermore, that it had already completed that role and arrived at its terminus. It appears difficult to deny that Paul's

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<sup>122</sup>Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 266.

<sup>123</sup>Both BDAG, s.v. “παιδαγωγός”; L&N, vol. 1: §36.5, carefully differentiate παιδαγωγός from διδάσκαλος. Also R. Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7,” 55; Smith, “The Role of the Pedagogue in Galatians,” 198. For this reason, “tutor” (NASB, NKJV) is also unsatisfactory.

<sup>124</sup>BDAG, s.v. “παιδαγωγός”; L&N, vol. 1: §36.5. Cf. ESV, HCSB, NET, NIV.

<sup>125</sup>R. Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7,” 56; Belleville, “Under Law,” 70. Cf. RSV.

argumentation is, at least in part, salvation-historical.<sup>126</sup> Paul begins by emphasizing the primacy of the promise God made to Abraham, and, as though to remove any doubts about the *heilsgeschichtliche* character of his logic, he includes the historical fact of the 430 year interval between the promise and the arrival of the Law. This statement sets the tone for the starkly chronological line of argumentation which follows. Paul rapidly shifts his focus away from the historical precedence of the promise, and moves to an emphatic insistence upon the temporal limitation of the Law. No fewer than five times (“*until* the Seed comes,” “*before* faith arrived,” “*until* the *coming* faith was unveiled,” “has been our παιδαγωγός *until* Christ,” “*now* that faith has come, *no longer* are we under a παιδαγωγός”) from 3:19-25 does Paul explicitly mention the expiration date for the Law, an expiration date that has come and passed now that Christ, the Seed, has come.<sup>127</sup>

To argue for an explicitly salvation-historical logic, however, would be to miss the distinctly apocalyptic tenor of Paul's reasoning.<sup>128</sup> While it is true, historically speaking, that the promise did precede the Law by approximately 430 years, and that Christ's incarnation, life, death, and resurrection are all matters of true and verifiable history which transpired some time after the Law's inception, Paul does not think primarily in terms of historical chronological sequence.<sup>129</sup> Paul's view is apocalyptic, in

<sup>126</sup>Schreiner, *Galatians*, 247-48.

<sup>127</sup>The temporal references continue piling up in 4:1-4: “for the *whole time* the heir is a minor,” *until the time established* by the father,” “we were enslaved,” “*when the fullness of time* came.”

<sup>128</sup>Rightly Andrew H. Wakefield, *Where to Live: The Hermeneutical Significance of Paul's Citations from Scripture in Galatians 3:1-14* (Academia Biblica. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 192-93; Schliesser, “‘Christ-Faith’ as an Eschatological Event (Galatians 3.23-26),” 283. Scholars who emphasize the apocalyptic nature of Paul's presentation include J. Louis Martyn, “Apocalyptic Antinomies in Paul's Letter to the Galatians,” *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985): 410–24; Bruce Hansen, *All of You Are One: The Social Vision of Galatians 3.28, 1 Corinthians 12.13 and Colossians 3.11* (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 82-86; de Boer, *Galatians*, 31-36, 79-82.

<sup>129</sup>Moreover, as was argued above, the primary point of mentioning the 430 years in 3:17 was not to indicate historical precedence for the promise, but to show that the Law, which came after Abraham's

which this “history” of promise → Law/curse → Christ/redemption repeats itself in the lives of individuals. Even though Christ has finished his initial work in the time and space of world history, the Law still accomplishes its enslaving, cursing, condemning task in the lives of all people (3:22). In this sense, a strict salvation-historical interpretation cannot fully account for Paul's reasoning. Because the Law still works to condemn and curse people, Paul cannot be thinking in strictly *heilsgeschichtliche* terms.<sup>130</sup>

The Law has already fulfilled for the Galatians all that it was designed to do with respect to justification and life. It has locked them up under sin through its curse of condemnation. Having done this, its work is accomplished. It has, through this work, prepared the way for “the promise from faith in Jesus Christ” to fulfill the task of providing righteousness and life.

### **Galatians 3:21-25 and Social Identity Theory**

Although Galatians 3:21-25 serves to describe the Law's good role in God's plan, Paul cannot help but continue to devalue it in the eyes of the Galatians. Is the Law opposed to the promises of God? Of course not. But, the very fact that it does not compete with the promises means that the Law cannot bring life or righteousness. Additionally, even though the Law has the positive telos of leading people toward faith in Christ, while they are under it, they are effectively held captive, like a prisoner under a warden or a young child who is subject to the authority of his guardian. The Law thus performs what might be termed a negatively positive role in God's plan. It restricts in

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death, was not a legal addendum to the promise.

<sup>130</sup>If *Heilsgeschichte* has any role to play in the argument, it may function typologically. That is, the history of Israel, which follows the pattern of promise → Law/curse/imprisonment → Christ/redemption, prefigures that which is recapitulated individually in the lives of believers.

order to point toward freedom. Those who submit to the Law as an end in itself remain in a perpetual state of restriction, and never receive the promise of faith, life, and righteousness.

Paul's description of the Law's job, therefore, serves to highlight for the Galatian believers that the Law is expired for them, and a return to it would be foolish. It belongs to an old part of their identity that they are not meant to revisit. Just as it was necessary for a child to endure a period of maturation under the auspices of a παιδαγωγός, so also was it necessary to undergo the guardianship of the Law. But just as no right-minded college graduate attempts to return to Kindergarten—such a move would be foolish, embarrassing, and shameful—so neither do believers who have received the promise from faith in Jesus Christ go back to life under the Law.

In terms of Social Identity Theory, the implications are obvious. First, no one aspires to become a prisoner. An “under Law” identity creates this negative social status. Secondly, people naturally seek social identities that offer desirable benefits. In this case, the Law only offers imprisonment, whereas the promise of faith in Christ Jesus brings freedom, life, and righteousness. Finally, “under Law” is an expired identity. Educated adults don't return to elementary school, and those who have graduated from being “under Law” to being “in Christ” don't go back to the Law.

The SIT options of *social change* and *social mobility* clarify Paul's exposition in this passage. Although the rival teachers were telling the Galatians that they needed to move into a new social group—one that identified with the Law—in order to obtain Abraham's inheritance, Paul emphasized that the social group that identifies with Christ is really the one that confers life and righteousness. Thus, the Galatian believers did not need to make a move into a new group, but to reevaluate the benefits their current group



status already offered.<sup>131</sup>

### Galatians 3:26-28

The Galatians have already received the promise of justification from faith in Jesus Christ, and yet, astonishingly (and this is why Paul is vexed to the point of aporia—see 4:20), they are attempting to return to that stage of curse and condemnation from which they were redeemed in Christ. They have already received the sonship they so desire, and this apart from Law (here Paul recalls the same line of reasoning he pursued in 3:2-5). For this reason, Paul grounds (γάρ, v. 26)<sup>132</sup> the most important statement in his argument—“you are no longer under a παιδαγωγός”—in the fact that they are already sons of God, in Christ Jesus, and through faith.<sup>133</sup> There is no mention of Law, because

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<sup>131</sup>In SIT, social change is often exercised by groups which have no ability to improve their status by means of social mobility. In the case of the Galatians, however, the option of joining a new social group via Judaizing was available to them. Thus, the Galatians were attempting to make a superfluous social maneuver simply because they didn't understand the benefits of being “in Christ.”

<sup>132</sup>De Boer, *Galatians*, 242; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 255. NIV inexplicably renders γάρ here as “so.”

<sup>133</sup>Commentators debate the importance of Paul's change from first to second person between 3:25 and 3:26. It is common among scholars to aver that the παιδαγωγός metaphor of the Law in the preceding verses applied only to the Jewish people (Betz, *Galatians*, 185; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 145; Dunn, *Galatians*, 201; Matera, *Galatians*, 143-44; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 267; Fee, *Galatians*, 137). When making his transition to speaking of all people, then, Paul switched to second person subjects, which he further emphasized by his use of “all” (πάντες). In this case, the argument functions as a comparison: “If the Law's task is already finished for *us* Jews, then it surely has no place in the lives of *you* Gentiles” (cf. Byrne, *Sons of God—Seed of Abraham*, 172-73).

There are several reasons, however, to conclude that the παιδαγωγός metaphor of 3:23-25 applies equally to Gentiles as well (Bruce, *Galatians*, 183; Martyn, *Galatians*, 362; de Boer, *Galatians*, 238; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 246; Das, *Galatians*, 372-73; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 161). First, whatever Paul means by τὰ πάντα in 3:22, it must include both Jews and Gentiles. Paul gives no indication that he transitions from speaking universally to referencing only Jews between the two verses. Several similarities between 3:22 and 3:23-25, including the repetition of συγκλείω, with the double use of ὑπό phrases as the locale for the imprisonment, followed in each case by a ἵνα clause referring to πίστις, indicate that the two verses describe the same thing. Furthermore, the γάρ with which Paul introduces 3:26 most likely indicates that he grounds the conclusion of 3:25 in the fact of sonship through faith in 3:26. The πάντες in 3:26 clarifies that the subjects of that verse are all people, whether Jew or Gentile. As such, it would be highly unlikely that he changes the subject between these verses. Gal 4 supplies corroborative evidence that Paul's alternation of subjects is not meant to indicate a distinction between Jews and Gentiles, for after saying “we were enslaved to the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου,” Paul later says “you are turning again to the στοιχεῖα.” He also moves seamlessly between “we,” “you,” “our,” and “you” in 4:5-7 in a manner that

Law has nothing to do with becoming a son of God, which is equivalent to receiving righteousness and life. Paul appeals once again to the Galatians' experience—they have been baptized into Christ—to prove to them that they are God's sons, for baptism is the act of “putting on Christ.”<sup>134</sup> All who have clothed themselves with Christ are thereby (γάρ, v. 27) endued with Christ's identity as son of God.<sup>135</sup>

In referring to the Galatian believers as “sons of God,” Paul brings his argument full circle. The Galatians were trying to find a means of entry into Abraham's lineage, and Paul demonstrates that through baptism into Jesus Christ, they have attained this goal, apart from Judaizing. The concept of being a “son of God” derives from the OT, where YHWH had bestowed this honorific title upon the nation of Israel.<sup>136</sup> Thus, Paul is

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indicates he intends no distinction between the subjects.

Although it would supply a convenient solution to the πίστις Χριστοῦ debate, “in Christ Jesus” should not be construed as the object of “faith” (contra Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], 112; NASB, NKJV, HCSB). NRSV, ESV, NET, NIV rightly separate “faith” from “in Christ Jesus” (The textual variant in P<sup>46</sup> indicates that at least one early scribe had difficulty with Paul's syntax here). “In Christ Jesus” is most likely a status or position arrived at “through faith,” which Paul adds to describe precisely how faith renders one a “son of God” (explicated further in v. 27). Thus, an interpretive translation might be, “For you are all sons of God, because you are in Christ Jesus through faith.”

<sup>134</sup>Contra Dunn, *Galatians*, 203-4, the baptism referred to here likely includes the physical act of undergoing the rite of baptism. Dunn expresses a valid concern that Paul “would have been conscious of the danger of giving baptism the same exclusive force as his opponents gave circumcision,” and he is correct to emphasize the “vivid” nature and “experiential reality” of conversion (Gal 3:1-5). However, these points are insufficient to exclude the initiatory rite from Paul's argument here. Betz, *Galatians*, 187, distinguishes those aspects of Christian existence that Paul might have considered “objective,” such as faith, the gift of the Spirit, and adoption, from the external sign of baptism, which for Paul did not function as a “*ritus ex opere operato*.”

<sup>135</sup>Following Paul's discourse backwards from 3:27 to 3:25 shows that the fundamental purpose of the παιδαγωγός metaphor is to emphasize the expiration of the Law's temporary role for all those who are “in Christ.” Paul's logic is as follows: (1) you were baptized into Christ, meaning you have clothed yourself with Christ (v. 27); (2) because (γάρ) you are clothed with Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, διὰ τῆς πίστεως), you are sons of God (v. 26); (3) because (γάρ) you are sons of God, you are no longer under a παιδαγωγός.

Ironically, the Galatians were in danger of attempting to attain sonship to God by means of Law, but Paul is saying that the sonship they already have means they are exempt from the Law.

<sup>136</sup>Exod 4:22; Deut 14:1; Hos 1:10; 11:1. Cf Deut 1:31; 32:6; Isa 1:2; Jer 31:9, 20; Mal 1:6; Sir 36:11; 2 Esd 6:58; Jub. 1:23-24. See esp. Byrne, *Sons of God—Seed of Abraham*, 173-74; also Dunn, *Galatians*, 202; Matera, *Galatians*, 144-45; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 270; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 256; Moo, *Galatians*, 250; Das, *Galatians*, 378.

telling the Galatians that they have now received the same familial relationship to God as the historical descendants of Abraham, a relationship that had previously been reserved for Jews.<sup>137</sup> Paul is not saying that the Galatian believers have now become members of the ethno-national group Israel, but that they had received the eschatological culmination toward which God's dealings with Israel always pointed. There is no indication within the epistle that the Galatians were concerned about becoming “sons of God,” only that they desired to become “seed of Abraham.” If it is true that 3:26-28 echo a familiar baptismal liturgy, then the Gentile Galatians had the solution before them all along: being a “son of God” is the eschatological equivalent of being a “seed of Abraham.”<sup>138</sup> The false teachers had so confused the Galatians that they were seeking an identity they already possessed.

Verse 28 confirms that the Galatians' concern revolved around ethnic lines. “There is neither Jew nor Greek,” Paul boldly pronounces.<sup>139</sup> If, as some scholars note, the antitheses slave/free, male/female are not germane to the argument of Galatians, why does Paul include them here?<sup>140</sup> Although the argument is ultimately “unverifiable,”

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<sup>137</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 185-86; Matera, *Galatians*, 144-45; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 270.

<sup>138</sup>Charles A. Wanamaker, “The Son and the Sons of God: A Study in Elements of Paul's Christological and Soteriological Thought,” (PhD diss., Durham University, 1980), 321, says, “The Galatians already knew of their own sonship to God, and Paul was able to draw upon it in his attempt to prove their sonship to Abraham.”

<sup>139</sup>The two antitheses which follow—slave/free, male/female—are additional implications of Paul's line of argumentation, but his primary concern falls upon the first set (Martyn, *Galatians*, 376; Betz, *Galatians*, 182; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 154; de Boer, *Galatians*, 243-44; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 173-74). Snodgrass points out that an “obvious reason why male/female and slave/free issues did not receive the attention that the Jew/Gentile issue did is that there was no one saying 'You must be a free person or a male to become a Christian.' The gospel was not at stake [in the other two pairings].” See Klyne R. Snodgrass, “Galatians 3:28: Conundrum or Solution?” in *Women, Authority, & the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 179.

<sup>140</sup>It is possible that Paul adds (notice its absence in the parallel passages 1 Cor 12:13 and Col 3:11) the third pairing (male/female) to the list due to the centrality of circumcision, and its obvious inaccessibility for women, in the opposing teachers' arguments. See Troy L. Martin, “The Covenant of Circumcision (Gen 17:9-14) and the Situational Antitheses in Gal 3:28,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122 (2003): 111-25; Ben Witherington III, “Rite and Rights for Women – Galatians 3.28,” *New Testament Studies* 27 (1981): 593-604. But see Judith Gundry-Volf, “Male and Female in Creation and New Creation:

commentators who see here a quotation of an early baptismal liturgy are probably correct.<sup>141</sup> In favor of the suggestion that Paul cites a baptismal formula here are (1) the reference to baptism in 3:27, despite the fact that Paul nowhere else speaks of baptism in the epistle;<sup>142</sup> (2) “being clothed with Christ” potentially alludes to the practice of clothing baptizands with a clean robe; (3) it is difficult to see how the final two antitheses

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Interpretations of Galatians 3:28c in 1 Corinthians 7,” in *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry*, ed. Thomas E. Schmidt and Moisés Silva, 95-121 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), who proposes that all three antitheses are original to the liturgy, but Paul removes the male/female pairing from his 1 Corinthians and Colossians citations due to misinterpretations and misapplications.

In an unpublished presentation, Esau McCaulley has suggested that the three antitheses are all germane to the argument of the epistle, and that the connecting link between them is the concept of inheritance. According to the thesis of McCaulley, Greeks, slaves, and women were excluded by Jewish law from receiving inheritance. See Esau McCaulley, “Who Will Inherit the Land? Galatians 3:26-29 and Paul’s Interpretation of Jewish Inheritance Law,” presentation at the 67<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, November 17, 2015.

<sup>141</sup>Schreiner, *Galatians*, 257; and Das, *Galatians*, 381, argue that it is impossible to verify a quotation here. Scholars who argue in favor of a quotation include Betz, *Galatians*, 181-85; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 154-55; Witherington, “Rite and Rights,” 597; Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 208-18; G. Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians*, 136-37; Gundry-Volf, “Male and Female in Creation and New Creation,” 95; Martyn, *Galatians*, 376; Pauline Nigh Hogan, *‘No Longer Male and Female’: Interpreting Galatians 3:28 in Early Christianity* (New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 24-25; de Boer, *Galatians*, 245-47; B. Hansen, *All of You Are One*, 1-11.

By affirming a preexisting baptismal creed, one does not have to accede to suggestions that by quoting the formula, Paul expresses agreement with a Gnostic strand of thought that teaches the removal of gender distinctions and the return to an androgynous primordial human being (Wayne A. Meeks, “The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity,” in *In Search of the Early Christians: Selected Essays*, ed. Allen R. Hilton and H. Gregory Snyder [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002], 3-27; Betz, *Galatians*, 198-200).

Martin “The Covenant of Circumcision,” opposes the suggestion of a baptismal formula, arguing instead that the antitheses derive from distinctions created by the “covenant of circumcision” in Gen 17:9-14. His argument is weakened by (1) the fact that the slave/free antithesis purportedly created by circumcision is not equivalent to the other two antitheses, (2) an inadequate explanation for the word-for-word correspondence of the third antithesis with Gen 1:27, and (3) a tendentious construal of the Galatian situation. In spite of his incorrect assessment of the genesis of the formula in Gal 3:28, some of Martin’s conclusions regarding the implications and meaning of the phrase are spot on (as will be seen below).

The suggestion that Paul quotes, with significant alteration, a dominical saying (Dennis R. MacDonald, *There is No Male and Female: The Fate of a Dominical Saying in Paul and Gnosticism* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987]), is also unverifiable.

It is unwise to jump to conclusions or base interpretations upon purported geneses of a hypothetical quotation here. To speculate over what an “original” source said, and what changes Paul made to it, is dangerous. Even if Paul took over and altered a traditional saying from an outside source, he did not thereby affirm it. What Paul affirmed is what Galatians states, and it must be interpreted thus.

<sup>142</sup>In a context where Paul was battling a false gospel that relied upon adherence to certain

contribute to the argument of Galatians; (4) the formula recurs in a slightly altered form in 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Colossians 3:11; (5) Paul changes from 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> person between 3:25 and 3:26; and (6) Paul refers to “Greek” when one would expect “Gentile.”<sup>143</sup>

Paul introduces the idea of the baptismal rite in 3:27 in order to cite the familiar baptismal formula as another plank in his argument.<sup>144</sup> In essence, he is saying, “Don't you remember the words spoken over you at the time of your conversion? We affirmed then that ethnicity neither admits you into nor excludes you from the family of God. You have already received all that you need, apart from 'works of the Law.’”<sup>145</sup>

Two major questions arise from this verse. First, what exactly does the phrase “there is no . . .” (οὐκ ἔστι) mean? Secondly, what does Paul mean by “you are all one”?

Three times in 3:28, Paul repeats the phrase οὐκ ἔστι.<sup>146</sup> Richard Hove points out that the

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“works of the Law” such as circumcision, food rules, and calendar observance, it would be dangerous to recommend that baptism had somehow replaced such actions and become a new “work” required for justification. With regard to this, Schreiner's suggestion is cogent: “If Paul believed that baptism merely replaced circumcision, he almost certainly would have made such an argument in Galatians, for it seems that such a declaration would have settled the debate over circumcision in Galatia decisively.” See Schreiner, *Galatians*, 257. See also R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 156.

<sup>143</sup>Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 208; de Boer, *Galatians*, 245-47; B. Hansen, *All of You Are One*, 5-6.

<sup>144</sup>The γάρ which introduces 3:27 indicates the ground for 3:26 (Wanamaker, “The Son and the Sons of God,” 326). Thus, the believers' baptism into Christ and clothing with Christ are the proof of their status of sonship, which in turn functions to ground their permanent release from the παιδαγωγός of 3:23-25.

<sup>145</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 184-86; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 155; Hogan, *No Longer Male and Female*, 26; de Boer, *Galatians*, 245. If this line of interpretation is correct, it weakens Dunn's hypothesis that Paul does not refer to the baptismal rite (see Dunn, *Galatians*, 203-4). Still, Dunn's instincts are correct in seeing that Paul's emphasis is less upon the ritual itself, and more upon what it represented (being clothed with Christ) and affirmed (there is neither Jew nor Greek). Cf. also Bruce, *Galatians*, 185-86.

<sup>146</sup>Twice the phrase is followed by the contrastive οὐδέ, giving the rendering “neither . . . nor . . .” The third pairing replaces οὐδέ with καί, but one should not read any significant implications into this alteration. As most scholars recognize, Paul alludes to Gen 1:27 LXX (e.g., Bruce, *Galatians*, 189; Witherington, “Rite and Rights,” 597; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 157; Matera, *Galatians*, 142-43; de Boer, *Galatians*, 246; Das, *Galatians*, 386). For a dissenting voice, see Martin, “The Covenant of Circumcision,” 111-25. Martin's proposal that the entire formula derives from Gen 17:9-14 is crippled by his inability to supply a convincing argument that the slave/free antithesis derives from the same locus. Any suggestion that Paul approves a myth of an androgynous primordial man (e.g., Meeks, “The Image of the Androgyne,”

three sets of antitheses set up by Paul are merisms; they are three ways of dividing all humanity into opposite sides.<sup>147</sup> As Martyn notes, ancient philosophers represented the world by pairs of opposites, in which there was always a “preferable side of the divide.”<sup>148</sup> Modern theories of social identity recognize these social polarities, using the terminology of “ingroup” and “outgroup.” In the context of Paul's discourse with the Galatians, the alleged “ingroup” sides are Jew, free, and male.<sup>149</sup> Paul announces that, in some way, these traditional divisions of humanity no longer obtain. To be certain, these divisions

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165-208; Betz, *Galatians*, 198-200), and a return to that ideal state, is ludicrous. Richard W. Hove, *Equality in Christ?: Galatians 3:28 and the Gender Dispute* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1999), 68, has demolished Betz's argument by pointing out that (1) every NT reference to Gen 1:27 affirms, rather than critiques or rejects, its teaching on gender differentiation; and (2) Paul affirms gender distinctions in other passages. See also Gundry-Volf, “Male and Female in Creation and New Creation,” 102-3, who demonstrates how this suggestion collapses with its flawed interpretation of Gen 1:27; 2:24.

The use of this verse as a proof text to justify the rejection of biblically assigned gender roles within the church (for example, to allow women to serve as pastors) removes Gal 3:28 from its interpretive context and completely misses the point of Paul's argument.

<sup>147</sup>Hove, *Equality in Christ?*, 83; also Snodgrass, “Galatians 3:28,” 174. In light of the fact that slave/free and male/female are both clear examples of merism, it is likely that Jew/Greek is intended to function in the same manner, despite the fact that Ἕλληνα is not strictly synonymous with ἔθνη, the term one might have expected Paul to use here. For a strong argument that Paul referred specifically to the Greek ethnic group and not to Gentiles, see Christopher D. Stanley, “Neither Jew nor Greek: Ethnic Conflict in Graeco-Roman Society,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 64 (1996): 101-24; idem, “The Ethnic Context of Paul's Letters,” in *Christian Origins and Hellenistic Judaism: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament*, ed. Stanley J. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, 177-201 (Leiden: Brill, 2013). Stanley argues in favor of a literal reading of Ἕλληνα against the backdrop of significant tensions between Jews and Greeks in Asia Minor, tensions that new believers would have brought with them into the church. Stanley finds it “virtually impossible” that Paul would be oblivious to this state of affairs (see Stanley, “The Ethnic Context of Paul's Letters,” 198).

Because Paul's writings show little precision in distinguishing between Ἕλληνα and ἔθνος (see esp. 1 Cor 1:22-24), Ἕλληνα is likely a synecdoche referring to all non-Jewish humanity. For Ἕλληνα partnered with Ἰουδαῖος, see Rom 1:16; 2:9, 10; 3:9; 10:12; 1 Cor 1:22, 24; 10:32; 12:13; Gal 3:28; Col 3:11. For ἔθνος paired with Ἰουδαῖος, see Rom 3:29; 9:24; 11:25; 1 Cor 1:23; Gal 2:14, 15; cf. Rom 9:30-31; 15:8-9, 27; 2 Cor 11:26; Gal 2:8, 9; Eph 2:11. Paul's consistent pattern, when joining Ἰουδαῖος with either of the two terms to form a merism (“Jew and/or . . .”), is to use Ἕλληνα. This could be due to the fact that he never uses singular ἔθνος when referring to individuals (so James M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations: The Old Testament and Jewish Background of Paul's Mission to the Nations with Special Reference to the Destination of Galatians* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995], 123). See Rom 1:16; 2:9, 10; 3:9; 10:12; 1 Cor 1:24; 10:32; Gal 3:28; Col 3:11 (cf. 1 Cor 12:13).

<sup>148</sup>Martyn, “Apocalyptic Antinomies in Paul's Letter to the Galatians,” 415.

<sup>149</sup>In most other contexts in the ancient world, the Greek side of the Jew/Greek divide would have been the preferred side.

persist in every way for those who are outside the church; Paul specifies that this removal of differentiation applies only to those who have been baptized “into Christ,” then he repeats that the unity to which he refers transpires “in Christ.”

What, then, is the nature of the removal of distinctions that Paul affirms here? A literal translation (“there is neither Jew nor Gentile”) appears to eradicate the differences.<sup>150</sup> Does Paul intend to communicate an annihilation of major social distinctions? The key to understanding this verse aright is to interpret it within its context. Far too often in the history of interpretation has Galatians 3:28 been removed from the argument of the epistle, and the collateral damage has been incalculable.<sup>151</sup>

Within its context, Galatians 3:28 makes two points. First, it indicates that ethnicity, gender, and social class make no contribution whatsoever to whether or not someone may be a member of God's family.<sup>152</sup> Instead, becoming a “son of God” only occurs in Christ Jesus, through faith.<sup>153</sup> Second, Galatians 3:28 teaches that these social distinctions are irrelevant for ongoing eschatological identity.

Within the progression of Paul's thought, Galatians 3:28 denies social distinctions any role in determining whether one may enter God's family. He has just affirmed that “as many of you as were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.” Verse 28

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<sup>150</sup>With astonishing implications for the male/female antithesis. See Meeks, “Image of the Androgyne,” 165-208; Betz, *Galatians*, 198-200.

<sup>151</sup>There is no room here to enter the massive, ongoing debate over gender roles and sexuality within the church. Suffice it to say that interpretations of Gal 3:28 that ignore the argumentative context of Galatians have functioned as a cornerstone of many misleading conclusions.

<sup>152</sup>This point is actually made in 3:26-27, but 3:28 buttresses those verses by adding commentary to them.

<sup>153</sup>Cf. Snodgrass, “Galatians 3:28,” 174: “The parallel structure found in 3:26 and 3:28b emphasizes that all have the same status as children of God and that all enjoy the unity that is in Christ.”

Paul's emphasis on being “in Christ” permeates this section: “sons of God in Christ Jesus” (3:26), “baptized into Christ,” “clothed yourself with Christ” (3:27), “one in Christ Jesus” (3:28), “of Christ” (3:29).

follows immediately (asyndeton) on the heels of this verse, providing commentary on 3:27, which functions as the ground for the conclusion in 3:26 that all are sons of God, in Christ Jesus, through faith. Thus, the “all” (ὅσοι) who are baptized into Christ includes Jew, Greek, slave, free, male, and female. Galatians 3:28 is, therefore, a proclamation of inclusion for Gentiles, slaves, and women. Therefore, when Paul says “there is neither Jew nor Greek,” he is not demolishing ethnic differences; he is affirming and including them.<sup>154</sup> Similarly, social caste (whether slave or free) and gender play no part in determining membership status in the people of God. Only being “in Christ” matters.<sup>155</sup>

The question of who qualifies to be made a “son of God” is not all that Galatians 3:28 addresses. Because the Galatian controversy centered around believers—already “in Christ”—who nevertheless were considering the alleged benefits of Judaizing, it is apparent that this teaching applies to more than conversion. The two pericopes in chapter 2, regarding Titus' refusal to be circumcised and the commensality controversy in Antioch, demonstrate that social distinctions revolving around ethnicity were introducing a worldly class system into the church. The Jew/Gentile division did not determine who could be a believer, but rather what that person's social standing would be once they belonged to the church.

Paul's point in Galatians 3:28 is that divisions that mark the world's way of assessing and assigning social identity no longer exist “in Christ Jesus.” He argues that if all the Galatian believers—regardless of social distinctions—who were baptized into

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<sup>154</sup>Ironically, while the false teachers were telling the Galatians that, as Gentiles, they are excluded (4:17), they were in reality attempting to shut out those who were already in.

<sup>155</sup>Hove, *Equality in Christ?*, 81-86, conducted a broad study of the phrase οὐκ ἔνι . . . οὐδέ, concluding that “there is no distinction between x and y” constitutes its best interpretive translation. The distinction is negated, as the context indicates, by being in Christ. As such, “all believers, without distinction, are united to one Christ and are therefore one with each other.”



Christ clothed themselves with Christ, and were made “sons of God, in Christ Jesus, through faith,” then it follows that social distinctions continue to be irrelevant for their ongoing eschatological identity. In other words, if social distinctions do not apply when entering God's family through faith and baptism, then their irrelevance persists after the fact as well.

The world uses ethnic boundaries and social divisions, signified by merisms: Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. Socially speaking, one is either “in” or “out.” In the words of Martyn, in each of these social divisions, there is “a preferable side of the divide.” To this worldly approach at social identity, Paul retorts that “in Christ” identity swallows up these social identifiers in such a way that they are reduced to irrelevance for eschatological identity. All become “one.” All are “in Christ” and “of Christ.” And as 3:29 will clarify, all enjoy the same benefits: Abrahamic lineage and the promised inheritance—benefits which belong to Christ alone. The old divisions, therefore, are irrelevant for eschatological identity.

Paul does not address the validity of the institution of slavery, nor does he liberate women to serve in any and all capacities within the church, and he does not claim that gender is eradicated upon one's baptism into Christ. He affirms that these distinctions exist, but denies that they divide the church into a social hierarchy. His ultimate point is that no social distinction can determine who qualifies as “offspring of Abraham” and heir of the promised inheritance. Paul, therefore, is not arguing for the obliteration of social distinctions within the church; after all, he clearly affirms such identities in other places (Gal 2:14; 1 Cor 7, 11; Philemon; 1 Tim 6:1-2).<sup>156</sup> Rather, he argues that we remove such

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<sup>156</sup>Schreiner, *Galatians*, 258-59; Das, *Galatians*, 385-86. Contra Betz, *Galatians*, 193, who argues that Paul's statement in Gal 3:28 “cannot . . . be harmonized” with his affirmations elsewhere.

identity markers from the equation for attaining the membership and benefits (e.g., righteousness, life, inheritance, Abrahamic lineage) of the eschatological people of God.

The second exegetical issue Galatians 3:28 poses is the meaning of the phrase “you are all one.” Paul refers to a new unity that transpires only “in Christ Jesus,” and this unity is the logical ground (γάρ) for the negation of the three sets of antitheses. Within the context, “one” must refer to a group within which all believers—whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female—co-exist in unity. Surprisingly, Paul uses the masculine εἷς where the neuter would be expected.<sup>157</sup> This increases the likelihood that Paul emphasizes some sort of personal union. Martyn captures the idea well: they are “not one *thing*; they are one *person*.”<sup>158</sup> With the immediately following catch-phrase “in Christ Jesus,” Paul immediately clarifies who this “one person” is. Having been “baptized into Christ,” believers “clothe themselves with Christ,” and thereafter they are “in Christ” and “of Christ.” Conversion effects a union with Christ not just personal, but also corporate, diverse, and unifying.<sup>159</sup> Paul, therefore, emphasizes not that believers are made equal by means of homogenization, but that they are unified by means of incorporation.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup>It is thus unlikely that Paul alludes to “one body” (ἐν σῶμα) here, as he often does elsewhere (Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 10:17; 12:12-13; Eph 2:16; 4:4; Col 3:15; cf. Eph 1:22-23; 4:12, 16; 5:23, 30; Col 1:18, 24; 2:19). Rightly, B. Hansen, *All of You Are One*, 99-100. Contra Betz, *Galatians*, 200; Bruce, *Galatians*, 190; Dunn, *Galatians*, 207. Nevertheless, the two ideas were probably closely linked in Paul's mind.

<sup>158</sup>Martyn, *Galatians*, 377. See also Witherington, “Rite and Rights,” 597.

<sup>159</sup>Martyn, *Galatians*, 377; Hove, *Equality in Christ?*, 71; Fung, *Galatians*, 176; Das, *Galatians*, 384. B. Hansen, *All of You Are One*, 101, concludes that εἷς, in line with Ἰουδαῖος and Ἕλληνας, refers to a new corporate people group. In this new social grouping, “primary categories of social organization” are demoted. Thus, a “collective new humanity” is formed through incorporation into Christ, where “believers share the new collective identity of those who are 'in Christ' and claim God as their father.” As a result, interpretations that read εἷς as implying sameness miss Paul's point.

<sup>160</sup>Fee, *Galatians*, 143.

### Galatians 3:26-28 and Social Identity

The merisms of 3:28 are an exercise in the kinds of social comparison that dominated the Greco-Roman world.<sup>161</sup> As Esler puts it, “to a considerable extent, groups and individuals know who they are in comparison with other groups and individuals, in relation, for example, to factors such as status, wealth or poverty, [and] ethnic identity.” Contrast with other groups creates polarities that help determine social identity: “I am not a Jew, therefore I am a Gentile. I am not a female, therefore I am male.”<sup>162</sup> In the first century, the polarities of slave/free and male/female determined one's lot in society. Additionally, for those experiencing some relationship to the Jewish people and their religion, the Jew/Greek (or Gentile) duality dominated. Thus, to find oneself on the “unpreferable side” of one or more of these antinomies would cripple one's opportunity for a valued identity.<sup>163</sup>

To a limited extent, social mobility—that is, the ability to cross boundaries into another social group—was available as a means of bettering one's social identity. This concept of permeable group boundaries is precisely what the opposing teachers' program relied upon. An individual who desired a share in the Abrahamic inheritance could access it by “crossing the boundary and becoming a Jew.”<sup>164</sup> Therefore, the other teachers were

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<sup>161</sup>Cf. the Jewish thanksgiving: “Blessed be He who did not make me a Gentile. Blessed be He who did not make me a woman. Blessed be He who did not make me an uneducated man” (t. Ber. 7:18). See also the famous Greek parallel: “. . . that I was born a human being and not a beast, next, a man and not a woman, thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian” (Diog. Laert., *Vit. Phil.* 1.33; Lact., *Inst.* 3.19.17). Both citations derive from B. Hansen, *All of You Are One*, 19.

<sup>162</sup>Philip Francis Esler, “An Outline of Social Identity Theory,” in *The T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014), 19.

<sup>163</sup>Martyn, “Apocalyptic Antinomies in Paul’s Letter to the Galatians,” 415, introduced the concept of “antinomies” and being on “the preferable side of the divide” to the study of Galatians.

<sup>164</sup>Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew,” *Harvard Theological Review* 82 (1989): 13-33.

encouraging the Gentile Galatians to “Judaize” through circumcision and other “works of the Law.”

Socially speaking, Paul found two problems with this strategy. First, he recognized that the blessing of Abraham was not restricted to “Jews by nature” or Jewish proselytes, for the Abrahamic blessing was for “all the nations” (Gen 12:3; Gal 3:9). Secondly, the true offspring—and as such, sole heir—of Abraham was a single person, who was Christ (Gal 3:16). Therefore, Paul rightly discouraged the Galatian believers from seeking the blessing of Abraham by means of social mobility. By seeking to become Jewish, the Gentile Galatians would only succeed in changing their ethnicity, and would fail in their attempt to obtain the blessing of Abraham.<sup>165</sup>

In place of the errant suggestion of social mobility that was being proffered by the other teachers, Paul demonstrated to the Galatians that a “social change” was in order. The concept of “social change,” as coined by Henri Tajfel, refers to the act of acquiring a more valued social identity by means of a positive re-evaluation of the ingroup to which one belongs.<sup>166</sup> Paul recognized that the Galatians' present status as “sons of God” qualified them for the Abrahamic inheritance and identity as “offspring of Abraham” that they desired. The Galatian believers would not have doubted that they were “sons of God” (Gal 1:1, 3, 4; 3:26; 4:6), but they did not realize that this also made them “heirs of Abraham.” It is for this reason that Paul reminds them of the identity they already had, one that they received when they were baptized and clothed themselves with Christ through faith. He then encourages them to reevaluate this identity and recognize that it

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<sup>165</sup>It would, in fact, result in their “falling away from grace” and “cutting themselves off from Christ,” in whom they had already qualified for the inheritance (5:2-4).

<sup>166</sup>For a cogent explanation, see Philip Francis Esler, *Galatians*, New Testament Readings (New York: Routledge, 1998), 51.

grants them the benefits they desire.

The baptism of the Galatian believers in Christ served as a rite of initiation into a new social sphere. In undergoing the ritual, believers asserted that “I am not what I used to be.” In this way, rites of initiation “help in the process of identity transition.”<sup>167</sup> Some commentators recognize the vital re-socializing aspect of baptism for new believers. For example, de Boer states that baptism “bestows a new identity” wherein believers “share in [Jesus'] divine sonship.”<sup>168</sup> Betz notes the role of the confession in 3:26-28, stating that it “would communicate information to the newly initiated, telling them of their eschatological status . . . and also informing them how this status affects, and in fact changes their social, cultural, and religious self-understanding.”<sup>169</sup>

Because of the identity crisis in Galatia, Paul was forced to direct the Galatians' attention back to the liminal moments of their conversion, such as the demonstrations of the Holy Spirit (3:1-5) and their baptism into Christ (3:27). Paul's point in appealing to the Galatians' baptism is not solely to point out that they had become “sons of God,” but to point out that this also entailed two vital implications they had overlooked, both of which were related to their new position “in Christ.” First, they had missed or forgotten that their “in Christ” status meant the erasure of the Jew/Greek divide, for they were all now “one in Christ Jesus.” Secondly, they had not made the connection that being “in Christ” meant they were incorporated also into his status as the true heir of Abraham. Thus, a key aspect of Paul's strategy was to remind the Galatians of the value of their

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<sup>167</sup>Rupert Brown, *Group Processes: Dynamics within and between Groups* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 24.

<sup>168</sup>de Boer, *Galatians*, 243. See also Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 270.

<sup>169</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 184.

social identity “in Christ,” in hopes of effecting the “social change” that would prevent them from attempting to jump ship through “social mobility.” Their baptism functioned as a key reminder of the identity changes they had experienced.

Due to the potent social opposition between the identities of “Jew” and “Gentile,” the “social change” Paul was attempting to effect required more than a simple reevaluation of social identities. The Galatian identity crisis called for a reordering. Only a complete elimination (called “deategorization”) or re-prioritization (called “recategorization”) of the ethnic identities would suffice. As was demonstrated in the exegesis above, Paul's practice was not to eliminate ethnic realities but to retain them in an attenuated manner. To do so, Paul posited a superordinate group identity (being “in Christ Jesus”), which was capable of encompassing all other aspects of social identity (e.g., Jew/Greek, slave/free, male/female).<sup>170</sup> This new “in Christ” social grouping unites (“you are all one”) previously incompatible identities by “nesting” them within a superior (i.e., more salient) controlling identity. In doing this, Paul re-prioritizes these identities, subordinating them to “being in Christ.” Modern sociologists term this process “recategorization.” The salience of superordinate groupings trumps that of subordinate groups, so that, in the case of believers, being “in Christ” controls and defines individuals' identity more than where they stand with respect to prevailing social antitheses.<sup>171</sup> A

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<sup>170</sup>Sociologist John C. Turner posits a hierarchy consisting of at least three levels of identity: superordinate, intermediate, and subordinate. See John C. Turner, *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 45-46. Other sociologists refer to the same concept as “nested identities,” and the individual's most fundamental identity as their “terminal” rather than superordinate, identity. The terminal identity “orients other lower-level identities” (Aaron Kuecker, “Ethnicity and Social Identity,” in *The T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker [New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014], 73). See also Bengt Holmberg, “Understanding the First Hundred Years of Christian Identity,” in *Exploring Christian Identity*, ed. Bengt Holmberg, 1-32 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Esler, “An Outline of Social Identity Theory,” 13-39, for additional applications from the sociological literature.

<sup>171</sup>Robert L. Brawley, “Nodes of Objective Socialization and Subjective Reflection in Identity:

superordinate identity, however, does not replace a lower-level identity.<sup>172</sup> Therefore, the subordinate groups continue to function underneath the superior identity, but their relative importance is diminished in light of the surpassing importance of being “in Christ.”<sup>173</sup>

In Galatians 3:28, was Paul eliminating (deategorizing) the social subgroups by creating the “in Christ” group, or did he intend to retain them? The exegesis above concluded that Paul was not rejecting, but including, these aspects of diversity within the people of God. His main point in Galatians 3 is that being a member of the people of God means redemption from the Law (and therefore from a specific form of ethnic particularity).

Two implications derive from Paul's teaching here. First, ethnicity plays no role in determining membership within the “in Christ” group; instead, membership is attained only through identification with Christ. Second, the new social group of “in Christ” has the potential to include people of any and every ethnicity. Paul affirms ethnic distinctions

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Galatian Identity in an Imperial Context,” in *The T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, 130, although his claim that “when ‘in Christ’ identity is salient, *Ioudaioi*/Greek, slave/free, male/female are not” goes too far. As a true superordinate identity, the “in Christ” identity (should) always exert its influence over all subordinate identities; that is, being “in Christ” is always salient. Brawley's assertion (see also Matthew J. Marohl, “Letter Writing and Social Identity,” in *The T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, 103) amounts to a complete removal of all distinctions which fall lower on the identity hierarchy than this one. A better explanation is that being “in Christ” attenuates, but does not eliminate, subordinate social identities. Dunn, *Galatians*, 207, states that “these distinctions had been relativized.”

<sup>172</sup>This would constitute social mobility, whereby an individual makes a lateral move out from one group and into another. A new group identity displaces the previous one. Prominent examples of this in Paul would be the move from “under Law” to “under grace” (Rom 6:14-15), from being a “slave to sin” to being a “slave to righteousness” (Rom 6:17-18), and from being a “son of darkness” to a “son of light” (1 Thess 5:5). Social mobility is what the false teachers were offering the Galatians; they could replace their Gentile identity with a Jewish one through Judaizing. They would then be privileged with all the benefits allegedly inherent to a Jewish identity. Paul's riposte, however, is that the desired benefits do not inhere to a Jewish identity as defined by the teachers, but to a truer Jewish identity defined by union with Christ, the genuine Seed of Abraham.

<sup>173</sup>In some instances, recategorization is accompanied by the elimination of subgroup identities (“deategorization”), but sociologists recognize that the most successful recategorization efforts retain the previous identities, so that individuals are not “deprived of their valued (sub)group identities.” Esler, “An Outline of Social Identity Theory,” 30.

while at the same time subordinating them to a more important controlling reality.<sup>174</sup> Also supporting the conclusion that Paul had in mind the retention of ethnic and social diversity is the fact that the Pauline writings consistently affirm ongoing distinctions in ethnicity (Rom 9-11; 1 Cor 7:17-20; 9:20-21; Gal 2:7-9, 14), social class (1 Cor 7:20-24; Eph 6:5-9; Col 3:22-25; Phm; 1 Tim 6:1-2),<sup>175</sup> and gender (1 Cor 11:3-16).<sup>176</sup> Therefore, based upon the testimony of both Galatians and the broader witness of the Pauline corpus, Paul is recategorizing believers under a superordinate “in Christ” identity without decategorizing other important aspects of their identities, such as nationality, social class, and gender.<sup>177</sup>

This “recategorization” of believers into an “in Christ” superordinate identity erases the polarity between the old antinomies. Before and outside of Christ, social identity is determined by insider/outsider dualities such as “Jew and Greek,” “slave and free,” and “male and female.” These differences do not disappear “in Christ,” but their

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<sup>174</sup>B. Hansen, *All of You Are One*, 102, states, “In wresting the rhetoric of Abrahamic descent from his opponents in Galatia, Paul produces an alternate ethnic rhetoric that trumped their claims.”

<sup>175</sup>In the case of the institution of slavery (and the distinctions between first-century slavery and our modern conceptions of slavery should be remembered), Paul affirms it as a reality, while not necessarily supporting its validity. It is a reality for many of the early believers, yet it is not the ideal (1 Cor 7:21-23). Paul instructs Philemon to forgive, and perhaps to free, Onesimus, but his motive is based more in Onesimus' usefulness to him than in an effort to abolish slavery. The superordinate identity as fellow sons of God lends a certain amount of ambiguity to the slave-master relationship (“no longer as a slave, but more than a slave—a beloved brother,” Phm 16; “slaves who have believing masters should not despise them because they are brothers, but rather serve them well, because those who benefit from their good work are believers and beloved,” 1 Tim 6:1). Paul's point in Gal 3:28 is that being a slave or not makes no difference in one's access to membership within the people of God. Interpretations which suggest a complete abolition of slavery in Gal 3:28 thereby create a contradiction with other Pauline passages which address slavery (see Betz, *Galatians*, 193). Rather than acceding so readily to the conclusion that Paul was inconsistent, interpreters should be led by such alleged contradictions to reevaluate their exegesis of Gal 3:28.

<sup>176</sup>Rightly Martin, “The Covenant of Circumcision,” 124.

<sup>177</sup>Rightly Witherington, “Rite and Rights,” 598, who says that being in Christ “transcends and transforms racial, social, and sexual distinctions, though it does not obliterate them.” Also J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 186; Caroline E. Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2007), 129.



salience is subordinated to a superior controlling reality to the extent that they can no longer play as important a determining role in individuals' identity as they once did. They are no longer the most important, determining aspects of social identity.<sup>178</sup>

### **Galatians 3:29**

In 3:29, Paul brings the argument which he began in 3:6 full circle. He recognizes that the appeal of becoming a “seed,” and therefore “heir,” of Abraham was drawing the Galatians away from the truth of the gospel. Fundamental to the imminent threat of the Galatians' apostasy was their misunderstanding of the relationship between belief in Christ, God's promises to Abraham, and the Mosaic law code.

Judging by Paul's argument, the Galatians harbored at least two misconceptions regarding these covenants. First, the Galatians did not recognize the intrinsic connection between God's promises to Abraham and the “New Covenant” in Christ. The Galatians viewed the Abrahamic inheritance as something distinct from the benefits of faith in Christ, but Paul saw a single operation of justification by faith. Paul labors to clarify this link in 3:6-9, equating Christian belief with the faith exercised by Abraham, and arguing that the gospel had been preached beforehand to Abraham. Later, Paul associates the “promise of the Holy Spirit” already being enjoyed by the Galatian believers with the “blessing of Abraham” (3:14).<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, this “promise” is explicitly affiliated with

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<sup>178</sup>Cf. B. Hansen, *All of You Are One*, 101: Paul “demands a social unity in Christ that is not aligned with any conventional social status.”

<sup>179</sup>In his subsequent epistle to the Romans, Paul elaborates on the connection between Abraham and believers in Christ. Abraham's πίστις functioned in the same manner as does that of believers in Christ, and they are justified in the same way that he was (Rom 4:20-24). He was “godless” (ἄσεβής, 4:4) and uncircumcised (4:10) at the time when his faith was counted for righteousness. His “justification” (δικαιοσύνη) was not a result of “works” (a reference back to “works of the Law” in 3:20, 28), but only his πίστις (4:2-5). Therefore, he can be regarded as the “father of all those who believe through uncircumcision, with the result that righteousness is counted to them” (4:11). Even Abraham's paternal status over Jewish people (“the circumcision”) applies best to those who follow the example of the faith he had while

the work of Christ (3:13-14, 16, 19, 22).<sup>180</sup>

A second error the Galatians were committing was believing that Torah observance was necessary to obtaining the Abrahamic promises. To this end, Paul strove to separate as far as possible the Law from the promises. The Law brings a curse rather than the promise (3:10-13); the Law cannot function as an addition to or replacement for the promise (3:15-18); the Law was added to create transgressions, not to give life and righteousness (3:19-21). The closest relationship the Law has with the promise is that it shuts all up under sin, thereby excluding them from the promise, so that they might place their faith in Jesus Christ in order to receive it (3:22).

With one concise statement in 3:29, Paul summarizes the entire argument of the chapter. There is an integral connection between Abraham's inheritance and Christ, and this connection bypasses the Law, thereby excluding it entirely from the equation.<sup>181</sup> The surprising implication is that all of the alleged benefits of being a descendant of Abraham inhere not to Jews and Judaizers, but only to those who are “in Christ.” In other words, Paul completely “eschatologizes” the promise made to Abraham and his “Seed.” In the immediate context, Paul refers back to the preceding verse and the incorporation of all baptized believers, Jew or Greek, into “one” person. Additionally, he clearly evokes the specification of 3:16 that Abraham's “seed . . . is Christ.” In 3:16, he had restricted the

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uncircumcised (4:12). Finally, Abraham and his offspring received the promised inheritance not because he observed the Law, but because of the “righteousness of faith” (4:13). Just as in Galatians, Paul argues that Abraham's promise would be invalidated if the Law supplied the inheritance (4:14; cf. Gal 3:18). Moreover, Abraham's fatherhood cannot be limited to the circumcised, because God promised to Abraham that he would be “father of many nations” (Gen 17:5/Rom 4:16-18, which matches the promise of Gen 12:3/Gal 3:8—“in you all the nations will be blessed”).

<sup>180</sup>Notice Paul's intentional reference to the Spirit as “promise,” a term which he repeatedly associates with God's gracious dealings with Abraham (3:16, 17, 18).

<sup>181</sup>Cf. Matera, *Galatians*, 147: “The blessing of Abraham cannot come through the Law since the Law does not incorporate one into Christ.”

promise to two people—Abraham and Christ—thereby excluding all others (including Jews), in order that he might in the end embrace within the promise all people (Jew *qua* Jew, and Gentile *qua* Gentile) who are incorporated by faith into Christ.<sup>182</sup> In the end, Paul demonstrates to the Gentiles how, in Christ, they have already obtained the longed-for identity of “seed of Abraham,” and its concomitant benefit, the promised inheritance.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>182</sup>Schreiner, *Galatians*, 259. Wanamaker, “The Son and the Sons of God, 336, says, “even Jews by birth, only have access to the promised inheritance through Jesus Christ; hence, with regard to salvation, there is no longer a distinction between Jew and Gentile but all must become heirs of Abraham through Christ.”

<sup>183</sup>Dunn, *Galatians*, 208; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 176.

## CHAPTER 5

### EXEGESIS OF GALATIANS 4:1-11

#### **Galatians 4:1-2**

Chapter divisions do not always fall in ideal places, and Galatians 4:1 is one of those instances where the break interrupts a continuous discourse. Most scholars recognize that the argument Paul began in chapter 3 does not conclude until at least 4:7.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the content of 4:1-7 is so redolent of that which occurred in the previous sections that some interpreters question whether it advances Paul's discussion.<sup>2</sup> While there are some new elements added to the fray in 4:1-7, it appears correct to conclude that this section “restates from another angle” content already under discussion in Galatians 3.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Brendan J. Byrne, *Sons of God-Seed of Abraham: A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1979), 186; Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1979), 202; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 210; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 262; Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 257; A. Andrew Das, *Galatians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014), 401-2.

<sup>2</sup>Charles A. Wanamaker, “The Son and the Sons of God: a Study in the Elements of Paul's Christological and Soteriological Thought” (PhD diss., Durham University, 1980), 337, sees “freedom” as the advancement, but freedom is implied in 3:13, 25. Moo, *Galatians*, 257, maintains that the new feature is the Spirit, but the reception of the Spirit in 4:6 echoes the same in 3:14. Richard N. Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25 (1982): 57, believes the only distinction between 4:1-7 and what precedes it is the concept of υιοθεσία, but adoption is presaged by 3:26-27. It would appear that the only new elements are the surprising dearth of references to Abraham (Das, *Galatians*, 402), and the expansion of the enslaving power from Law to the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου.

<sup>3</sup>So Schreiner, *Galatians*, 262. Moo, *Galatians*, 258, calls it an “elaboration and clarification,” while Dunn, *Galatians*, 210, followed by Richard B. Hays, *The Letter to the Galatians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, in vol. 11 of *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 280-81, sees a “recapitulation.” Scholars debate how far back this elaboration

Galatians 4:1-7 may be divided into three units, as follows.<sup>4</sup> In 4:1-2, Paul employs a new metaphor, one which repeats the salient features of the “guardian” metaphor of 3:24-25.<sup>5</sup> In 4:3-6, Paul interprets and applies the metaphor, explaining how it illustrates the redemption, adoption to sonship, and inheritance effected through Christ and the Spirit.<sup>6</sup> Finally, in 4:7 he extrapolates the implications of this teaching.

In 4:1-2, Paul's “recapitulation” of preceding themes is most apparent.<sup>7</sup> The metaphor of the underage heir aligns with the details of the “guardian” metaphor Paul had

reaches; it is suggested here that Paul repeats material from as far back as 3:22. The chiasmic structure shown below (contra the proposal of Linda L. Belleville, “‘Under Law’: Structural Analysis and the Pauline Concept of Law in Galatians 3:21-4:11,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26 [1986]: 54, whose chiasm inadequately excludes 4:4-7) shows that all of the major motifs of 4:1-7 are accounted for in 3:22-25, and the “sons of God . . . offspring and heirs of Abraham” pericope functions as the centerpiece between the two outside sections:

A	Imprisonment under law and sin, arrival of faith, promise received (3:22-23)
B	Metaphor of sons under a guardian (3:24-25)
C	Sons of God . . . offspring of Abraham (3:26-29)
B'	Metaphor of heir under stewards and overseers (4:1-2)
A'	Imprisonment under <i>στοιχεῖα</i> , God sends Son, redemption, adoption, Spirit, inheritance (4:3-7)

<sup>4</sup>Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 176, provides a different tripartite division (illustration [1-3], quotation of an early Christian confession [4-5], application [6-7]), but the discourse markers of comparison (*οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς*, 4:3) and conclusion (*ὥστε*, 4:7) firmly support the reading proposed here. Longenecker's inclusion of 4:3 with the introductory illustration is perplexing.

<sup>5</sup>R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 162. Because the word picture in 4:1-2 aims to restate the *παιδαγωγός* metaphor, efforts to search for exact parallels in Greek, Roman, or Jewish law have fallen short. Paul was not appealing to specific laws, but to general principles. For this reason, he chose generic concepts, such as the *ἐπίτροπος*, *οἰκονόμος*, and *νήπιος*, which could adequately convey the idea of temporary restraint until maturity.

<sup>6</sup>Gal 4:6, in which Paul presents the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit as the conclusive evidence of the completed reality of redemption and adoption, functions both to advance the explanation of God's actions, and to supply evidence of their reality. The discourse marker of addition (*δέ*) rather than ground (*γάρ*) or inference (*ὥστε*) indicates that its primary role is to continue the progression of events begun in 4:3. Incidentally, the idea of including 4:6 with the verses which precede it is confirmed by its inclusion as the final line in a chiasmic structure constituting 4:4b-6, as will be shown below. Therefore, the sending of the Spirit and its testimony of sonship and inheritance function as the climactic finale to the *kerygma* of 4:3-6.

<sup>7</sup>The term “recapitulation” derives from Hays, *Galatians*, 280. *Λέγω δέ* (“Now what I am saying is...”) in 4:1 prepares the readers/hearers for some form of additional explanation of what had preceded it. R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 162; Dunn, *Galatians*, 210; Frank J. Matera, *Galatians*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 148; Moo, *Galatians*, 257.

employed in 3:24-25 in three salient regards.<sup>8</sup> The first, most obvious feature of the twin metaphors is the aspect of restraint.<sup>9</sup> In 3:24-25, “we” are “under a guardian” (ὕπὸ παιδαγωγόν), and in 4:1-2 “the heir” is “under overseers and stewards” (ὕπὸ ἐπιτρόπους ἐστὶν καὶ οἰκονόμους). The nature of this restraint is clearly negative. Every time in Galatians the phrase “under \_\_\_\_\_” (ὕπὸ + accusative) occurs, it carries a negative connotation.<sup>10</sup> The person who is “under” the authority of some external force in Galatians is “enslaved,” “locked up,” and in need of redemption. Furthermore, being “under overseers and stewards” prevents the heir from claiming his inheritance.

A second salient feature of these parallel metaphors is that the time of restraint is limited.<sup>11</sup> The control exercised by the guardian (παιδαγωγός), overseer (ἐπίτροπος), or steward (οἰκονόμος) over a child reached its *terminus ad quem* when the child attained mature adulthood, that is, when he ceased being underage (νήπιος, 4:1). Paul describes

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<sup>8</sup>Many scholars point out what they believe to be a lack of fidelity between several aspects of the underage heir metaphor and what is known of legal structures and terminology in the Greco-Roman world of Paul's day (on this, see esp. James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ in the the Pauline Corpus* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992], 122-45). Such complaints fail to recognize that Paul's point was not to reflect accurately Roman or Greek (or any other) practice, but to explain his points regarding the Law of Moses through a metaphor (rightly R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 164; Hays, *Galatians*, 281; Moo, *Galatians*, 259; Marion L. Soards and Darell J. Pursiful, *Galatians*, Smith & Helwys Bible Commentary [Macon, GA: Smith & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2015], 190). It may be the case that Paul uses ἐπιτρόπους and οἰκονόμους as “generalizing” plurals, indicating that the search for a precise parallel in Greco-Roman law would be futile (Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 190).

<sup>9</sup>Hays, *Galatians*, 281, argues that this is the primary point of the metaphor.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. “under a curse” (Gal 3:10); “under sin” (3:22); “under law” (3:23; 4:4-5, 21); “under a guardian” (3:25); “under stewards and overseers” (4:2); “under the elements of the world” (4:3).

<sup>11</sup>This is recognized by most commentators, e.g., R. Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law,” 56; Norman H. Young, “Paidagogos: the Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor,” *Novum Testamentum* 29 (1987): 74; Matera, *Galatians*, 161; Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 265; David John Williams, *Paul's Metaphors: Their Context and Character* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 63; Hays, *Galatians*, 281; Sam Tsang, *From Slaves to Sons: A New Rhetoric Analysis on Paul's Slave Metaphors in His Letter to the Galatians* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005), 114; Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary*, New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 211.

this end date as “the arrival of πίστις” (3:25), and “the time set by the father” (τῆς προθεσμίας τοῦ πατρός, 4:2).

The third pertinent feature of the two metaphors is that in both cases, the focal individual is a son and heir. Despite being under the control of the guardian, overseer, and steward, the individual under restraint is a “son” (this is implied by the guardian metaphor, then made explicit in 3:26), “heir,” and “master of all” (κύριος πάντων, 4:1).

Although Paul does not introduce any new elements in the word picture of 4:1-2, it helps to sharpen our understanding of the “guardian” metaphor from 3:24-25. Paul did not mean to say that anything that is true of a παιδαγωγός may also be said of the Torah.<sup>12</sup> Rather, he wanted to emphasize three things: (1) the Law engendered a state of slavery; (2) the Law's rule was temporary, and has expired for those who have been redeemed by Christ; and (3) the “children” have attained the full son and heir status which comes after the “guardian's” time of authority. That Paul wants to emphasize these three points is corroborated by their persistent repetition in 4:1-7.<sup>13</sup>

From a Social Identity perspective, the metaphor of Galatians 4:1-2 highlights a lack of “social mobility” (i.e., the ability to move from one social group to a different group as a means of improving one's social value, as perceived by oneself and by others), and as a result, a sense of “relative deprivation.” In the metaphor, the “heir,” being underage, is completely restricted from the liberties afforded a responsible adult. The “stewards” control his financial situation, while the “overseers” restrict his freedom to

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<sup>12</sup>Rightly David T. Gordon, “A Note on Paidagōgos in Galatians 3:24-25,” *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 150; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 265; Tsang, *From Slaves to Sons*, 113.

<sup>13</sup>Slavery: “no different from a slave,” “under overseers and stewards,” “enslaved under the elements of the world,” “no longer a slave.” Expiration: “for as long as,” “minor,” “until the time set by the father,” “when we were minors,” “when the fullness of time came,” “no longer a slave.” Sonship/Heirship: “heir,” “owner of all,” “that we might receive adoption,” “. . . but a son; and if a son, also an heir.”

make his own decisions. Just like the child under the παιδαγωγός, this underage heir lives an existence “no better than that of a slave.” The heir's inability to access his inheritance exemplifies the state of “relative deprivation.”<sup>14</sup> The underage heir can do nothing to increase his liberties or access his estate.

### **Excursus: Does 4:1-2 Refer to Israel in Egypt?**

In his influential study *Adoption as Sons of God*, James M. Scott opposes the *opinio communis* that views Galatians 4:1-2 as an illustration based upon Greco-Roman legal matters. Instead, Scott argues that these verses refer to Israel's time of slavery in Egypt. His evidence includes the following: (1) ὁ κληρονόμος in 4:1 refers anaphorically to “seed of Abraham” in 3:29, which indicates that Paul is speaking of Israel; (2) νήπιος is not a *terminus technicus* for a minor, but rather alludes to Hosea 11:1, which calls Israel a νήπιος at the time when God rescued them from Egypt; (3) κύριος πάντων is a *Hoheitstitel* (“title of universal sovereignty”), and thus does not refer to ownership and inheritance, but rather to Israel's eschatological hope that they would “inherit and rule the world”; (4) the collocation ἐπιτρόπους καὶ οἰκονόμους refers not to guardians of a minor, but to “subordinate state officials,” and might allude to the taskmasters of Egypt; (5) τῆς προθεσμίας is not a technical term for the conclusion of a guardianship, but speaks simply of either a “set date” or “a predetermined time limit,” and probably refers anaphorically to “the nearest specific period of time mentioned in Galatians,” the 430 years of 3:17; (6) Paul's use of δοῦλος in 4:1 parallels the use of slavery language in Genesis and Exodus to refer to the time of Israel's stay in Egypt; (7) the use of υἰοθεσία in Romans 9:4 supplies

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<sup>14</sup>As a reminder, “relative deprivation” occurs when a member of a group recognizes or feels that his group has less access to specific goods, opportunities, or benefits than do members of other groups.



corroborative evidence that Paul connected the Exodus with υιοθεσία.<sup>15</sup>

Of the evidences listed by Scott, only numbers 2, 6, and 7 hold water. It is indisputable that Paul uses the same term (νήπιος) that Hosea 11:1 uses to refer to Israel before the Exodus. Additionally, the OT does use slave terminology to describe Israel's time in Egypt.<sup>16</sup> Finally, Paul may associate υιοθεσία with the Exodus in Romans 9:4-5, so the possibility that Paul draws the two together here in Galatians cannot be excluded.<sup>17</sup> These three pieces of evidence are significant, but do not prove Scott's thesis.<sup>18</sup>

On several of his points, Scott succeeds in establishing grounds to doubt some prevailing interpretations of Galatians 4:1-2. For example, he challenges the popular views on κύριος πάντων, ἐπιτρόπους καὶ οἰκονόμους, and προθεσμία. However, this does not mean that his alternatives provide better explanations. Scott is unable to produce a single text in which κύριος πάντων refers specifically to Israel's eschatological hope of universal sovereignty. His suggestion that ἐπιτρόπους καὶ οἰκονόμους could refer to the taskmasters in Egypt is tenuous at best. The terms ἐπιτρόπους and οἰκονόμους are far too positive to serve as synonyms for the terms used in the LXX text of Exodus, such as ἐπιστάτας τῶν ἔργων or οἱ ἐργοδιῶκτοι.<sup>19</sup> Finally, προθεσμία, as Scott has demonstrated,

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<sup>15</sup>Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, 126-49.

<sup>16</sup>Gen 15:13-14; Exod 6:6; 13:3, 14; 14:5; 20:2. By far the most prominent term used in the LXX to refer to the slavery in Egypt is δουλεία (Exod 6:6; 13:3, 14; 20:2; Lev 26:45; Deut 5:6; 6:12; 7:8; 8:14; 13:6, 11; Judg 6:8; 3 Kgdms 9:9; Neh 9:17; Jer 41:13; Mic 6:4). Although Paul could have used this term here to make a possible allusion more clear, he chose not to do so (cf. Gal 4:24; 5:1; Rom 8:15, 21).

<sup>17</sup>The concatenation of υιοθεσία with the divine glory (ἡ δόξα), the covenants (αἱ διαθήκαι), the law-giving (ἡ νομοθεσία), and the liturgy (ἡ λατρεία) reminds some scholars of Exod 4:22, the Exodus from Egypt, and the related establishment upon Mount Sinai of the Torah and tabernacle-service.

<sup>18</sup>Contra Scott J. Hafemann, "Paul and the Exile of Israel in Galatians 3-4," in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions*, ed. James M. Scott (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 337, who believes the connection of νήπιος and δοῦλος "certainly establish[es] an Exodus-typology as the basis of Paul's comparison."

<sup>19</sup>For ἐπιστάτας τῶν ἔργων see Exod 1:11; cf. 5:14. For οἱ ἐργοδιῶκτοι, Exod 3:7; 5:6, 10, 13.

rather than being a technical term, obtains its referent from the context.<sup>20</sup> Yet, Scott has to reach all the way back to 3:17 to find his antecedent for it. Contextually, it is more likely that προθεσμία—referring to the end of the time that the heir is a νήπιος—points to the arrival of the Seed (3:19), faith (3:23, 25), and Christ (3:24). This is corroborated by 4:4, where “the fullness of time” explains what Paul means by προθεσμία. Just as in 3:19, 23-25, this refers to the time that Christ arrived. Furthermore, this explanation supplies a much closer antecedent than Scott's.<sup>21</sup>

Scott is correct to argue that the “heir” of 4:1 refers back to “seed of Abraham” in 3:29. Yet, he believes that this confirms Israel as the referent of ὁ κληρονόμος. However, the context of 3:26-29 clarifies that those who are “seed of Abraham” are those who have been baptized into and clothed themselves with Christ, and who hail from all ethnic groups (“there is neither Jew nor Greek”), including the Gentile Galatians.<sup>22</sup> It is impossible to limit the “seed of Abraham” in 3:29 to Israel. In fact, to exclude Gentile believers from the “seed of Abraham” in 3:29 would damage Paul's argument here.

Perhaps the biggest flaw in Scott's thesis is the fact that in Galatians 3 Paul has been speaking of freedom from the Law. He will continue to do so in Galatians 4. Yet Israel's Exodus from Egypt is intimately associated with their reception of the Torah (cf. Exod 20:2; Rom 9:4). Why would Paul use an event from Israel's history so closely tied to their reception of the Law as an illustration of the way in which believers are set free from that same Law? Such an illustration would be paradoxical and counter-productive.

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<sup>20</sup>The term never appears in the LXX, and never refers to the Egyptian bondage in any extant Jewish literature. If Paul used it in this manner here, it would be the only such use of the term.

<sup>21</sup>Das, *Galatians*, 430-31.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 404, 430; Erin Heim, “Light through a Prism: New Avenues of Inquiry for the Pauline Υιοθεσία Metaphors” (PhD diss., University of Otago, 2014), 156.

In conclusion, the major planks in Scott's thesis regarding Galatians 4:1-2 are unconvincing. The only solid evidence he has mustered is the use of νήπιος in Hosea 11:1, and the appearance of δουλ- cognates in Genesis and Exodus to refer to the time in Egypt.<sup>23</sup> This is not enough to demonstrate a connection between Galatians 4:1-2 and the Exodus. Therefore, Paul was likely not referring to the Exodus from Egypt in this passage. Rather, he was providing an analogy from everyday life in order to illustrate the point he had been making about the Law.

### **Galatians 4:3-6**

These four verses interpret Paul's word picture in 4:1-2. Ὁυτως καὶ ἡμεῖς (“In the same way we also . . .”)<sup>24</sup> clearly marks the transition between illustration and explanation. Ὅτε ἦμεν νήπιοι, ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου ἤμεθα δεδουλωμένοι (“when we were minors, we were enslaved under the elements of the world”). Just as the “minor” (νήπιος) in the preceding metaphor was “under stewards and overseers,” so also “we were enslaved” during our time of minority. Paul's use of the so-called “pluperfect periphrastic”<sup>25</sup> ἤμεθα δεδουλωμένοι is not inconsequential to his argument. He highlights the present, achieved reality of the redemptive work of Christ, the Father's adoption of believers, and the sending of the Holy Spirit into our hearts. Thus, the slavery to the “elements of the world” is something that resides entirely in the past, a historical event in

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<sup>23</sup>Scott's argument that Paul's use of δοῦλος refers to δουλ- cognates in Genesis and Exodus is further weakened by the fact that Paul does not say the heir “is” a slave, but that the heir is “no better off than a slave.” Were Paul referring to the historical event in which Israel actually were slaves, he surely would not have made such a distinction.

<sup>24</sup>ESV, HCSB. Cf. also RSV, NRSV “so with us.” The καὶ could also be read as ascensive, “even we,” without significantly impacting the interpretation.

<sup>25</sup>See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 648.

the lives of believers.

Paul fails to make explicit to whom he refers by “we” in 4:3. While a minority of scholars aver that “we” refers to Gentiles alone,<sup>26</sup> most scholars conclude either that it refers to Jews<sup>27</sup> or to all believers.<sup>28</sup> The decision appears difficult, and Paul's use of pronouns throughout the epistle can be perplexing,<sup>29</sup> but contextual factors point toward the conclusion that the “we” of 4:3 is universal. Four clues point in this direction: (1) Paul

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<sup>26</sup>Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 29; William J. Dalton, “The Meaning of ‘We’ in Galatians,” *Australian Biblical Review* 38 (1990): 33-44; Caroline E. Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2007), 71; Das, *Galatians*, 406. To avoid the conclusion that Jews are included in the “we,” Gaston and those who follow him are forced to argue that being “under Law” is a situation which describes only Gentiles. The fact that Christ himself came “under Law” mitigates this argument. Norman H. Young, “Pronominal Shifts in Paul's Argument to the Galatians,” in *Ancient History in a Modern University*, Vol. 2, *Early Christianity, Late Antiquity, and Beyond*, ed. T.W. Hillard, R. A. Kearsley, C. E. V. Nixon, and A. M. Nobbs (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 207, dismantles the Gentile-only hypothesis.

<sup>27</sup>Andrew John Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World: an Exegetical Study in Aspects of Paul's Teaching* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 60; Belleville, “Under Law,” 68; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 164; Matera, *Galatians*, 155; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 267; Gordon D. Fee, *Galatians*, Pentecostal Commentary (Dorset, UK: Deo Publishing, 2007), 146.

<sup>28</sup>Donald W. B. Robinson, “The Distinction Between Jewish and Gentile Believers in Galatians,” *Australian Biblical Review* 13 (1965): 36; Byrne, *Sons of God-Seed of Abraham*, 176; Wanamaker, “The Son and the Sons of God,” 117; Betz, *Galatians*, 204; Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 181; David R. Bundrick, “Ta stoicheia tou kosmou (Gal 4:3),” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34 (1991): 355; J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, The Anchor Bible (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 388; Hays, *Galatians*, 282; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 267; de Boer, *Galatians*, 258; Moo, *Galatians*, 260; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 191.

<sup>29</sup>On this, see especially Young, “Pronominal Shifts,” who concludes that there is no consistent pattern of reference for Paul's alternation between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns in Galatians. Dalton, “The Meaning of ‘We’ in Galatians,” reaches a significantly different conclusion.

Martyn, *Galatians*, 334-35, argues that Paul's alternating use of pronouns is “a rhetorical, psychological, and fundamentally theological language game Paul is playing with the Galatians,” the point of which is to “erase the distinction between Jew and Gentile.” As a result, Paul creates “an undifferentiated monolith of humanity before Christ” (J. Louis Martyn, “Christ, the Elements of the Cosmos, and the Law in Galatians,” in *The Social World of the First Christians*, ed. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995], 17; cf. George E. Howard, *Paul: Crisis in Galatia: A Study in Early Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990], 59).

R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 164, attributes the oscillation between persons to a hypothetical admixture of Pauline and pre-Pauline content, a suggestion which is plausible, yet impossible to prove.

never specifies that “we” is a technical way of referring to Jews,<sup>30</sup> and in the context of Galatians it appears more likely that his use of the first person is a means of identifying with his audience, who are Gentile believers; (2) Paul has recently stated that Scripture locked up “all” (τὰ πάντα) under sin. Because 4:1-3 echoes 3:22-25, a universal enslavement is in Paul's mind here as well; (3) if, as some argue, “we” consistently refers to Jews, those who receive adoption in 4:5 are Jews, but this breaks the logical link between 4:5 and 4:6, making a *non sequitur* of the statement “because *you* are sons.” The first proposition (“we receive adoption”) must include the members of the second proposition (“you are sons”).<sup>31</sup> Since it is certain that the “you” in 4:6a refers to the Gentile Galatians, then the “we” in 4:5b must include Gentiles as well as Jewish believers. This increases the likelihood that “we” in 4:3 is also universal.<sup>32</sup> (4) By including the Jewish Torah within “the fundamental elements of the cosmos” (cf. 4:5, 9) Paul broadens the referent of the enslavement in a way that clarifies that he wants to emphasize a universal plight.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the “we” of 4:3 is a reference to both Jews and Gentiles.

### **The Στοιχεῖα Τοῦ Κόσμου**

In a surprising twist, Paul describes the erstwhile slavery of 4:3 as “under the

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<sup>30</sup>In 2:15-17, he is careful to clarify that he is referring specifically to Jews. This careful distinction does not continue through the remainder of the letter. See Young, “Pronominal Shifts,” 215.

<sup>31</sup>If Paul were claiming that Gentile sonship (“and because *you* are sons”) somehow cleared the way for or enabled God's sending of the Spirit into the hearts of Jewish believers (“God sent the Spirit of his Son into *our* hearts”), then the fact of the Gentile believers' sonship goes entirely unexplained in the presentation. It also creates another *non sequitur* out of 4:7a, which clearly summarizes the preceding verses (“therefore [ὥστε] you are no longer a slave but a son”). Cf. Heim, “Light through a Prism,” 148.

<sup>32</sup>Young, “Pronominal Shifts,” 215.

<sup>33</sup>Martyn, *Galatians*, 335; Hays, *Galatians*, 282.

fundamental elements of the cosmos” (ὕπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου), where one might have expected another reference to being “under Law” (cf. 3:23; 4:4, 5, 21). The phrase στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου elicits a perplexing array of interpretive options. The term στοιχεῖον simply means “the basic components of something.”<sup>34</sup> For example, Aristotle defined it as a “primary indivisible component.”<sup>35</sup> As a “generic term,” the word could take on a myriad of meanings, depending upon the context in which it resides.<sup>36</sup> The στοιχεῖα could thus be understood as the letters of the alphabet, fundamental components of education (cf. Heb 5:12), or of the primary elements of which the world is comprised (traditionally regarded to be earth, air, fire, and water; cf. 2 Pet 3:10, 12). By derivation, the στοιχεῖα came to refer also to the heavenly bodies of the sun, moon, and stars. Eventually, these connections led to an identification of the στοιχεῖα with spiritual beings believed to inhabit or constitute the four elements of the world or the heavenly bodies.

As a result, most interpreters fall within three main understandings of the στοιχεῖα: (1) they are the basic principles of anything that is taught, especially with reference to religious teaching;<sup>37</sup> (2) they are the essential, rudimentary substances of

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<sup>34</sup>BDAG, s.v. “στοιχεῖον.”

<sup>35</sup>Aristotle, *Pol.* 5.7.16. Cited in Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984), 68; Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World*, 32.

<sup>36</sup>Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 68, who explains that στοιχεῖα “of itself has no specific content. It denoted merely an irreducible component; what it is an irreducible component of must be supplied by the context in which it is used.” Wink is followed by Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World*, 33-34, who elaborates that the word was “capable of taking on whole new sets of specific meanings as it came to be applied in new and different areas of thought.”

<sup>37</sup>David A. Black, “Weakness Language in Galatians,” *Grace Theological Journal* 4 (1983): 19; Belleville, “Under Law,” 68; Derek R. Moore-Crispin, “Galatians 4:1-9: the Use and Abuse of Parallels,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 61 (1989): 210; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 165; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 286.

which the universe is comprised,<sup>38</sup> (3) they are spiritual beings in control of the cosmos.<sup>39</sup> The lines which divide these three interpretations are porous. Many interpreters hold a combination of readings #2 and #3, and it is also clear that much pagan religious teaching focused upon the physical elements and/or the heavenly bodies (whether divinized or not), thereby reducing any distinction between view #1 and views #2 and #3.

Is it possible to determine precisely what Paul means by στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Galatians 4:3? Before answering this question, it is necessary to glean as much information about this phrase as is possible from the context. In doing so, several important facts arise. First, Paul connects τὰ στοιχεῖα with τοῦ κόσμου, and this should not be overlooked as vital to the phrase's interpretation. It is not simply the στοιχεῖα to which Paul refers, but the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου. Following the influential study of Josef Blinzler, some scholars maintain that the only known reading of the full phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου is the fundamental cosmic elements (*Grundstoffe*) of earth, air, fire, and water.<sup>40</sup> Does this consistent usage by other authors of the time period restrict Paul to

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<sup>38</sup>Josef Blinzler, "Lexikalisches zu dem Terminus τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου bei Paulus," in *Studiosorum Paulinorum Congressus Internationalis Catholicus 1961*, vol. 2 (Rome: E Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1963): 429-43; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 193; Eduard Schweizer, "Slaves of the Elements and Worshipers of Angels: Gal 4:3, 9 and Col 2:8, 18, 20," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107 (1988): 456; Frank Thielman, *From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul's View of the Law in Galatians and Romans* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 82; Martyn, *Galatians*, 395; de Boer, *Galatians*, 297.

<sup>39</sup>Bo Ivar Reicke, "The Law and This World According to Paul : Some Thoughts Concerning Gal 4:1-11," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 (1951): 262-63; Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 42; In-Gyu Hong, *The Law in Galatians* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 165; Clinton E. Arnold, "Returning to the Domain of the Powers: *Stoicheia* as Evil Spirits in Galatians 4:3, 9," *Novum Testamentum* 38 (1996): 57; Bruce W. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham's God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 51-53.

<sup>40</sup>Blinzler, "Lexikalisches zu dem Terminus τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου bei Paulus," 429-43. Blinzler analyzes 175 instances of the term στοιχεῖα, determining that 78.3% mean *Grundstoffe* (physical elements—earth, air, fire, and water), 17.7% refer to *Buchstaben* (letters), 3.4 % *Grundlagen* (basic principles), and 0.6% *Gestirne* (stars, luminaries). Following this analysis, Blinzler argues that στοιχεῖα, when conjoined with τοῦ κόσμου, always means the elements of earth, air, fire, and water that constitute the physical world. Martyn, "Christ, the Elements of the Cosmos, and the Law in Galatians," 19, maintains that

the same meaning, or might he have something else in mind when he appends τοῦ κόσμου to τὰ στοιχεῖα?

An analysis of Paul's conception of κόσμος in Galatians leads to the conclusion that Paul might not have been thinking specifically of the physical elements when he spoke of τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου. Within Galatians Paul uses the term κόσμος elsewhere in 6:14-15, where he states, "But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (ESV). Galatians 1:4, where Paul proclaims that "the Lord Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age," supplies a fruitful comparison. Although 1:4 does not specifically use the term κόσμος, it supplies a conceptual parallel for 6:14-15.<sup>41</sup> Thus, in Galatians the term "world" does not simply refer to physical elements such as earth, air, fire, and water, but rather to an "evil age" from which Christ rescues believers, and a world order which has been crucified and replaced with a "new creation."<sup>42</sup> Therefore, Paul's apocalyptic perspective colored the way he perceived "the world." It is this perspective regarding the cosmos that Paul attaches to the term στοιχεῖα. Thus, by appending τοῦ κόσμου to τὰ στοιχεῖα, Paul is not defining the στοιχεῖα as the fundamental elements earth, air, fire, and water. Instead, he is pointing out that the

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Blinzler's conclusions are unassailable for Paul's time period. Martyn is followed by Hays, *Galatians*, 282.

<sup>41</sup>Rightly B. Longenecker, *Triumph of Abraham's God*, 44-46, who points out that these references to a domain transfer occur in the thematic opening and closing sections of the letter, arguing that Paul has an "eschatological perspective" that functions as "the letter's convictional basis." Cf. also Das, *Galatians*, 406.

<sup>42</sup>Rightly Das, *Galatians*, 443, who states that "Paul is contrasting one world and its fundamental constituting elements with an invading, new world." B. Longenecker, *Triumph of Abraham's God*, 43, says that "new creation" refers to "the passing from one domain into another domain, from one sphere of identity into another sphere." See also Black, "Weakness Language in Galatians," 24; Martyn, "Christ, the Elements of the Cosmos, and the Law in Galatians," 31-32.



στοιχεῖα belong to the “evil age” from which Christ has provided a rescue and which has been crucified and replaced with a new creation.<sup>43</sup>

A second pertinent detail regarding the στοιχεῖα is that they carried some relation to pagan worship, even if Paul knows that those things being worshiped were really “not gods by nature” (4:8). While Paul does not specify whether the “not gods” of 4:8 are equivalent to the στοιχεῖα of 4:9 (it could be the case that the στοιχεῖα are religious principles dispensed by the “not gods”), what he makes clear is that a submission to the στοιχεῖα is the same as slave service to “those who are not gods.” Additionally, in 4:3, 8-9 submission to the στοιχεῖα is Paul's description of the Galatians' religious past. Terms such as “were enslaved,”<sup>44</sup> “formerly,” “returning again,” and “all over again” make this clear.

A third, perhaps surprising, facet of the στοιχεῖα is that they include (at least some aspects of) Jewish Law observance. In the analogy of 4:1-2, the “overseers and stewards,” echoing the παιδαγωγός metaphor of 3:23-25, clearly refer to the Torah, and οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς leaves no doubt that the στοιχεῖα align with the ἐπιτρόπους καὶ οἰκονόμους. The connection between slavery “under the elements” in 4:3 and redemption of “those under Law” in 4:5 further clarifies the link. Given these connections, one may also confidently conclude that the “days, months, seasons, and years” of 4:10 includes

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<sup>43</sup>A few other details point in this direction as well. First, Paul uses apocalyptic language in the verses surrounding his introduction of τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου. His use of τῆς προθεσμίας and τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου indicates that the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου belong to a different apocalyptic era. Secondly, Paul refers to the στοιχεῖα in 4:9 as “weak and poor,” a description which would be unsuitable if he were referring to the elements of earth, air, fire, and water.

<sup>44</sup>A handful of scholars maintain that 4:3 speaks of the religious past of Jewish believers, but the parallel with 4:8-9, combined with the fact that there is no extant evidence that ancient authors outside of Paul used στοιχεῖα to refer to aspects of the Jewish religion, indicates that 4:3 also includes Gentiles within its purview.

Jewish calendar cycles.<sup>45</sup> When Paul in 4:10 explains this observance of special days, he does so as evidence of the Galatians' "return to the powerless and destitute στοιχεῖα" (4:9). Therefore, to submit to special calendar requirements, whether they be pagan or Jewish, equates to slavery to the στοιχεῖα. In at least this one sense, Paul regards the Mosaic Law code as closely related to the στοιχεῖα.<sup>46</sup>

An often overlooked connection is that between Ἡμέρας . . . καὶ μῆνας καὶ καιροῦς καὶ ἐνιαυτούς in Galatians 4:10 and εἰς καιροῦς καὶ εἰς ἡμέρας καὶ εἰς ἐνιαυτούς in Genesis 1:14 LXX. Paul appears to be echoing the Creation narrative, where God fixes and appoints "lights" (φωστῆρες) "to separate the day from the night and to stand for signs and for times and for days and for years." The following verses clarify that the Genesis account speaks specifically of the sun, moon, and stars. If this is the case, Paul refers to the universal human dependence upon the positioning of sun, moon, and stars to determine the calendar. Just as pagan worshipers relied upon the heavenly bodies to coordinate their feast days and seasons, so also Jewish worshipers did the same to establish their Sabbath and feast schedule.<sup>47</sup> In beginning to observe the Jewish calendar

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<sup>45</sup>Bruce, *Galatians*, 206; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 182; Dunn, *Galatians*, 227-29; Matera, *Galatians*, 157; Fee, *Galatians*, 160; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 279; Das, *Galatians*, 423. Many scholars believe "days, times, seasons, and years" is unspecific enough to include both Jewish and pagan calendar observance, especially when compared with the more specifically Jewish terminology of Col 2:16 (ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων). See Betz, *Galatians*, 218; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 301; de Boer, *Galatians*, 276; Moo, *Galatians*, 278.

<sup>46</sup>Ἡμέρας . . . καὶ μῆνας καὶ καιροῦς καὶ ἐνιαυτούς in Gal 4:10 probably contains an echo of Gen 1:14 LXX (εἰς καιροῦς καὶ εἰς ἡμέρας καὶ εἰς ἐνιαυτούς), which may support the idea that Paul includes pagan calendar observance within his purview here, since Gen 1:14 is not a part of the Mosaic Law code, but rather speaks of the establishment of the sun, moon, and stars. Paul is therefore comparing a common characteristic of the Gentile Galatians' former worship and the Jewish observance into which they were transitioning. In Paul's mind, the *turn* to Jewish calendar by Gentile Christ-believers was nothing less than a *return* to the regulations of their former enslaving religion outside of Christ.

<sup>47</sup>Contra Moo, *Galatians*, 263.

<sup>48</sup>2 Chr 8:13, which speaks of "making offerings according to the commands of Moses on the Sabbaths and the months (new moons?) and in the feasts, three times each year," supplies the only comparable concatenation of these terms in the LXX, although numerous passages use one or two of the

cycles, the Galatian believers were submitting to the same controlling powers that enslaved them in their past life of paganism.

Paul, however, is not saying that the Torah is equivalent to the στοιχεῖα, for 4:3, 8-9 clarifies that the Galatians were formerly enslaved to the στοιχεῖα during their time of pagan worship before they came to know and be known by God, and before they had ever considered observing the Jewish calendar. The στοιχεῖα, then, either include or describe both the Galatians' past religious practices and Jewish Law observance.

A fourth, and final, aspect of the στοιχεῖα is that they exercised a controlling function in the lives of those who were “under” them. That Paul repeatedly refers to a status “under” them or submission to them as “slavery” (4:3, 7, 8, 9) makes this clear. The metaphors Paul invokes also attest to this regulatory function; the Law is a prison warden, “guardian,” “overseer,” and “steward.” This idea also finds lexical support within the term στοιχεῖον itself. As David Bundrick<sup>48</sup> explains, the word literally refers to “members of a row.” The term communicates alignment with a standard. Paul uses the cognate verb στοιχέω in 5:25, in a context in which he sets aside the Law as a regulatory standard for ethical living, replacing it with “aligning ourselves with the Spirit.”<sup>49</sup> Equally apropos is

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words in speaking of Jewish calendar observances.

<sup>48</sup>Bundrick, “Ta stoicheia tou kosμου,” 356; Dunn, *Galatians*, 317-18.

<sup>49</sup>L&N, §41.12, includes στοιχέω in the semantic subdomain “Imitate Behavior,” categorizing it with the terms μιμέομαι, μιμητής, συμμιμητής, and ἐξακολουθέω, and defining it as “to live in conformity with some presumed standard or set of customs.” The verb was used in military settings to refer to soldiers aligning themselves into formation (Moo, *Galatians*, 372; Das, *Galatians*, 588; Moisés Silva, *NIDNTTE*, s.v. “στοιχεῖον, στοιχέω”).

A parallel use of στοιχέω in Acts 21:24 refers to carefully living according to the Law (στοιχεῖς καὶ αὐτὸς φυλάσσων τὸν νόμον). Paul uses στοιχέω in Rom 4:12 and Phil 3:16, two other passages which contrast faith and Law observance as sources of δικαιοσύνη. A clear pattern emerges in which every use of the verb στοιχέω in the NT resides in a context that addresses the Law. Although the sample size is perhaps too small to make a firm conclusion, it is probable that the term στοιχέω was commonly used to refer to Torah observance (the reference in Acts places the term on the lips of “the elders” of the church at Jerusalem, supplying an example of this usage outside of Paul's writings). Paul then built upon this familiar manner of speaking about Law observance by using the cognate noun στοιχεῖα to refer to the Law's

his use of στοιχέω in 6:16. Following his declaration of the world's crucifixion and the replacement of “circumcision or uncircumcision” with a “new creation,” Paul declares, “as many as align themselves (στοιχήσουσιν) with this rule (κανών), peace and mercy be upon them, even upon the Israel of God.” Thus, the two uses of στοιχεῖα (4:3, 9) and the two uses of στοιχέω (5:25; 6:16) speak of alignment with standards that control and direct one's life. Στοιχεῖα in 4:3, 9 speaks of systems outside of Christ which result in “slavery” for those who submit to them, while στοιχέω in 5:25; 6:16 relate standards to which believers in Christ align themselves (“the Holy Spirit,” “new creation”), in opposition to the old, expired paradigm of the Law and the cosmos.<sup>50</sup> As such, the meaning of στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου should not be restricted to calendar observance, for Paul speaks of a general enslavement “under Law” which cannot be limited to the Jewish calendar, and he uses the cognate στοιχέω in relation to moral concerns when he contrasts the “works of the flesh” with the “fruit of the Spirit.”

What then, may be said regarding the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου? It has been demonstrated that the meaning must somehow enable a reference to both pagan religious observance and submission to Jewish Law. The fact that Paul includes Torah as somehow within the scope of the στοιχεῖα seems to exclude the view that it refers to the elements which comprise the cosmos (i.e., earth, air, fire, and water).<sup>51</sup> Additionally, it is difficult to see how the view that it refers to personal spiritual beings can align with Paul's inclusion

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controlling function in the life of its adherents.

<sup>50</sup>Note that in both 5:25 and 6:14-16, what is replaced is the paradigm of the Law, whereas in 4:3, 9 that which is replaced includes not only Law, but also pagan religious practices.

<sup>51</sup>Although the preponderance of linguistic evidence for the full phrase στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου strongly supports view #2, the evidence within Galatians of Paul's views regarding the cosmos (discussed above) mitigates the value of external evidence in determining the interpretation here.

of the Jewish Law, which is itself impersonal.<sup>52</sup> The potential allusion in Galatians 4:10 to Genesis 1:14 raises the question of whether Paul refers to planetary bodies such as the sun, moon, and stars (used to determine calendar cycles) when he uses the phrase, but the addition of τοῦ κόσμου, and his use of the cognate στοιχέω in 5:25 and 6:16, minimize the likelihood of such a specific referent.

Thus, what remains is the view that στοιχεῖα refers to basic principles, specifically of religious teachings (cf. Heb 5:12). Paul uses the term στοιχεῖα metaphorically, in a manner that enables him to make a comparison between the Galatians' religious background and submission to Torah. While not equating the Law with their pagan past, Paul draws up a point of commonality between the two. What the Law and pagan religion had in common was that they both enslaved their adherents.<sup>53</sup> Both Torah and pagan religion enslaved by subjecting their adherents to regulatory standards and rules which could not provide salvation (cf. 3:21; 4:9).<sup>54</sup> This seems the best explanation for why Paul cites calendar requirements in 4:10. They are a perfect example of the way in which both Torah and pagan religion regulated the lives of their

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<sup>52</sup>Reicke, "The Law and This World According to Paul," 262-63, suggests that the angels who administer the Law in 3:19 are στοιχεῖα. Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World*, 59, criticizes this conclusion, noting that Paul speaks in Galatians of bondage to the Law, but never to angels. Reicke's argument goes astray as soon as he commits to a view that the στοιχεῖα must be "personal" because Paul compares them to "overseers and stewards" (Reicke, "The Law and This World According to Paul," 261). Paul uses the metaphor to describe the Jewish Law, which no one would argue is a personal being. Reicke's thesis is nullified by the distinction between the Law and the angels who ordained it. Because it is clear that Paul makes the Law a στοιχεῖον, it is very unlikely that the angels would be included within the term as well.

<sup>53</sup>Wanamaker, "The Son and the Sons of God," 117; Martyn, "Christ, the Elements of the Cosmos, and the Law in Galatians," 16; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 286; Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World*, 65; de Boer, "The Meaning of the Phrase Ta Stoicheia Tou Kosmou in Galatians," *New Testament Studies* 53 (2007): 209; Fee, *Galatians*, 147. Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World*, 39, is also fundamentally correct in defining the στοιχεῖα as "the basic and fundamental constituents of that which is before and outside of Christ." Paul's argument in 4:1-6 emphasizes the eschatological removal of the Law upon the arrival of Christ in "the fullness of time."

<sup>54</sup>Belleville, "Under Law," 68.

observers.<sup>55</sup>

By situating the slavery to the *στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου* within the eschatological past (“we were enslaved, but when the fullness of time came . . .”), Paul emphasizes to the Galatians that now that Christ has come, neither their old pagan religion nor Judaism are appropriate. The old religious and social paradigms no longer regulate the lives of those who have been redeemed by Christ, for they have been decisively replaced by being in Christ, living by the Spirit, faith working through love, and a new creation. “Faith” has broken in to history (3:23-25), crucifying the old cosmos (6:14), rescuing believers from the “present evil age” (1:4), and bringing a new era of redemption, freedom, and new creation. This apocalyptic two-ages framework is paradigmatic for Paul's argument of the expiration of the Law in Galatians, and the pivotal event is the curse-bearing, curse-eradicating work of Christ.

### **Social Identity in Galatians 4:3**

In applying the metaphor of 4:1-2, Paul once again appeals to the Galatians' sense of social identity. Just as the child in the metaphor was completely powerless to improve his social station, “so also we were enslaved to the fundamental elements of the cosmos” (4:3). Viewed through the lens of SIT, this verse emphasizes the low social standing and lack of social mobility that characterized the past of the Galatian believers. First, Paul refers to the subjects of the verse as “underage” (*νήπιος*). Paul commonly uses this term with a negative nuance in his writings to speak of spiritual immaturity,

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<sup>55</sup>Paul uses generic terms for calendrical observance, avoiding specific terminology such as “Sabbath” or “Passover.” The phrase *ἡμέρας παρατηρεῖσθε καὶ μῆνας καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἐνιαυτούς* could refer to Jewish or pagan religious practice. Food laws and circumcision requirements, being more exclusively Jewish, would have failed to demonstrate as effectively how observance of the Jewish Law enslaves in the same manner as pagan religious activity. So Betz, *Galatians*, 218; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 301; de Boer, *Galatians*, 276; Moo, *Galatians*, 278.

foolishness, and helplessness (Rom 2:20; 1 Cor 3:1; 13:11; Eph 4:14). In this passage, the sense of helplessness would be foremost. Paul speaks of a “minor” whose control over his affairs is so limited that he is essentially a slave. In doing so, Paul is emphasizing a shameful element of the Galatians' spiritual history that, thankfully, has now been eradicated by God's work in Christ. They were, just like the νήπιος in the metaphor of 4:1-2, socially immobile. It was only God's work at “the fullness of time” that effected their social move from slavery to sonship. Later in the passage, when Paul laments the Galatians' potential “return” to the στοιχεῖα, he evokes this idea again. Do they really want to go back to that childlike state of helplessness, powerlessness, and low social standing?

In addition to referring to the religious past of believers as an embarrassing time of impotent minority, Paul further illustrates the lack of social mobility outside of Christ by referring to the Galatians' religious past as slavery to τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου. As shown above, the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου probably refers to basic principles of religion that exercise a controlling function over their adherents by forcing them to align with religious rules and observances. Thus, the στοιχεῖα enslaved their adherents, rendering them socially insignificant.

### **The Structure of Galatians 4:4-6**

Paul explains a new eschatological scenario in 4:4-6.<sup>56</sup> Many scholars find a

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<sup>56</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 205-7; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 166-67; B. Longenecker, *Triumph of Abraham's God*, 94, argue that 4:4-6 constitutes a pre-Pauline confession. Their argument is unverifiable; it is just as reasonable to conclude that Paul himself was capable of crafting this pericope. Regardless of who authored these lines, it is probable that they predate the writing of Galatians, and are here quoted by Paul with approval. Heim (“Light through a Prism,” 145), states, “In regard to the issue of composition in verses 4-5: (1) even if these verses are a pre-Pauline fragment, Paul has appropriated and fully integrated the text in order to make his own point about the believers’ sonship in relation to the Son, and (2) if Paul is using a well-known liturgical text or pithy statement to articulate his view of sonship then, being familiar to his audience members, it probably would have had an even greater impact on community identity.”

chiastic arrangement in 4:4-5:<sup>57</sup>

ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ,  
(γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός), γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον,  
ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ,  
ἵνα τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν.

The outside lines of the chiasm parallel God's sending of his Son with our becoming sons through adoption. There is “presupposed an intimate link between the sonship of Christ and the υἰοθεσία we receive as a result of the sending of the Son.”<sup>58</sup> The internal stichs of the structure are said to describe Christ's full humanity in order to obtain redemption for humans.<sup>59</sup>

This chiasm, however, does not account fully for the elements within the passage. Some scholars simply overlook the phrase γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός as an inconvenient imposition,<sup>60</sup> while Richard Longenecker maintains that the phrase, although not “germane to the argument of Galatians,” is included because it is part of a pre-Pauline confession.<sup>61</sup> Such conclusions result because scholars are too quick to force the text to fit their own structures. While the chiasm above cannot satisfactorily account for the text of

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<sup>57</sup>Byrne, *Sons of God-Seed of Abraham*, 180; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 166; B. Longenecker, *Triumph of Abraham's God*, 92; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 287; Trevor J. Burke, *Adopted into God's Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 116; Moo, *Galatians*, 266; Das, *Galatians*, 407. This chiasm is sometimes incorrectly attributed to J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes and Dissertations* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), 168 (e.g., R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 166; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 287; Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 116; Das, *Galatians*, 407), but his proposal is different, as will be seen below.

<sup>58</sup>Byrne, *Sons of God-Seed of Abraham*, 183.

<sup>59</sup>R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 171. Some iterations of this interpretation distinguish between “born of woman” and “born under Law” as representing full humanity, and Jewish identity, respectively. Thus, some interpreters believe the redemption from the Law is only purchased for Jewish Christians. See R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 171-72; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 288; Fee, *Galatians*, 149.

<sup>60</sup>Byrne, *Sons of God-Seed of Abraham*, 180, says γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός “stands out as something of an anomaly.” R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 166; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 287; Moo, *Galatians*, 266; Das, *Galatians*, 407, exclude the phrase from their descriptions of the chiasm.

<sup>61</sup>R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 166.



Galatians 4:4-5, there is a rarely-mentioned alternative which does justice to the pericope, as shown below:<sup>62</sup>

ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ,  
γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός,  
γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον,  
ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ,  
ἵνα τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν. (Ὅτι δὲ ἐστε υἱοί,)<sup>63</sup>  
ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ<sup>64</sup>

This structural arrangement surpasses that of the first chiasm for several reasons. First, it supplies the line *γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός* a “germane” place within the pericope, rather than collapsing both *γενόμενον* clauses together.<sup>65</sup> Secondly, by including *ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ* from 4:6, it showcases the perfect parallelism between God's sending of his Son and his sending of the Spirit of his Son.<sup>66</sup> Third, the answering of the double *γενόμενον* phrases with double *ἵνα* clauses creates a masterful balance within the central lines.

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<sup>62</sup>After arriving at this conclusion independently, I was happy to find that Dunn, *Galatians*, 214; Fee, *Galatians*, 148, had already made the same suggestion. Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 168, is similar, differing only in that his chiasm does not include the external *ἐξαπέστειλεν* lines. He has often been cited as proposing a different structure, but a careful reading of his commentary reveals that his chiasm includes the two *γενόμενον* clauses mirrored by the two *ἵνα* clauses. Belleville, “Under Law,” 68, follows the same four-line chiasm as Lightfoot.

<sup>63</sup>Ὅτι δὲ ἐστε υἱοί is placed within parentheses because it is likely a parenthetical comment in which Paul turns aside to the Galatians to apply the point directly to them. Cf. Mk 13:14, “let the reader understand.”

<sup>64</sup>	A	God sent out his Son
	B	coming from a woman
	C	coming under Law
	C'	that he might redeem those under Law
	B'	that we might receive the adoption, (and because you are sons)
	A'	God sent out the Spirit of his Son

<sup>65</sup>The interpretation pursued here will demonstrate that each *γενόμενον* clause makes a distinct contribution to the confession.

<sup>66</sup>As Fee, *Galatians*, 151, notes, the “symmetry [of the mirrored sending formula for the Son and the Spirit] is undeniably deliberate.” Viewed in this way, the artistic beauty and balance of the chiasm leap from the page. A further piece of evidence favoring the inclusion of 4:6 within the chiasm is the close parallel of Gal 3:13-14 (discussed below), which also begins with Christ and concludes with the Spirit.

This chiasmic structure carries thematic strength as well. The external lines match one another with the repeated sending formula and references to “his son.”<sup>67</sup> Finally, by viewing 4:6b as the final line (“God sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts . . .”), Paul provides a conclusive means of determining the identity of the “we” who receive adoption in 4:5.

The internal lines of this chiasm artfully express the “interchange” that transpires in Christ. The two γενόμενον lines describe how Christ has become what we are, while the two ἵνα clauses express that the purpose and result of his incarnation is that we become what Christ himself is—sons of God. Morna Hooker explains: “Christ shares our experience, in order that we might share his; he came under law, to set free those under law. . . . He who is Son of God was born of a woman in order that those who are born of woman might become sons of God.”<sup>68</sup>

### **Relationship to Galatians 3:13-14**

Many scholars recognize a connection between Galatians 4:4-6 and 3:13-14. Indeed, this new passage recapitulates all of the relevant themes of 3:13-14.<sup>69</sup> Both passages begin with the idea of slavery expressed by a ὑπό phrase (the slavery is called a

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<sup>67</sup>Incidentally, the inclusion of the final ἐξαπέστειλεν clause also renders the chiasm Trinitarian. Note also that the subject of ἐξαγοράση remains ambiguous. Did the Son redeem (cf. 3:13), or was it the Father's work? Finally, the Spirit is described as “the Spirit of his Son.” The parallel passage in Rom 8 corroborates that Paul liked to articulate his υἰοθεσία teaching in a Trinitarian fashion.

<sup>68</sup>Morna D. Hooker, “Interchange in Christ,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 22 (1971): 352. Hooker's reading of the passage supports the structure argued for here, but she does not mention the chiasm.

<sup>69</sup>Cf. Richard Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11*. 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 107: “we are dealing here with two tellings . . . of the same story.” Also Dunn, *Galatians*, 216-17; Martyn, *Galatians*, 408; Todd A. Wilson, “‘Under Law’ in Galatians: a Pauline Theological Abbreviation,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 56 (2005): 370-71. Moo, *Galatians*, 266, notes the thematic parallels, but falls into the trap of attempting to align the passages by their double ἵνα clauses. It is better to align the conceptual parallels than to sacrifice them in favor of the formal correspondence between the ἵνα clauses.

curse in 3:10-13), then proclaim the redemption achieved by Christ (expressed by ἐξαγοράζω, accomplished through Christ's γενόμενος . . . κατάρα/γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον), which effects Abrahamic blessing/adoption<sup>70</sup> and Spirit inheritance. Table 7, on the following page, illuminates the relationship between these two pericopes:

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<sup>70</sup>Given the close parallels between the other elements of the passages, it is clear that by “adoption” Paul meant something essentially equivalent to “the blessing of Abraham,” most likely the believers' justification. Gal 3:8 confirms that Paul viewed justification and the blessing of Abraham as essentially equivalent. This justification makes one both a “son of Abraham” and a “son of God.”

Table 7. The relationship of Galatians 3:13-14 to 4:4-6

<i>Galatians 3:13-14</i>	<i>Galatians 4:4-6</i>
<p>“For as many as are of works of Law are under (ὕπό) a curse.”</p> <p>ὅσοι γὰρ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσὶν, ὑπὸ κατάραν εἰσὶν (3:10)</p>	<p>“When we were minors, we were enslaved under (ὕπό) the fundamental elements of the cosmos.”</p> <p>ὅτε ἤμεν νήπιοι, ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου ἤμεθα δεδουλωμένοι (4:3)</p>
<p>“. . . becoming (γενόμενος) a curse for us . . .”</p> <p>γενόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατάρα</p>	<p>“. . . coming (γενόμενον) under Law . . .”</p> <p>γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον</p>
<p>“Christ redeemed (ἐξηγόρασεν) us from the curse of the Law”</p> <p>Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἐξηγόρασεν ἐκ τῆς κατάρας τοῦ νόμου</p>	<p>“. . . that he might redeem (ἐξαγοράσῃ) those under Law”</p> <p>ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ</p>
<p>“. . . that (ἵνα) in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might happen for the Gentiles.”</p> <p>ἵνα εἰς τὰ ἔθνη ἡ εὐλογία τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ γένηται ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ</p>	<p>“. . . that (ἵνα) we might receive adoption.”</p> <p>ἵνα τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν</p>
<p>“. . . that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”</p> <p>ἵνα τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος λάβωμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως</p>	<p>“And because you are sons, God sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.”</p> <p>Ὅτι δὲ ἐστε υἱοί, ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν</p>

Given the above parallels, it is obvious that Galatians 3:13-14 and 4:4-6 are fundamentally related. Hays, therefore, is correct in finding a “narrative substructure” underlying these two passages, since both clearly refer to the same kerygma. The narrative movement from curse/slavery → redemption → blessing/adoption → Spirit

demonstrates a common template of motifs, while the obvious differences between the two passages show that the underlying “narrative” was elastic enough to accommodate unique re-tellings. Paul is telling the same story in 4:4-6 as he was in 3:13-14.<sup>71</sup>

Paul begins the passage in 3:10-14 by arguing that a curse falls upon all who are “from works of the Law.” Although the language of “curse” does not recur after 3:13, that Paul speaks of the same thing in 4:3 when he says “we were enslaved under the fundamental elements of the cosmos” is apparent. First, he uses ὑπό to express the situation in both cases: “*under* a curse” = “*under* the fundamental elements.” Every other use of these ὑπό catchphrases in Galatians describes a negative situation of restraint created by the Law (3:10, 22, 23, 25; 4:2, 4, 5, 21),<sup>72</sup> and therefore 4:3 should be interpreted in the same way.<sup>73</sup> Second, the solution in both passages is the same: redemption effected by Christ. Christ alone provides redemption from the curse/enslavement that the Law brings. This redemption transpires through Christ's becoming a curse by being “hanged on a tree,” which is essentially equivalent to Christ's “coming under Law.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>In fact, Paul repeats this core kerygma in partial form both in 3:22 (imprisonment, implied release, reception of promise [sonship, Spirit, both?]) and 3:23-26 (imprisonment, release, sonship). The primary difference is that neither of these re-tellings explicitly mentions the Spirit.

<sup>72</sup>“Under a curse” (3:10), “under sin” (3:22), “under Law” (3:23; 4:4, 5, 21); “under a guardian” (3:25); “under overseers and stewards” (4:2), “under the fundamental elements” (4:3).

<sup>73</sup>Although it is possible that the curse, because it is the Law's curse, only falls upon Jews, it was argued in chap. 3 that both the curse and its redemption are universal. This is supported by the facts that no one, Gentile included, does “all the things written in the book of the Law,” and that the redemption from the Law benefits the Gentiles (3:14a). Furthermore, “Scripture locked *all* under sin” (3:22); there is “no Jew nor Greek” (3:28); and the heir is enslaved “under the fundamental elements of the cosmos” (4:1-3), which clearly includes Gentile false religion (4:8-9).

<sup>74</sup>The extensive parallels lead to the conclusion that by γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον, Paul means something more than simply that Christ was born and lived as a Jew, subject to the Law (rightly Byrne, *Sons of God, Seed of Abraham*, 181-82; F. F. Bruce, “The Curse of the Law,” in *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett*, ed. M. D. Hooker and S. D. Wilson [London: SPCK, 1982], 34; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 171; Martyn, *Galatians*, 390; Wilson, “Under Law' in Galatians,” 373; Schreiner,

According to the parallels suggested here, the “blessing of Abraham” for the “Gentiles” (3:14a) parallels “adoption as sons” (4:5b). Although it is tempting to extrapolate from this that the adoption as sons is a special *proviso* for Gentiles, this is not necessarily the case. First, in the explanation of 3:14 provided in chapter 3 of this study, it was concluded that although Paul specifically names the “Gentiles” as the recipients of the blessing of Abraham, this does not exclude Jews from the same benefit. The curse of the Law had rendered all people, even “Jews by nature,” the same with respect to justification.<sup>75</sup> If no one is able, through faithful Jewish living, to gain admittance into the eschatological people of God, then all are, by definition, spiritual Gentiles.<sup>76</sup> This point regarding Jews, however, is not Paul's focus in 3:14, and he therefore does not develop it. He is speaking as “the apostle to the Gentiles” about a Gentile concern. They were not asking how a Jew receives the blessing of Abraham, but how a Gentile does so.

Therefore, in saying that Christ's redemption brought the blessing of Abraham to the

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*Galatians*, 271). The phrase ὑπὸ νόμον, by this point in Galatians, clearly cannot stand for something as neutral as life as a Jew. The similarities between the two passages suggest that by coming “under Law,” Christ bore the Law's curse through his death on a cross (Wilson, “‘Under Law’ in Galatians,” 373). It is a misunderstanding at this point that leads many scholars mistakenly to conclude that the redemption in 3:13 and 4:5a is exclusively for Jews. Such scholars are prone also to ignore the integral place of the phrase γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός in 4:4, because they cannot reconcile its obviously universal implications with their exclusive interpretation of the redemption. Such readings also fail in their attempts to explain how a redemption solely for Jews can lead to “the blessing of Abraham” and “adoption” being accomplished for Gentiles. So, for example, Robinson, “The Distinction Between Jewish and Gentile Believers in Galatians,” 39, who follows such a schema, concludes, “Only the bare link between the Jews' redemption and the blessing of the Gentiles is maintained.”

<sup>75</sup>See especially 2:16-19 for Paul's ethnic reasoning which places Jews in the same situation as Gentiles with reference to justification, sin, and transgression. Gal 3:10-12 also prepares the reader for the assumption that even “Jews by nature” are excluded from the Abrahamic heritage because they too have been cursed by the Law. Later in the argument, Christ's position as the singular seed of Abraham (3:16) implies that even Jews are excluded from membership in the covenant family until they have been “baptized into” and have “put on” Christ (3:27).

<sup>76</sup>The idea that one can be a Jew by lineage but not by heritage is, of course, well-represented in the Hebrew Scriptures themselves, often expressed through the terminology of being “(un)circumcised” in “heart” (Lev 26:41; Dt 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; 9:25-26; Eze 44:7, 9; cf. Acts 7:51) or “ear” (Jer 6:10; cf. Acts 7:51). Outside of Galatians, Rom 2:28-29; 9:6-8; 11:1-24; Phil 3:3; Col 2:11 demonstrate that Paul recognized this distinction between internal and external “Jewishness.”

Gentiles, he is not excluding the fact that it also enacted that blessing for Jewish believers.

However, the interpretation of 3:13-14 should not be allowed to govern how 4:4-6 is read. Therefore, an independent interpretation of 4:4-6 will first be pursued. Ultimately, the interpretation of 4:4-6 will confirm the reading of 3:14 given here.

### **Interpretation of Galatians 4:4-6**

The most important question interpreters of Galatians 4:4-6 face asks to whom Paul refers by “those under Law,” “we,” and “you.” Do these different identifiers represent different groups, or are they universal? Two grammatical elements in 4:5 are incapable of bringing final clarity to the question at hand. First, the double *ἵνα* clauses may be interpreted as supportive of either reading. Some interpreters see the second *ἵνα* clause as subordinate to the first.<sup>77</sup> However, the double *ἵνα* clauses could just as easily be read as coordinate or parallel.<sup>78</sup> Likewise, the transition from third person “those under Law” to first person “we might receive adoption” may be interpreted in one of two ways. One interpretation sees the change in grammatical person as significant, marking a distinction between the two groups. A second reading, however, views the beneficiaries of redemption and adoption as the same group; the transition from third to first person could either be resultant of Paul's redaction of a traditional formula,<sup>79</sup> a typical instance of authorial identification with his auditors, or a simple move from proclamation to

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<sup>77</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 208; Terrence L. Donaldson, “The ‘Curse of the Law’ and the Inclusion of the Gentiles: Galatians 3:13-14,” *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 98-100; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 271. Note that reading the second *ἵνα* clause as subordinate to the first can support either interpretation.

<sup>78</sup>R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 172; Matera, *Galatians*, 150.

<sup>79</sup>R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 173.

application. In the end, grammar alone will not answer the question of the identities of the two groups in 4:5.

One must therefore attend to the meanings of the four phrases in 4:4c-5b to determine if they can supply a solution. It is appropriate to begin with the assumption that *γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός* is “germane to the argument of Galatians,” and only exclude it if no valid reason for its inclusion can be found.<sup>80</sup>

*Γενόμενον*, in 4:4c, might plausibly be interpreted as a formal equivalent for *γεννητός* or as “a quasi-passive of *γεννάω*.”<sup>81</sup> Therefore, in saying that God's Son was *γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός*, Paul would be saying that Jesus was born as a human being. A better reading, however, sees *γενόμενον* as referring not specifically to Jesus' birth, but to his transition into humanity. Paul's choice of *γενόμενον* rather than *ὄντα*, *γεννητός*, or *γεννώμενον* points the reader in this direction.<sup>82</sup> What Christ experienced when he became human was, in the words of Hays, a “disjunction,” a “change in the Subject's circumstances.” In the incarnation, Christ left what he was to become that which he was not.<sup>83</sup> In either reading, this phrase constitutes nothing less than an early Christian

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<sup>80</sup>Contra R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 166. His error in this case appears to be driven by his form-critical conclusions, rather than exegesis.

<sup>81</sup>Ernest de Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), 218; Betz, *Galatians*, 207; Bruce, *Galatians*, 195; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 171; Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, 167; Moo, *Galatians*, 266; Das, *Galatians*, 398; BDAG, s.v. “*γίνομαι*,” subheading 1. Cf. Deut 23:9; Wis 7:3; 1 Esd 4:16; Tob 8:6; Josephus, *Ant.* 7.21.

<sup>82</sup>In point of fact, many of the passages scholars commonly adduce as evidence that Paul refers simply to human birth do not use *γίνομαι* (e.g., Job 14:1; 15:14; 25:4; Sir 10:18; Matt 11:11; Luke 7:28), while some passages that do use *γίνομαι* do not require the translation “born” (e.g., Sir 44:9; John 8:58; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.216. Josephus, *Ant.* 16.382 is ambiguous).

<sup>83</sup>Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 96. Byrne, *Sons of God-Seed of Abraham*, 181, says “one should speak of a change rather than a simple coming to be.” See BDAG, s.v. “*γίνομαι*,” subheading 5: “to experience a change in nature and so indicate entry into a new condition”; L&N, §13.48: “to come to acquire or experience a state.” Phil 2:7 supplies the best parallel. Cf. also Jn 1:14.



confession of the incarnation.<sup>84</sup> The phrase does not limit Christ's human existence to a specific ethnic group, and thus should be interpreted as his full identification with all humanity.<sup>85</sup>

The second phrase, *γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον*, is subject to various interpretations. Many interpreters conclude that it speaks of Jesus' Jewish lineage.<sup>86</sup> While it is correct to say that Jesus was born and lived as a Jew, this is not precisely what Paul had in mind here, for three reasons. First, in the next phrase Paul portrays being “under Law” as a situation requiring the remedy of redemption. It is unlikely, however, that he believed being born as a Jew was what subjected a person to enslavement. Secondly, Paul had already described the situation of being “under Law” as universal in 3:22-23.<sup>87</sup> Finally, if *ὑπὸ νόμον* refers specifically to a Jewish status, then the redemption which follows must apply only to Jews (“those under Law”). But in that case, one of the two statements which follow (“in order that we might receive adoption,” or “and because you are sons”) ceases to fit the argument.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Byrne, *Sons of God-Seed of Abraham*, 181; Wanamaker, “The Son and the Sons of God,” 123; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 171; Martyn, *Galatians*, 390; Hays, *Galatians*, 283; Fee, *Galatians*, 149.

<sup>85</sup>Scholars often debate whether *ἐξαπέστειλεν* refers to the preexistence of Christ, or whether *γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός* refers to the virgin birth. While both discussions are important, they are tangential to Paul's argument (and therefore remain undeveloped in the letter). Space restrictions preclude a discussion here. The interpretation presented in this study clearly supports the implication of preexistence in Gal 4:4. However, 4:4 proffers no evidence either for or against the virgin birth.

<sup>86</sup>R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 171, says “he came as ‘the Jew.’” Also Betz, *Galatians*, 207; Bruce, *Galatians*, 196; Dunn, *Galatians*, 216; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 288; Hays, *Galatians*, 283; Fee, *Galatians*, 149; Moo, *Galatians*, 266.

<sup>87</sup>Additionally, Christ's “coming under Law” effects redemption for being “under the fundamental elements of the cosmos,” a universal rather than merely Jewish plight. Had he wanted to refer to a specifically Jewish scenario, he could just as easily have referred to “the Law” rather than “the fundamental elements.” Moreover, the “so also we” of 4:3 indicates that Paul is drawing his Gentile auditors into the application of the metaphor of 4:1-2.

<sup>88</sup>If one concludes that the “we” who receive adoption are Jews, then the next statement, “and because you are sons,” spoken to Gentile believers, is a massive assumption which has no ground in the pericope. If, on the other hand, the “we” who receive adoption in 4:5b includes both Jews and Gentiles, this

A second group of scholars believe γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον refers to a curse exacted by the Law upon all humans.<sup>89</sup> This second view provides the best explanation for the argument which follows. If Jesus' "coming under Law" refers to his identification with a universal condition rather than a national or ethnic one, then the redemption he accomplishes by means of this identification is sufficient to account for the fact that Gentiles benefit as well.<sup>90</sup>

Does γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον refer to Jesus' birth, life, death, or some combination thereof? Scholars who read γενόμενον as "born" usually conclude that ὑπὸ νόμον refers specifically to Jesus' Jewish pedigree. This reading does not necessarily exclude the idea that Jesus lived as a Jew and died under the "curse of the Law." On the other hand, reading the participle as something along the lines of "having become" or "having been" leaves open the possibility that ὑπὸ νόμον refers to something less specifically ethnic.<sup>91</sup> In favor of reading it as "born under Law" is the fact that γενόμενον

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begs the question of how a redemption solely for Jews might enable that adoption to transpire for Gentiles; it goes unexplained. Thus, one phrase or the other becomes a *non sequitur*.

<sup>89</sup>Burton, *Galatians*, 219; Byrne, *Sons of God-Seed of Abraham*, 182; Wanamaker, "The Son and the Sons of God," 125; Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, 159. Martyn, *Galatians*, 390; de Boer, *Galatians*, 263, support this position, but believe the enslavement is "to powers inimical to God," yet Paul's descriptions of the Law in Gal 3:19-24 do not portray the Law as an antagonist to God's plan.

<sup>90</sup>A minority perspective suggests that γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον refers to a status experienced only by Gentiles. See John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 91-92; Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 29-30; Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 71. This conclusion flies in the face of a fundamental point of Paul's argument, in which he labors to demonstrate that Jews and Gentiles suffer the same curse and require the same remedy. The thesis section of 2:15-21, focusing as it does upon Paul's and Cephas's justification by faith, with its insistence that "not any flesh" (οὐ . . . πᾶσα σὰρξ) will be justified from "works of the Law," should be enough to persuade any interpreter that the "curse of the law" of 3:10-13 applies also to Jews. Moreover, it runs aground in its attempts to describe how it can be that Jesus (who was clearly not a Gentile) himself came ὑπὸ νόμον.

<sup>91</sup>An analysis of γίνομαι as an Aorist Middle Participle in the Pauline corpus yields four additional instances in which the participle refers to Jesus. Only two of these might be rendered "born" (Rom 1:3; Phil 2:7). However, given Paul's affirmation of Christ's preincarnate existence in both Romans (cf. 8:3) and Philipians (cf. 2:6), both might better be translated in a transitional sense (contra esp. Bruce, *Galatians*, 195-96). The other instances clearly cannot mean "born" (Gal 3:13; Phil 2:8). Paul uses the Aorist Middle Participle of γίνομαι an additional four times when not referring to Jesus. Two of these

in the parallel phrase may mean “born of a woman.”<sup>92</sup> However, as was argued above, even in 4:4c γενόμενον refers to something more profound than mere birth. Philippians 2:7-8 (“*coming into human likeness . . . having become obedient to the point of death*”) provides an ideal parallel.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, a significant problem arises from interpreting γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον as a reference only to Jesus' birth. The passage then fails to explain how this event effected redemption for “those under Law.”<sup>94</sup> The ἵνα clause which follows calls for an explanation of the means by which redemption is accomplished: “Christ came under the Law, *in order that* he might redeem those under Law.” While incarnation is able to achieve identification with those under Law, it does not obtain their release from the Law's thrall. Through incarnation the Son joined humanity in our physical state, but

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instances reflect the “change in status” meaning argued for here in Gal 4:4 (Rom 7:3; Phil 3:8), while the remaining two speak of geographical movement, and thus do not contribute to the debate at hand (2 Cor 1:8; 2 Tim 1:17).

Outside of Paul, there are many examples of γίνομαι used in the manner argued for here. Cf. Mark 6:26; Luke 1:2; 18:24; 24:5, 37; Acts 1:16; 4:11; 7:32; 10:4; 12:23; 15:25; 16:27, 29; 19:28; 24:25; 27:36; Heb 1:4; 6:20; 7:26; 11:24; Jas 1:12, 25.

<sup>92</sup>Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, 167; Moo, *Galatians*, 266. Scholars who interpret γενόμενον as “born” are constrained to the conclusion that ὑπὸ νόμον does not refer primarily to Christ's curse-bearing death (cf. 3:13), although it may imply it. Most who follow this reasoning would probably agree with Hays, *Galatians*, 284, who does not find Christ's death inherent in the ὑπὸ νόμον phrase, but recognizes that it was necessary in order to effect redemption. This argument has to assume that Paul implies Christ's death between 4:4d and 4:5a. For example, Wanamaker, “The Son and the Sons of God,” 126, states, “Vs. 5a leaves one crucial fact unstated but clearly understood: eschatological redemption demanded the death of the Son of God. Paul did not need to state it here expressly because he had already made it clear in Gal. 3:13.” Cf. also Hays, *Galatians*, 284.

<sup>93</sup>Ἄλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφῆν δούλου λαβών, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος· καὶ σχήματι εὐρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ. The parallels between these two passages are suggestive: being a human (not merely a Jew) is represented as slavery, a first γενόμενος describes the Son's transition to human existence, and a second γενόμενος his death. Additionally, both passages have been singled out as confessional in nature. See de Boer, *Galatians*, 263. Wanamaker, “The Son and the Sons of God,” 165; Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 96, both note the parallel between Gal 4:4c and the first γενόμενος in Phil 2:7, but do not mention the similarities between the second γενόμενος in Gal 4:4d and Phil 2:8.

<sup>94</sup>For example, Heim (“Light through a Prism, 169) states, “In this passage Paul does not communicate *how* the Son accomplished this mission (i.e. his death and resurrection are noticeably absent).” Similar is Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 119. Hays (*Galatians*, 284), notes that “it would be misleading to suppose that Paul here thinks of a redemption achieved solely through the incarnation of the Son as opposed to through his death.” Cf. also Dunn, *Galatians*, 216-17.

identification is not the same as the representation or substitution demanded by redemption.

For this reason, *γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον* refers specifically to some action performed by or done to Christ that could effect redemption for others who similarly found themselves *ὑπὸ νόμον*. In other words, *ὑπὸ νόμον* means something other than simply being Jewish or living under the Torah.<sup>95</sup> Encompassed within the phrase is Christ's redemptive work, not merely his ethnic identity. Paul has already laid the groundwork for this understanding of *ὑπὸ νόμον*, for nowhere in Galatians does *ὑπὸ τινα* have a positive, or even neutral, connotation. Nowhere does he use it as a sort of shorthand for “being a Jew.” The phrase always suggests restraint, imprisonment, or enslavement. Being “under Law” brings the baneful scenario of being “under a curse,” “under sin,” and “enslaved.” Being “under Law” describes not a people group, but a plight.<sup>96</sup>

The only way of obtaining release from the Law's stranglehold is “through the Law” to “die to the Law,” which may only be accomplished by means of crucifixion with Christ (2:19). It is, therefore, Christ's death that is the means of release from the Law's

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<sup>95</sup>In agreement with Wilson, “Under Law' in Galatians,” 372-73. Betz, *Galatians*, 208, says “It is interesting to note that the cross of Christ is not mentioned in this passage,” yet does not follow this insight to the logical conclusion that Paul probably had more in mind than Christ's Jewishness when he said Christ came “under Law.” Bruce, *Galatians*, 196, evinces the conundrum created by trying to interpret *γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον* solely as Jesus' birth as a Jew. He is forced to argue that “it is implied that [Jesus] himself was not enslaved to the bondage in which they were held.” Yet Paul makes no such distinctions. Both Jesus and the people redeemed are described simply as “under Law,” meaning that Christ experienced the Law's enslavement just as fully (or perhaps even more so) as did those he came to redeem.

<sup>96</sup>Also Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, 159; Martyn, *Galatians*, 390; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 270-71; de Boer, *Galatians*, 263. Contra Moo, *Galatians*, 266. Although Paul's primary emphasis in saying Christ came “under Law” is to emphasize that he came under its curse, this does not exclude the historical fact that he did so as a Jew. Dunn, *Galatians*, 216, implies that to define *ὑπὸ νόμον* in any other manner than “Jew” is “abandoning historical particularity.” This is a false dichotomy. Christ was a Jew, under the Jewish Torah. But Paul's emphasis is not ethnocentric, it is curse-centric, because the Jewish Law brought a curse upon all humans (cf. 3:10-14).

grasp. This conclusion is corroborated in 3:13 when Paul says “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law” by dying as a curse on the cross. One could argue that Paul says no more in 4:4-5 regarding Christ than he does regarding others; they both are characterized as ὑπὸ νόμον. Yet Christ's coming under Law included something that no one else's did. He also “became a curse” by being crucified. Therefore, Christ's γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον means not simply that he was born or lived as a Jew, but that he suffered the full effects of being under Law; he became its curse in a way no other person has done. For Christ to “come under Law” means that he bore the full brunt of the Law's condemning and killing power. The people he redeems through this act are spared the curse that once hovered over them like an executioner's blade, for this curse has already been endured “for us” (3:13). All this Paul communicates in the three words γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον.<sup>97</sup>

An extremely important point follows from this exegesis. Paul does not specify ethnic particularity at any point in 4:4. The phrase “coming from a woman” communicates Jesus' humanity. Likewise, “coming under Law” describes his identification not with an ethnic status, but with a plight suffered by all humanity. Both 4:4c and 4:4d, therefore, refer in different ways to Christ's identification with the same group. The first description indicates his identification with their humanity, while the second describes his identification with their “under” status (that is, their condemnation by the Law). He became fully human, in order to become fully what every human has been—enslaved by Law, under sin, under a curse.

The next phrase, “that he might redeem those under Law,” indicates the

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<sup>97</sup>Wilson, “‘Under Law’ in Galatians,” 372-73, makes a compelling case that “coming under Law” in 4:4 equates to “Christ became a curse” in 3:13. In addition to the verbal and formal similarities, Wilson argues that the phrase “under Law” is Pauline shorthand for “under the curse of the Law,” providing another link between the two passages. See also Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, 158-59.

purpose (ἵνα) for Christ's "coming under Law." For the sake of consistency, those who suggest that Christ's γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον referred to his Jewish birth often conclude the same regarding this phrase—Christ redeemed Jewish people.<sup>98</sup> At this point, however, some interpreters waver, maintaining that somehow the τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον who are redeemed include not only Jews, but Gentiles as well.<sup>99</sup> It is difficult to see how this conclusion follows from Paul's logic. Why would Paul use the same descriptor (ὑπὸ νόμον) in one breath to refer to Christ's Jewishness, and in the next to refer to all people? It seems better to conclude that "under Law" refers to the same attribute in both phrases. The best reading is that ὑπὸ νόμον refers to a universal situation, one that affects all people.<sup>100</sup> Although Paul does not specifically refer to the "curse of the Law" in this context, this seems the best conclusion here as well. It was demonstrated above that Christ's "coming under Law" referred to his coming under the Law's condemning curse.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, Paul insists upon the fact that "all" experience imprisonment (3:22-23) and slavery (4:3)<sup>102</sup> instigated by the Law, which is another way of referring to its curse. Finally, the redemption results in a sonship which clearly includes Gentiles (4:6; cf. 3:14, 26, 29). Therefore, Christ came under the Law's curse in order to redeem people from

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<sup>98</sup>Robinson, "The Distinction Between Jewish and Gentile Believers in Galatians," 37; Betz, *Galatians*, 207-8; Donaldson, "The 'Curse of the Law' and the Inclusion of the Gentiles," 96-97; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 171-72; Matera, *Galatians*, 150; Dunn, *Galatians*, 216; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 288; Hays, *Galatians*, 283-84; Fee, *Galatians*, 149.

<sup>99</sup>E.g., Bruce, *Galatians*, 196.

<sup>100</sup>Burton, *Galatians*, 219, points to Paul's use of the phrase τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον in 1 Cor 9:20 as a "middle term" between Ἰουδαίοις and τοῖς ἀνόμοις as evidence that Paul viewed Gentiles as subject to the Law.

<sup>101</sup>See chap. 3 of this study for the conclusion that the "curse of the Law" in 3:10, 13 refers primarily to its condemning and killing power.

<sup>102</sup>Although 4:3 does not refer specifically to slavery to the Law, but instead to the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, the discourse markers clearly indicate that subjection to the Law is a means of subjection to these fundamental elements.

every race who experienced that same enslaving curse.

After this, Paul uses a second ἵνα clause to indicate a second purpose of Christ's "coming from a woman, coming under Law." Christ did so, "in order that we might receive adoption." Once again, the primary question scholars debate regarding this phrase is the identity of those who receive adoption. Although the majority view holds that the adoption is universal,<sup>103</sup> two minority perspectives argue either that the adoption is strictly Jewish,<sup>104</sup> or that it applies specifically to Gentiles.<sup>105</sup>

Supporters of the view that υιοθεσία belongs to Jews alone argue from two fronts. First, they maintain that Paul uses his pronouns in Galatians "consistently," and that the first person plurals always refer to Jews.<sup>106</sup> Secondly, they aver that, for Paul's theology, adoption is a specifically Jewish privilege (cf. Rom 9:4).<sup>107</sup> The argument in favor of a consistent referent for first person pronouns is tenuous, and goes against much contextual evidence.<sup>108</sup> The argument based upon Romans 9:4 is also faulty, for it fails to

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<sup>103</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 208; Bruce, *Galatians*, 197; Donaldson, "The 'Curse of the Law' and the Inclusion of the Gentiles," 98; Fung, *Galatians*, 183; Matera, *Galatians*, 150; Dunn, *Galatians*, 217; Martyn, *Galatians*, 390; Fee, *Galatians*, 149; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 271; de Boer, *Galatians*, 265; Moo, *Galatians*, 267; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 197.

<sup>104</sup>John W. Taylor, "The Eschatological Interdependence of Jews and Gentiles in Galatians," *Tyndale Bulletin* 63 (2012): 310; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 172; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 289.

<sup>105</sup>Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 71. Hays, *Galatians*, 284 initially states that the adoption is for Gentiles, but later on the same page states that it is universal.

<sup>106</sup>Taylor, "The Eschatological Interdependence of Jews and Gentiles in Galatians," 310-11; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 289. Most argue that Gal 2:15 establishes the first person plural as a constant referent to Jewish believers.

<sup>107</sup>Taylor, "The Eschatological Interdependence of Jews and Gentiles in Galatians," 311. R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 172, points to the article in front of υιοθεσία as evidence that it points restrictively "to the hope of Israel for the culmination of God's promises."

<sup>108</sup>For example, in 3:22 Paul argues that the Scripture locked up "all" under sin, and in the next verse states that "we" were locked up under Law (συγκλείω in both cases). It is difficult to see how τὰ παντᾶ in the first verse can refer only to Jews, and even more difficult to find a distinction between the first and third person subjects of imprisonment in the two verses. Similarly, the transition between 3:25 and 3:26 is nonsensical if the subjects of 3:25 who are justified "from faith" and no longer "under a guardian" are

recognize that Paul universalizes υιοθεσία in Romans 8:15, 23, a potentially controversial maneuver which leads to his insistence in 9:4 that the privileges already granted to Israel “according to the flesh”—including υιοθεσία—still inhere, for “the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom 11:29). Thus, Paul refers to υιοθεσία as a Jewish prerogative in Romans 9:4 precisely because he had granted it to Gentiles in the previous chapter.<sup>109</sup> Given that the next phrase in Galatians—“and because you are sons”—is clearly addressed to a primarily Gentile audience, it seems best to conclude that the reception of adoption must, at the very least, include Gentiles, if not also Jews.<sup>110</sup>

A second minority view of the recipients of υιοθεσία in 4:5 is that they are strictly Gentile. Scholars present a variety of arguments in favor of this conclusion. First, some interpreters reach this conclusion for structural reasons. They believe (rightly) that there is a direct relationship between the redemption of “those under Law” and the

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Jewish, and then suddenly Paul asserts the sonship of “you” Gentile Galatians “through faith.”

Additionally, it would be strange for Paul to speak of being “under the fundamental elements of the cosmos” in 4:3, were he speaking solely of a Jewish bondage. The first person plurals work much better in these passages when viewed as Paul’s authorial identification with his auditors. Finally, to argue that Paul consistently refers to Jews with the first person fails to explain the sudden transition to second person in 4:6, “and because you are sons,” followed by another first person “into our hearts.” Why would the (unexplained, for it would be so if the adoption were limited to Jews) Gentile son status bring about Jewish reception of the Spirit? Even more vexing is the question of why all this teaching regarding Jewish redemption, Jewish adoption, Jewish reception of the Spirit would be of interest or importance to the primarily Gentile Galatian audience.

<sup>109</sup>Heim (“Light through a Prism,” 319), argues, “The combination of the three υιοθεσία metaphors in Romans highlights the commonality between Jews and gentiles by emphasizing that God extends sonship to both groups through adoption.” Cf. Douglas J. Moo (*The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996], 562), who states, “Paul’s choice of the term ‘adoption’ is a deliberate attempt (after 8:15, 23) to highlight the continuing regard that God has for Israel, despite her widespread unbelief.” See also Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 249, 285; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 470-71.

<sup>110</sup>Rightly Donaldson, “The ‘Curse of the Law’ and the Inclusion of the Gentiles,” 95; Matera, *Galatians*, 150; Young, “Pronominal Shifts,” 215; Das, *Galatians*, 408. Additionally, the fact that “in order that we might receive adoption” reflects “coming from a woman”—an expression describing the generic human condition—in the chiasm of 4:4-6, shows that the υιοθεσία cannot be limited to any particular people group. Cf. Dunn, *Galatians*, 217.



reception of adoption. For scholars who conclude both that the second  $\text{ἵνα}$  clause is epexegetical of the first and that “those under Law” are Gentiles, this conclusion follows.<sup>111</sup> Others find a symmetrical chiasmic movement in 4:4-5 from Gentile (= “born of woman”) → Jew (= “born under Law”) → Jew (“those under Law”), and back to Gentile (“we” who receive adoption). Appeals are sometimes made to Paul’s “to the Jew first, then to the Greek” motif.<sup>112</sup> Finally, interpreters sometimes read 4:4-5 through the lens of their interpretation of 3:13-14, equating the reception of adoption with “the blessing of Abraham for the Gentiles.”<sup>113</sup>

None of the arguments for a Gentile-only adoption is compelling. First, even if the second  $\text{ἵνα}$  clause is epexegetical or coordinate, it does not follow that it speaks solely of Gentiles, for the best reading of “under Law” is that it describes a situation of condemnatory oppression exercised over all people by the Law. The argument that 4:4-5 follows a neat “Gentile : Jew :: Jews : Gentiles” pattern founders upon the recognition that “coming from a woman” is a general descriptor for humanness, not for being a Gentile. Christ was not a Gentile, and therefore “coming from a woman” must mean something else. If the chiasm is consistent, then it follows that the “we” of 4:5b does not refer solely to Gentiles. Therefore, a more satisfactory reading of the four clauses (which are chiasmic) is as follows:

- A “coming from a woman” (= generic humanity)<sup>114</sup>  
 B “coming under Law” (= experienced the Law’s condemnation)
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<sup>111</sup>Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 30; Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, 91.

<sup>112</sup>E.g., Betz, *Galatians*, 208; Bruce, *Galatians*, 197.

<sup>113</sup>E.g., Hays, *Galatians*, 284. Another potential reason for this interpretation is naked presupposition. Interpreters who follow a two-covenant approach find attractive the idea that adoption is a *Sonderweg* for Gentiles.

<sup>114</sup>Cf. Phil 2:7, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος; also Rom 8:3.

B' "those under Law" (= those who experience the Law's condemnation)<sup>115</sup>  
A' "we" (= generic humanity, including both Jew and Gentile)<sup>116</sup>

It is unlikely that Paul's maddeningly ambiguous references to the beneficiaries of redemption and adoption throughout 4:3-6 are the result of careless writing, and more plausible that they are a deliberate rhetorical tool designed to blur any and all perceived distinctions between Jew and Gentile.<sup>117</sup> Paul's rhetoric emphasizes a single universal plight alongside a single universal solution.

Are the two ἵνα clauses in 4:5 coordinate or subordinate? Concluding that the identity of those who are redeemed is equivalent to those who are adopted enables the possibility that the two ἵνα clauses are both coordinate and synonymous (or coordinate and constructive, as are the two in 3:14). While reading the two clauses as synonymous or constructive is certainly plausible, the best reading views the second clause as dependent upon the first one. The believers' redemption and adoption are two distinct events, and the redemption of believers precedes their adoption.<sup>118</sup> This explains the inclusion of two

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<sup>115</sup>It was argued above that ὑπὸ νόμον describes a condemnation levied by the Law against all people. This conclusion is corroborated by the independent exegesis of Gal 3:10 supplied in chap. 3.

<sup>116</sup>A further argument in favor of identifying "those under Law" with "we" who receive adoption is the fact that Paul uses the first person to refer to both the recipients of adoption and those "enslaved under the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου." Surely Paul does not have a different referent in mind in 4:3 and 4:5b in using the first person in both instances. Since the redemption of "those under Law" applies to those enslaved to the fundamental elements in 4:3, and those enslaved to the fundamental elements are the same "we" as those who receive adoption, the subjects in all three situations are the same.

<sup>117</sup>Rightly, Martyn, *Galatians*, 334-35; de Boer, *Galatians*, 209. Additionally, the move to the second person "you are sons" in 4:6 probably evinces Paul's editorial insertion into a preexisting confession.

<sup>118</sup>Rightly Bruce, *Galatians*, 197; Fung, *Galatians*, 182; de Boer, *Galatians*, 264; Das, *Galatians*, 412-13. Other scholars conclude that the second ἵνα clause depends upon the first one, yet they believe the identities of "those under Law" and "we" to be distinct. Thus, for example, Donaldson, "The 'Curse of the Law' and the Inclusion of the Gentiles," 98, argues that Israel's redemption opens the way for both Jewish and Gentile adoption. Betz, *Galatians*, 208, avers that Paul follows a "Jew first and then Greek" paradigm.

γενόμενον phrases within the confession.<sup>119</sup> Paul emphasizes two distinct aspects of the incarnation, because the incarnation accomplished two distinct goals. First, Christ came under Law, to redeem those under the thrall of Law. Second, Christ became a human son, so that believers might become divine sons. Distinguishing between these two events, however, does not necessitate the conclusion that they transpire for different groups of people.<sup>120</sup> As argued above, those who are redeemed from the Law are the same group who receive adoption.

In the final assertion of this primal kerygma, Paul proclaims to the Galatians, “And because you are sons, God sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying, ‘Abba Father.’” Despite the fact that the grammatical persons do not align, the thematic correspondence between this line and the one preceding it indicates that the “you” who are presumed to be sons are included in the “we” who have received adoption.<sup>121</sup>

The presence of the Spirit functions in Paul's argument as proof of the

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<sup>119</sup>This point reveals the fatal flaw in the chiasm proposed by Byrne, *Sons of God-Seed of Abraham*, 180; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 166; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 287; Moo, *Galatians*, 266; Das, *Galatians*, 407. Their treatments fail to recognize that ἵνα τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν reflects γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός, not ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ. They are thereby constrained to collapse both γενόμενον clauses into a single line of the chiasm (or simply to omit γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός), and ultimately exclude ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ from the structure entirely. Likewise, interpretations which view the adoption as part of the redemption (reading the ἵνα clauses as synonymous or constructive) miss how the double aspect (“from a woman,” “under Law”) of the Son's incarnation reflects the double outcome (redemption, adoption) of his work.

<sup>120</sup>Contra, for example, Betz, *Galatians*, 208; Matera, *Galatians*, 150; Dunn, *Galatians*, 216-17; Hays, *Galatians*, 284; Fee, *Galatians*, 149, all of whom see a move from Jewish redemption to universal adoption. Despite the popularity of viewing the first person pronouns as references to Jewish believers, no scholar suggests a move from Gentile redemption to Jewish adoption.

<sup>121</sup>Rightly Das, *Galatians*, 408-9. The change from first person “we” who receive adoption to the second person “you are sons,” followed by a quick return to the first person “into our hearts” causes problems for Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 289, who wants to find a careful distinction between first person references to Jewish believers and second person references to Gentile believers. As a result, Witherington elects to follow the unlikely textual variant ὑμῶν. In spite of Witherington's appeal to a careful pattern followed by Paul, and the ease with which a scribe might confuse the sounds of ἡ and ὑ, the first person reading ἡμῶν has both the weight of manuscript evidence and the principle of *lectio difficilior* on its side.

Galatians' sonship.<sup>122</sup> Nevertheless, the exact relationship between the Spirit and adoption is unclear. The Spirit might be either a concomitant of adoption, its result, or its cause. What is most evident is that Paul cannot conceive of someone having the Spirit and not being a “son of God.”

Is it possible to determine the precise relationship between the Spirit and sonship? Paul refers to the Spirit as “the Spirit of his Son,”<sup>123</sup> a statement that makes the Spirit appear to be the cause of υιοθεσία. However, Paul's use of ὅτι (“because”) indicates that the adoption transpires before God sends the Spirit into the hearts of the redeemed; the Spirit is sent into believers' hearts *because* they are sons.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 210; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 174; Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 406.

<sup>123</sup>The phrase appears nowhere else in Paul's extant writings.

<sup>124</sup>In favor of a causal use of ὅτι are Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 461; Burton, *Galatians*, 221; Allen Mawhinney, “Huiotesia in the Pauline Epistles: Its Background, Use and Implications” (PhD diss., Baylor University, 1982), 160-61; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 173; Matera, *Galatians*, 151; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 290; Moo, *Galatians*, 268; Heim, “Light through a Prism,” 171; Das, *Galatians*, 413-14. Betz, *Galatians*, 209-210, supports the causal reading while arguing that the ὅτι “refers back to 3:26, without thereby making 'sonship' a principle prerequisite for receiving the Spirit.” Given the fact that the previous clause refers to our reception of υιοθεσία, this explanation strains credulity.

The ὅτι clause presents a difficulty that has led some scholars to conclude that the ὅτι leads a declarative content clause (“and to show that you are sons”), rather than the traditional causal (“and because you are sons”) translation. See Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (New York: Scribner, 1971), 197; Byrne, *Sons of God-Seed of Abraham*, 184; Wanamaker, “The Son and the Sons of God,” 345-46; Dunn, *Galatians*, 219; Paul Nadim Tarazi, *Galatians: A Commentary*, Orthodox Biblical Studies (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999), 206-7; David J. Lull, *The Spirit in Galatia: Paul's Interpretation of Pneuma as Divine Power* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 106.

The difficulty resides in the fact that a causal reading makes the arrival of the Spirit subsequent to and even dependent upon believers' adoption. Many scholars argue that this would conflict with Gal 3:3 (where the Galatians' Christian experience “began by the Spirit”) and Rom 8:15 (“you received a Spirit of adoption”), where it appears that the Spirit brings, rather than follows, adoption. Regarding the objection from Gal 3:3, it can simply be argued that adoption and reception of the Spirit are so closely related that Paul regarded it as no contradiction to state that the Spirit marked the “beginning” of their faith experience. No scholars maintain that 3:26-27 contradicts 3:3, yet in these verses Paul avers that believers' sonship derives from the moment of faith and baptism into Christ, without any reference to the Spirit.

As for the alleged contradiction with Rom 8:15, the genitive modifier in πνεῦμα υιοθεσίας does not mandate a reading that makes the Spirit precede adoption. The genitive case means simply that in some way adoption and the Spirit are affiliated (Moo, *Romans*, 501-2, takes πνεῦμα υιοθεσίας “in the sense of 'the Spirit who confirms adoption' rather than 'the Spirit who brings about adoption.’” See also Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, 261; Byrne, *Romans*, 252; Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 142-43). Thus, πνεῦμα υιοθεσίας in Rom 8:15 in no way conflicts with the message of Gal 4:5-6, where adoption and the Spirit are likewise intimately related. In both passages, the Spirit confirms adoption/sonship. Byrne, *Sons of*

Although believers' υιοθεσία precedes their reception of the Spirit, the relationship between υιοθεσία and the Spirit is closely intertwined. Paul appeals here to the Spirit's presence as evidence of their sonship, and in another letter refers to the Spirit as the πνεῦμα υιοθεσίας (Rom 8:15).<sup>125</sup> Thus, adoption and the Spirit are so closely related that for Paul, there could be no such thing as an adopted believer without the Spirit, nor an unadopted believer who has the Spirit. Although the Spirit does not necessarily effect adoption for believers, it appears that the Spirit's presence does inaugurate their experience of sonship.<sup>126</sup> Believers come to know that they are “sons of God” by the Spirit's active presence within them, crying out “Abba Father” (cf. Rom 8:16, where “the Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are children of God”). This is why Paul describes the Spirit not simply as “the Spirit,” but as “the Spirit of his Son.” Believers do not recognize their adopted status unless the Spirit actualizes and evidences it for them. Υιοθεσία and the Spirit's presence are therefore inseparable. In this sense, the causal ὅτι clause describes a relationship that is more logical than chronological, for it is unlikely that Paul intended to communicate a temporal delay between adoption and

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*God-Seed of Abraham*, 184, who prefers the declarative reading, acknowledges that “the causal understanding of ὅτι also allows the Spirit to be the indicator of sonship—so that in effect, the grammatical controversy is not of great moment.” Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, 185, is correct in stating that Paul's line of argument is more logical than chronological; nevertheless, it is impossible to remove completely the chronological aspect of the syntax.

<sup>125</sup>The purpose of these verses is to demonstrate to the Galatian believers that they are heirs. To show that they are heirs, he must prove that they are sons. This he does by appealing to their experience of the Spirit (cf. 3:2-5, 14). Cf. Burton, *Galatians*, 221: “From the consciousness of the latter one may infer the former, and it is doubtless to induce the Galatians to draw this inference from their consciousness of possessing the Spirit that this sentence was written.” The indisputable presence of the Spirit, combined with the authority of the confession (which ties adoption together with the Spirit), showed the Galatians that they were heirs.

<sup>126</sup>Hays, *Galatians*, 285, states “The adoption was in one sense 'legally' accomplished in Jesus' death and resurrection, but that is not the end of the story. God has provided experiential confirmation of our adoption by pouring out the Spirit.” Burton, *Galatians*, 221, argues that believers do not receive “consciousness of a filial relation” until they receive the Spirit. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 408, states that “the Spirit actualizes adoption for the believer.” Cf. Dunn, *Galatians*, 221.

reception of the Spirit.<sup>127</sup>

Clearly, Paul cannot imagine an adoption for believers that is not also accompanied by reception of the Holy Spirit. This is the force of the ὅτι clause.<sup>128</sup> Paul moves from cause to effect, so that he might then move from effect to cause. Paul appeals to the confession to show the cause-effect relationship between adoption and Spirit. Then, applying it to the Galatians, he moves in the opposite direction. Moving from effect (Spirit) to cause (adoption), he proves that the Galatians are sons. The Galatians already know they have the Spirit (3:2-5); what they need to know now is that they are also sons and heirs.<sup>129</sup> Paul's argument takes the form of an reverse syllogism: (1) all who have the "Spirit of the Son" are "sons;" (2) you Galatian believers have the "Spirit of the Son;" (3) therefore, you Galatian believers are "sons."<sup>130</sup>

In the context of Galatians 4:4-6, ὅτι δέ ἐστε υἱοί is a Pauline insertion into the final line of the preexisting kerygma, which applies the confession to the Galatians as a proof of their sonship.<sup>131</sup> Paul could easily have left out the parenthetical ὅτι δέ ἐστε υἱοί,

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<sup>127</sup>Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, 185; Das, *Galatians*, 414. R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 174, argues that the reception of the Spirit and sonship are "integral" and "mutually dependent and intertwined." Also Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 143.

<sup>128</sup>Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, 185, rightly concludes that "since they are sons of God, that implies *eo ipso* that God sent the Spirit into their hearts."

<sup>129</sup>The way Paul closes the pericope shows this to be the case: "God sent the Spirit of the Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba Father.' *Therefore*, you are no longer a slave but a son; and if a son, also an heir through God." Paul's conclusion attests that he aims to demonstrate their status as heirs by proving that they are sons.

<sup>130</sup>Ultimately, chronology is not Paul's primary concern here, and debates regarding it are therefore tangential (cf. R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 173; Matera, *Galatians*, 151; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 272; de Boer, *Galatians*, 265; Moo, *Galatians*, 269; Das, *Galatians*, 413-14). Nevertheless, it is impossible to explain away the causal relationship between 4:6a and 4:6b.

<sup>131</sup>Heim ("Light through a Prism," 145), notes, "If Paul is using a well-known liturgical text or pithy statement to articulate his view of sonship then, being familiar to his audience members, it probably would have had an even greater impact on community identity."

but he desired to apply this proclamation to the need at hand.<sup>132</sup> Therefore, he inserted this editorial comment to draw the Galatians' attention to the fact that the Spirit's presence in their lives was a concomitant of their sonship. Because it was impossible to have the Spirit without being sons, and because they undoubtedly had the Spirit (3:2-5), they were sons, and as such, heirs (4:7). This fact was so important that Paul disrupted the aesthetic balance of the confession, in which “God sent out the Spirit of his Son” perfectly mirrored “God sent out his Son.”

**Social identity implications of Galatians 4:4-6.** Social Identity Theory can shed new light on certain aspects of Paul's presentation in Galatians 4:4-6. First, it illuminates Paul's use of group identity concepts to describe the social transition God has effected for believers through Christ. SIT recognizes that group memberships and their perceived value play an important role in constructing an individual's sense of identity. In this passage, Paul contrasts two aspects of “Christian” social identity with the identity it displaces. First, Paul speaks of a time division. There is an eschatological past and present. Members within the realm of the eschatological past are slaves “under the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου” and “under Law.” But for believers in Christ, the “fullness of time” has arrived, redemption has transpired, and adoption has been effected. A second group contrast is that between the κόσμος and the family of God. Those who belong to the world are helpless slaves, while those belonging to God's family are sons and heirs.

Secondly, Paul uses alternating subjects to blur the lines of distinction between ethnic groups, and to subordinate ethnicity to a more pertinent identity marker—being a

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<sup>132</sup>The suggestion that Paul adds ὅτι δὲ ἐστε υἱοὶ to a previously existing formula is supported by the facts that it breaks the poetic balance, interrupts the chiasm, and confuses the subjects. By positing that Paul has inserted this short clause, one is better able to explain the alternation between persons in 4:5b (“we”), 4:6a (“you”), and 4:6b (“our”). He is therefore mingling confession with application.

son of God. The interpretation above showed that the “we” in 4:3 is universal, referring to both Jewish and Gentile believers in the time before they were redeemed. Throughout the remainder of the pericope, the subjects oscillate, and aside from the second person references (which refer clearly to the Galatian audience), Paul avoids identifying his subjects with any clarity.<sup>133</sup> He glides from the first person “we were enslaved” (4:3), to the third person “those under Law” (4:5), back to the first person “we might receive adoption” (4:5), followed immediately by a shift to the second person plural “you are sons” (4:6) and the first person “into our hearts” (4:6), with a climactic move to the second person singular “you are no longer a slave but a son” (4:7). Paul leaves his interpreters with four explanations for this phenomenon: (1) he was careless with his pronouns; (2) he was making a careful distinction, with the first person references pointing to Jews and the second person references identifying Gentiles; (3) he was intentionally ambiguous, blurring the boundaries between Jew and Gentile; (4) the pronominal transitions evince his insertion of a preexisting confession into the letter.<sup>134</sup>

The position taken here is a combination of the third and fourth explanations. First, some of the pronominal inconsistencies are a result of his use of a preexisting confession. More important, however, is the fact that Paul aimed to diminish distinctions between Jews and Gentiles. He set the tone for this maneuver in 2:15-18, where Jewish believers recognize their Gentile-like “sinner” status. In 3:10-14, he described a curse that necessitates redemption for all people. Then, in 3:22, he stated that “Scripture locked up

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<sup>133</sup>The only subject to which he furnishes any distinguishing characteristic is “those under Law.” The exegesis above demonstrated that this refers to the plight of all humans.

<sup>134</sup>R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 164.



*all* (τὰ πάντα) under sin.”<sup>135</sup> Here in 4:3-5, Paul follows this pattern of describing a universal plight from which all people need to be redeemed.

The ethnic implications of Paul's approach are apparent. Just as he did in 3:28, Paul subordinates ethnic identity to more pertinent aspects of social identity. If Paul goes out of his way to demonstrate that Jews and Gentiles are all in the same boat (i.e., slaves “under Law” in need of redemption), especially in a context where “living like a Jew” (Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῆν, Ἰουδαΐζειν; 2:14), distinctions between Jew and Gentile (2:15; 3:7-9, 28-29), and “works of the (Jewish) Law” (2:16; 3:2, 5, 10) drive the controversy, then he is communicating that ethnic identity is less important than the Galatians, and the other teachers, believe.<sup>136</sup> Paul does not nullify ethnicity or argue that it is an unimportant aspect of identity.<sup>137</sup> Rather, he disconnects it from the matters of sin, slavery, sonship, and inheritance. Being a Jew does not make one δίκαιος, υἱός, or κληρονόμος.<sup>138</sup> Nor is being a Gentile what makes one ἁμαρτωλός or δοῦλος. Paul's point is that all people were enslaved ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου. For this reason, Paul can speak of the “we,” “you,” and “those” as though they were all members of “an undifferentiated monolith of humanity.”<sup>139</sup>

**The “Abba Father” cry.** At the conclusion of his statement regarding the

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<sup>135</sup>On these passages, see the exegesis in chaps. 2, 3, and 4.

<sup>136</sup>Here it is important to remember that a new ethnic identity is what the Galatians were pursuing in an attempt to gain what they perceived to be a strictly Jewish inheritance.

<sup>137</sup>Cf. Heim (“Light through a Prism,” 174): “Υιοθεσία as a model does not connote the obliteration of ethnic distinctions, but it does render them no longer salient, and subordinates them to the new familial relationships created through adoption.”

<sup>138</sup>Heim (“Light through a Prism,” 174): “It [the metaphor of adoption] hides any notion that sonship comes through Abraham and law observance.”

<sup>139</sup>Martyn, “Christ, the Elements of the Cosmos, and the Law in Galatians,” 17.

sending of the Spirit, Paul adds that the Spirit cries out “Abba Father.”<sup>140</sup> Scholarly discussion regarding this phrase has focused too narrowly on determining the precise meaning of “Abba,” specifically upon whether or not “Abba” means “Daddy.”<sup>141</sup> Contextually, however, there are at least four contributions the “Abba Father” exclamation makes to Paul's discussion.

First, the phrase communicates the intimacy of the believers' relationship to the Father.<sup>142</sup> Regardless of whether or not “Abba” means “Daddy,” the filial status that believers receive denotes an intimacy that surpasses by far their former status as slaves under the Law of Moses.<sup>143</sup>

Secondly, the “Abba Father” cry functions as an evidence of this new status.<sup>144</sup> Just as Paul appealed in 3:1-5 to the reception of the Spirit and the working of “powers” among the Galatians as evidence of their righteous standing, so here he points to their reception of the Spirit and its concomitant “Abba Father” cry as an outworking of their sonship.

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<sup>140</sup>The participle κρᾶζον is neuter, and thus—at least grammatically speaking—it is the Spirit who does the crying out. Paul probably did not mean by this to exclude the believers from joining in together with the Spirit in this cry. In Rom 8:15, believers voice the “Abba Father” cry by means of (ἐν ᾧ) the Spirit.

<sup>141</sup>For the basic contours of the debate, see especially Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 61-68; James Barr, “‘Abbā Isn’t ‘Daddy’,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 39 (1988): 28-47; idem, “‘Abba, Father’ and the Familiarity of Jesus’ Speech,” *Theology* 91 (1988): 173-79; Allen Mawhinney, “God as Father: Two Popular Theories Reconsidered,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 31 (1988): 181-89.

<sup>142</sup>Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 67; Gerhard Kittel, “Ἀββᾶ,” in *TDNT*, vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 6; Mawhinney, “God as Father,” 184-85; Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 411-12; Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 93-95.

<sup>143</sup>So Kittel, “Ἀββᾶ,” 6; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 175; Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 412.

<sup>144</sup>Lull, *The Spirit in Galatia*, 68; Dunn, *Galatians*, 222; Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 405-6.

Thirdly, the “Abba Father” cry shows that this filial status derives from the sonship of Jesus.<sup>145</sup> Because the Spirit is “the Spirit of (God’s) Son,” the cry he brings in believers echoes Jesus’ own manner of addressing the Father, as it is exemplified in Mark 14:36.<sup>146</sup> The Galatians’ conversion involved a “baptism into Christ” in which they “clothed themselves with Christ,” thereby becoming “sons of God through faith, in Christ Jesus” (3:26-27). It is now clear that the mechanism by which believers appropriate their status as “sons of God” is by receiving “the Spirit of the Son” (who Paul elsewhere calls “the Spirit of adoption,” Rom 8:15) into their hearts. The Spirit, by calling out the same filial address to the Father that Jesus the Son of God used while on earth, attests to the believers’ sonship status; they now have the same relationship to God that Jesus has.<sup>147</sup> The “in Christ” sonship of the Galatians is patterned after the sonship of Jesus and mirrors that sonship in the manner by which the Spirit compels them to address God as “Abba Father.”<sup>148</sup>

Finally, the multi-linguistic character of the cry reflects the multi-ethnic nature of the church.<sup>149</sup> Because Αββα is a direct transliteration from Aramaic into Greek, it is

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<sup>145</sup>Cf. the parallel passage in Rom 8:15-17, 29, where the Spirit signals believers’ release from slavery, is closely tied to their adoption to divine sonship, compels believers to call out the “Abba Father” cry, testifies along with their spirits that they are God’s children, makes them “co-heirs” with Christ, conforms them to the image of the Son, and makes them siblings of the Son.

<sup>146</sup>Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 65; Wanamaker, “The Son and the Sons of God,” 348; Bruce, *Galatians*, 199; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 291; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 174-75; Tarazi, *Galatians*, 213; Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 411; Moo, *Galatians*, 270.

<sup>147</sup>The sonship believers receive is not simply incorporation into the singular sonship of Jesus. Although believers become “one in Christ Jesus” (3:28), they are at the same time “sons of God” (plural). Thus, although believers are incorporated into Christ (cf. 3:29, ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ), they still retain individual personalities. Cf. Rom 8:29, where believers are “conformed (συμμόρφους) to the image of his Son” and Jesus is “the firstborn among many siblings.”

<sup>148</sup>Kittel, “Αββα,” 6; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 291; Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 405.

<sup>149</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 211; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 174; Dunn, *Galatians*, 222; Das,

unlikely that Gentile believers would address God in this way without a compelling reason to do so. The most likely cause for the intrusion of this Aramaic term into Gentile spirituality is that it reflects Jesus' use (and therefore the “Spirit of [Jesus] the Son” would impel them to cry it out in conformity with Jesus). Paul, however, likely saw a second reason to appeal to the multi-linguistic Αββα ὁ πατήρ cry: its use of both Aramaic and Greek vividly reflected the multi-ethnic character of the church. In the context of the Galatian controversy, where Gentile believers were being taught that they needed to live like Jews to qualify for the full benefits of God's promise to Abraham, the cry of Αββα ὁ πατήρ, experienced by all believers, portrayed the truth that in Christ “there is no Jew nor Greek,” but rather “you are all one.”

### **Revisiting the Relationship between Galatians 4:4-6 and 3:13-14**

Now it is time to return briefly to the question of the relationship between Galatians 4:4-6 and 3:13-14. It was shown above that the double ἵνα clauses in 4:5 constitute a subordinate, rather than coordinate, structure. From the perspective of some scholars, this immediately discredits the notion that the two passages “tell the same story.” However, the two passages should be aligned conceptually rather than formally. The two pairs of ἵνα clauses do not speak of the same actions as in the following depiction:

ἵνα: blessing of Abraham for the Gentiles	≠	ἵνα: he might redeem those under Law
ἵνα: reception of the promised Spirit	≠	ἵνα: we might receive adoption

Rather, the ἵνα clauses align as follows:

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*Galatians*, 415; Peter Oakes, *Galatians*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 138; Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 198.

-----	=	ἵνα: he might redeem those under Law
ἵνα: blessing of Abraham for the Gentiles	=	ἵνα: we might receive adoption
ἵνα: reception of the promised Spirit	=	-----

Filling in the remainder of the two pericopes leaves the following:

-----	=	God sent out his Son
-----	=	γενόμενον: from a woman
Christ redeemed us from the curse	=	ἵνα: he might redeem those under Law
γενόμενος: a curse for us	=	γενόμενον: under Law
ἵνα: blessing of Abraham for the Gentiles	=	ἵνα: we might receive adoption
ἵνα: reception of the promised Spirit	=	God sent out the Spirit of his Son

There are several reasons scholars have struggled to recognize the precise relationship between the two passages. First, 3:13-14 focuses upon Christ's actions, while 4:4-6 begins and ends by explaining God's role. As a result, the subject of the lead indicative verb in 3:13-14 is Christ, whereas God is the main actor in 4:4, 6. Secondly, in 4:4-6, the incarnation is explained, but in 3:13-14, it is only implied. To put it another way, 3:13-14 enters at a later stage of the story than 4:4-6 does. Thirdly, the structures do not formally align. Although both confessions include γενόμενος statements, ἐξαγοράζω, and double ἵνα clauses, attempting to align them on the basis of grammatical features rather than content leads to major discrepancies.<sup>150</sup> Fourthly, the persons of the pronouns appear to conflict with one another. In 3:13, Christ redeems “us”; in 4:5, he redeems “those under law.” In 3:14, the blessing of Abraham comes to “the Gentiles”; in 4:5, “we” receive adoption. To make matters worse, 4:6 throws in a second person pronoun where a first person reference would surely better fit the context. Only in reference to the reception of the Spirit do the pronouns align correctly: “we receive,” “into *our* hearts.” The disparities, however, are only apparent, and can be explained by the fact that Paul

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<sup>150</sup>E.g., Moo, *Galatians*, 266.

views the same story from a different perspective in each section.

Having established with some measure of certainty precisely how 3:13-14 relates to 4:4-6, it will be instructive to review some helpful ways that the two passages mutually interpret one another. First, when the passages are viewed synoptically, some of the hotly debated questions regarding identity fade away. For example, scholars debate specifically who receives the adoption in 4:5. Acknowledging that Paul told the same story in both pericopes leads to the conclusion that “adoption” is equivalent to “the blessing of Abraham.” Therefore, at minimum, one must conclude that adoption applies to Gentiles.<sup>151</sup> Secondly, 3:13 helps to interpret what Paul meant by the catchphrase ὑπο νόμον in 4:4d. In these parallel accounts, “becoming a curse for us” describes what it means for Christ to have “come under Law.”<sup>152</sup> Finally, “in order that we might receive the adoption” in 4:5 supplies more substance to the moderately ambiguous “blessing of Abraham” in 3:14.<sup>153</sup>

### **Excursus: “Son of God” Language and Anti-Imperial Rhetoric**

A recent wave of scholarship has focused upon the relationship of the New Testament writings to their first century Roman imperial context. Several scholars have emphasized the ways in which New Testament motifs interact with prominent

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<sup>151</sup>Contra Belleville, “Under Law,” 68; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 172; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 289. Chap. 3 of this study argued that by specifying the blessing of Abraham for the Gentiles, Paul was not excluding Jews from that same blessing. He was, rather, describing how his Gentile audience could participate in the blessing that the opposing teachers claimed could only be apprehended by Jews.

<sup>152</sup>Rightly Wilson, “‘Under Law’ in Galatians,” 373; Schreiner, 270-71; Hong, *The Law in Galatians*, 158-59.

<sup>153</sup>The parallels between the phrases suggest that by “blessing of Abraham” Paul may have had in mind a status of Abrahamic descent, i.e, becoming a “seed of Abraham.” Paul later argues that believers become Abraham’s offspring by clothing themselves with Christ, the “one Seed” of Abraham (3:16, 26-29). Thus, their adoption as “sons of God” coincides with their transfer into Abraham’s lineage.

contemporary imperial power structures. Foremost among these are Richard A. Horsley, N. T. Wright, and Michael Peppard.<sup>154</sup> These scholars point out the ways the New Testament writers echoed and challenged the common rhetoric dispensed throughout the empire. Thus, familiar imperial parlance hailed the Caesar as “lord” (κύριος), “savior” (σωτήρ), and “son of God” (υἱὸς θεοῦ) whose arrival (παρουσία) and “reign” (βασιλεία) was “good news” (εὐαγγέλιον) because it brought “peace” (εἰρήνη), “security” (ἀσφάλεια), and “liberty” (ἐλευθερία). The apostolic authors, however, used every one of these terms to describe the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the “Lord over all” to whom every knee—including that of Caesar—would bow.<sup>155</sup> Do these obvious linguistic overlaps indicate an intentional connection between the apostolic writings and the language of the Roman Empire?

On Horsley's interpretation of these connections, Paul's message of Jesus and the gospel was distinctly anti-imperial and subversive, “sharply opposed to Caesar and the Roman imperial order.”<sup>156</sup> Paul “borrowed the themes and terms of the Empire” in order “to articulate the gospel of, and build assemblies loyal to, a Lord and God who not only offered an alternative to, but stood in judgment over, the imperial Savior and the

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<sup>154</sup>Richard A. Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2004); N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 70; idem, “Gospel and Theology in Galatians,” in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans for Richard N. Longenecker*, ed. L. Ann Jervis and Peter Richardson, 222-39 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994); idem, “Paul and Caesar: A New Reading of Romans,” in *A Royal Priesthood: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically*, ed. C. Bartholomew, 173-93 (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002); idem, “Paul and Empire,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Paul*, ed. Stephen Westerholm, 285-97 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011); idem, “Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire,” in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel Imperium Interpretation. Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl*, ed. Richard A. Horsley, 160-83 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000); Michael Peppard, *The Son of God in the Roman World: Divine Sonship in its Social and Political Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>155</sup>Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 70; Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 18.

<sup>156</sup>Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 5.

ostensible 'peace and security' he offered."<sup>157</sup> Christopher Bryan appropriately critiques Horsley's approach with warnings against "parallelomania" and the idea "that to have *made use* of the imperial rhetoric was therefore to be *in confrontation* with it."<sup>158</sup>

N. T. Wright notes that the majority of the connections between imperial rhetoric and New Testament language derive primarily from the influence of the (OT) Scriptures upon the apostolic authors. For Wright, this recognition does not disconnect Paul's gospel from imperial critique, but roots it within the milieu of the Old Testament prophetic tradition. Thus, he affirms that Paul presented a "radical critique of pagan power" while at the same time founding that critique within Paul's convictions, based upon Scripture and revelation, that Jesus is "King, Lord and Saviour."<sup>159</sup> Bryan likewise points out that a majority of the terms viewed by some scholars as direct connections between Paul's proclamation and imperial rhetoric must be viewed first of all as reflections of motifs derived from the Septuagint. In fact, the only verbal connection that Bryan does not root in the LXX is the term *παρουσία*, which derives from "the Hellenistic rhetoric of divine manifestation, or that surrounding the formal visit of a sovereign."<sup>160</sup> Thus, Wright and Bryan offer a *via media* that accepts Pauline appropriation of imperial rhetoric, yet at the same time roots it primarily within his Jewish background.

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<sup>157</sup>Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>158</sup>Christopher Bryan, *Render to Caesar: Jesus, the Early Church, and the Roman Superpower* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 83, 90. "Parallelomania" is a term popularized by Samuel Sandmel in reference to scholars who tended to equate verbal parallels from outside sources (in his case, the Qumran documents) with direct influence upon the biblical authors. See Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81 (1962): 1-13. D. A. Carson later categorized parallelomania as a "word-study fallacy" in his popular *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 43-44.

<sup>159</sup>Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 69-70.

<sup>160</sup>Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, 82-83.



For the purposes of this study, the salient aspect of the scholarly discussion regarding Paul and empire is the tendency to associate the New Testament ascriptions of the “son of God” title to Jesus with the same epithet as used in the first century world to refer to the Roman emperor. Scholars view this terminological coincidence as a rhetorical attempt by the biblical authors to appropriate the title for Jesus, thereby asserting his status as the ultimate “son of God,” in direct opposition to the emperor cult and the *divi filius* motif.<sup>161</sup> Inasmuch as the adoption motif also ascribes divine sonship to believers in Christ,<sup>162</sup> some of the conclusions of these scholars impact their interpretations of the *υιοθεσία* passages.

In *The Son of God in the Roman World*, Michael Peppard develops this new strand of interpretation. Peppard notes that, apart from references to Jesus and his believers, all the extant uses of *θεοῦ υἱός* or its equivalents (e.g., the Latin *divi filius*) as a title in the New Testament era refer to the emperor.<sup>163</sup> Although this appears to be a surprising assertion at first blush, Peppard notes that because most gods have names, a statement of divine sonship would be communicated by phrases such as “son of Zeus” or “son of Hercules” rather than the more generic “son of God.” Thus, Peppard argues that

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<sup>161</sup>For example, Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, 4, contends that by calling Jesus “son of God” in Rom 1:4, “Paul states that Christ has displaced Caesar.”

<sup>162</sup>Within the Pauline corpus, believers are referred to explicitly as “sons of God” in Rom 8:14, 19; 9:26; Gal 3:26; cf. 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 4:6, 7. Additionally, they are called “children of God” in Rom 8:16-17, 21; Phil 2:15.

<sup>163</sup>Peppard, *The Son of God in the Roman World*, 28. Peppard distinguishes that he is only concerned with “titular” uses of “son of God” language. This distinction is important, as there exist many instances of generic “son of God” language. For example, Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.9.5-6, states “and chiefly to rational beings, seeing that by nature it is theirs alone to have communion in the society of God, being intertwined with him through the reason . . . why should not such a man call himself a citizen of the universe? Why should he not call himself a son of God?” Cf. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.3.1-9. Also Philo, *Deus* 31; Philo, *Conf.* 145-147; Philo, *Mut.* 131; *Corp. Herm.*, *Poimandres* 6.5, *Περὶ νοήσεως καὶ αἰσθήσεως* 8.2, *Κλείς* 14.7; et al. I thank Dr. Mark A. Seifrid for bringing this point and some of these references to my attention.

“imperial divine sonship [is] a relevant, though neglected, historical *comparandum* for divine sonship in early Christianity.”<sup>164</sup>

In a chapter focusing on the concept of adoption by God, Peppard points to an apparent correlation between the fact that Roman emperors often acceded to their imperial leadership through the process of being adopted, and the potential that Paul presented Jesus himself as being adopted by God. “Paul's portrayal of a powerful father granting adoptive sonship would . . . have invoked the transmission of power in the imperial family.” Peppard argues that Paul in Romans 1:3-4 demonstrates Jesus as inheriting his sonship via “both dynastic (through David) and adoptive (through God)” means, thereby “[appealing] to both kinds of father-son relationships, which were the central loci of power in Roman society.”<sup>165</sup>

Note that Peppard situates Jesus' dynastic descent through David, and not through God. He argues explicitly that “Paul does *not* use the begotten metaphor to describe the divine sonship of Christians or Christ himself.”<sup>166</sup> Recognizing the difficulty that *πρωτότοκον* in Romans 8:29 presents to this thesis, Peppard points to Psalm 89:27 (88:27 LXX) as an instance where divine adoption of David makes the Israelite king a “firstborn” (*πρωτότοκον*). A major implication of this, as Peppard himself notes, is that Paul appears to make little or no distinction between Jesus' sonship and that of believers. Paul, Peppard suggests, “is not trying to *separate* the divine sonship of Christ from the divine sonship of Christians. On the contrary, he draws them together as closely as he

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<sup>164</sup>Peppard, *The Son of God in the Roman World*, 29.

<sup>165</sup>Peppard, *The Son of God in the Roman World*, 138.

<sup>166</sup>Peppard, *The Son of God in the Roman World*, 138.

can.”<sup>167</sup>

Peppard's work raises several important questions for the study of υιοθεσία. Foremost among these are the following: Is it true that Paul did not envision Jesus as having been begotten, but rather that he believed Jesus to have been adopted? Does Paul distinguish between the sonship of Jesus and that of believers? What is the relationship between believers' divine sonship and Jesus' status as “son of God”? Was Paul's depiction of Jesus as “son of God” meant to function as anti-imperial rhetoric, and if so, how does this relate to his depiction of believers in the same manner?

Contrary to Peppard's conclusions, there is no evidence that Paul viewed Jesus as having been adopted. First and foremost, Paul never uses υιοθεσία or any other adoptive terminology to describe Jesus' status.<sup>168</sup> If Paul wanted to emphasize Jesus' status as adopted son in opposition to Caesar, he could easily have done so by using adoption language. Additionally, Galatians 4:4 affirms that Jesus was “Son” before God sent him out, before he transitioned into existence as a human.<sup>169</sup>

Next, against Peppard, Paul does distinguish between Jesus' sonship and that of believers. He always depicts believers' sonship as dependent upon the sonship of Jesus.<sup>170</sup> Galatians 4:5-6 shows that the believers cannot be “sons” apart from the “Spirit of the Son” (elsewhere called “the Spirit of adoption,” Rom 8:15) being sent into their hearts. Similarly, Galatians 3:26-29 shows that believers' sonship depends upon their baptism

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<sup>167</sup>Ibid., 139.

<sup>168</sup>Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 105-6; Heim, “Light through a Prism,” 17.

<sup>169</sup>See the exegesis above. Thus, any argument for Jesus' adoption based upon ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ in Rom 1:4 is nullified, since this passage speaks of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Whatever it means, it cannot be that Jesus was adopted by God the Father at his resurrection, since Paul affirms elsewhere that Jesus was “Son” before his incarnation (Gal 4:4; Rom 8:3; cf. Phil 2:6-7).

<sup>170</sup>Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 107.

“into Christ,” “clothing themselves with Christ,” and being “in Christ” and “of Christ.” In Romans 8:29, the sonship of believers is described as a conformity to the image of Jesus. Therefore, υιοθεσία functions as a metaphor that describes how believers receive the sonship Jesus has always had. Finally, in Paul Jesus is always υιός, and never τέκνον; thus, his sonship is often distinguished even at a terminological level from that of believers (Rom 8:16, 17, 21; Eph 5:1; Phil 2:15).

To conclude, nothing in Paul's writings suggests that he viewed Jesus as having been adopted by God the Father. Paul consistently distinguishes between the natural sonship of Jesus and the adopted sonship of believers. Although believers' sonship conforms to the image of Jesus' relationship to the Father, this depends upon their reception of the “Spirit of the Son,” indicating that the believers' identity as adopted “sons” derives from the natural sonship of Jesus, who was “Son of God” before he became human.

Peppard's study also posits a relationship between Paul's use of “son of God” and the motif of the Caesar as *divi filius*. Two obvious correlations are the use of “son of God” terminology, and the correspondence between some Caesars acceding to the throne by means of adoption and believers becoming “sons of God” via υιοθεσία.<sup>171</sup>

Although the parallels are intriguing, it does not appear that Paul is making an anti-imperial statement along the lines of “Jesus is lord, Caesar is not” here in Galatians. The first line of evidence for this is the fact that the theme of sonship in Galatians most often focuses on believers. It is unlikely that Paul is asserting a competing divine sonship between believers and the emperor of Rome. If this is the case, it weakens the hypothesis

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<sup>171</sup>Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 62, includes a list of emperors who were adopted into the Julio-Claudian dynasty.

that he pits Jesus' authority against that of the Caesar, since he refers both to Jesus and believers as “sons of God.” There is no hint in Galatians that Jesus was adopted into a position of political power. A second clue is the fact that the epistle evinces no danger that the Galatian believers are threatened by the imperial cult or that the Galatians are experiencing tensions with the Roman authorities (such as Rom 13:1-8 shows for the Roman congregations). Although Paul does denigrate the previous pagan worship of the Galatians, he gives no hints that emperor worship is a current threat to the Galatian church.<sup>172</sup> Rather, he deploys his efforts in a sustained polemic against the practice of “works of the Law,” specifically as evidenced in his attacks on calendar observance and circumcision.

Although Paul does not appear to be setting Jesus up as a rival to Caesar here in Galatians, there is perhaps a faint echo of the *divi filius* motif in his references to believers as “sons of God.” It is impossible to confirm this, because Paul never speaks of empire or emperor in Galatians, only “the present evil age.” Nevertheless, such a “pop culture” reference could have been in play. The implications of such an allusion for the Galatians' social identity would be consistent with Paul's objectives in the epistle. By comparing the identity granted believers to a status equivalent to that of the most prestigious individual in the Roman Empire, Paul would be magnifying the foolishness of trading in such a status for a position of slavery to impotent, pathetic, and non-existent gods.

### **Galatians 4:7**

Galatians 4:7 concludes the theological section that began in 3:6. The theme

<sup>172</sup>This does not exclude the possibility that it was an element of their pagan religious past. Cf. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 279-98.

since 3:26 has been sonship, with the pressing concern being inheritance (3:29; 4:1, 7).<sup>173</sup>

The section climaxes with the adoption of believers which transpires along with their reception of the Spirit of God's Son. In 4:7, Paul summarizes these themes in two deft clauses: "Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, also an heir through God."

Cosgrove correctly observes that the pressing issue all along has never been "how one is justified."<sup>174</sup> As Paul pushes toward his ultimate conclusion, where he emphasizes sonship and inheritance, justification fades from the discussion (it last occurred in 3:24, and will not return until 5:4).<sup>175</sup> The conclusion in 4:7, "if son, then heir," shows that the purpose of arguing for believers' sonship in 4:5-6 is to demonstrate their status as heirs. This is supported by the mention of the Spirit in 4:6, which aims to prove their adoption. Thus, the logic of 4:6-7 is "if you have the Spirit, then you are sons, and if you are sons, then you are heirs." Paul's conclusion, which emphasizes inheritance, shows that the inheritance has been the main concern all along. The Spirit functions as proof that the Galatians already have everything they are attempting to appropriate via "works of the Law." In other words, Paul is saying to them, the Spirit you have received is not only the beginning, but also the middle and conclusion of your eschatological life as believers in Christ.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup>Charles H. Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit: A Study in the Argument and Theology of Galatians* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 52; Dunn, *Galatians*, 222.

<sup>174</sup>Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit*, 50-52.

<sup>175</sup>Nevertheless, contra Cosgrove, the agility with which Paul oscillates between Spirit, justification, blessing, life, promise, and inheritance shows that Paul does not sharply distinguish between these concepts. In fact, a large part of the problem in Galatia was that the believers there *did* make too sharp distinctions between them. As a result, they believed that even though they had the Spirit, they did not yet have the blessing and inheritance of Abraham.

<sup>176</sup>It is possible that in thinking through the implications of this reality, Paul began to articulate

A final note needs to be sounded regarding 4:7. Paul states that the Galatian believers are heirs “through God” (διὰ θεοῦ).<sup>177</sup> This unique expression, which occurs nowhere else in the Pauline corpus, emphasizes the divine initiative which has supplied all of the benefits the Galatians have received. In contrast to their fleshly efforts (cf. 3:3), it has been God who called them by the grace of Christ (1:6), God who supplies the Spirit and works powers among them (3:5), God who justifies and blesses the Gentiles (3:8-9), God who graciously granted the inheritance to Abraham through a promise (3:18), God who sent out his Son to bring redemption (4:4-5), and God who sent out the Spirit into our hearts to make us his sons (4:6). The “works of the Law” did not and can not do any of those things, nor can they add to the benefits the Galatian believers already have. Only the divine initiative brings eschatological blessings.<sup>178</sup>

With respect to social identity, Paul now emphasizes *social mobility*. In particular, Paul references the social mobility that transpired for the Galatians when they came to know God. The phrase διὰ θεοῦ underscores that all of the progress made and benefits received by the Galatian believers derive solely from the divine initiative. The Galatians have moved, or rather have been moved, from slavery to sonship. Furthermore, their new social positioning gives them the Holy Spirit, access to God the Father, and

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more carefully this concept of the Spirit as not only beginning, but also confirmation and conclusion, of the eschatological life. Thus, in 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5, the Spirit is an “earnest” or “pledge” (ἄρραβών), and in Eph 1:14 the Spirit is the “pledge of our inheritance, for a redemption of possession” (ἄρραβὼν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν, εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῆς περιποιήσεως).

<sup>177</sup>This phrase proved vexing to many scribes. Alternate readings abound in the manuscript tradition, including διὰ θεόν; διὰ Χριστοῦ; διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; θεοῦ διὰ [Ἰησοῦ] Χριστοῦ; κληρονόμος μὲν θεοῦ, συγκληρονόμος δὲ Χριστοῦ. This is due probably not only to the rarity of the phrase (it only occurs once in the Pauline corpus), but also to the fact that διὰ usually connotes instrumentality rather than agency. It is precisely these difficulties that attest to the phrase's originality. The alternate readings are easily explained as scribal efforts to avoid the *lectio difficilior* or as harmonization with other passages. Rightly, Moo, *Galatians*, 271.

<sup>178</sup>Thus Moo, *Galatians*, 271, rightly notes that the focus of διὰ θεοῦ is on grace.

inheritance. Paul emphasizes that this social transition has been supplied by God.

Another element of Social Identity Theory that this passage exemplifies is the idea of *social change*.<sup>179</sup> In this passage, Paul encourages the Galatian converts to reassess what they have as members of the “in Christ” social group. An honest evaluation would discourage them from making a social move to the “works of the Law” group, for all the benefits they are seeking to acquire through that maneuver are benefits they already have in Christ. The problem is that the Galatians had been misled into thinking those benefits (blessing of Abraham, inheritance) only accrued to “those who are of the works of the Law.” Therefore, Paul reminds them that they are sons, and because sons, also heirs. In this case, the social change was not a mind game for the socially immobile, but a simple reminder of the facts. The social change of learning that the “in Christ” group obtains the blessing and inheritance of Abraham would prevent the exercise of social mobility in the wrong direction.

### **Galatians 4:8-11**

Paul had applied the status of sons and heirs to the Galatian believers in 4:5-7; he follows this in 4:8-11 by articulating the enormity of the mistake the Galatians are contemplating.<sup>180</sup>

The “but” (*ἀλλά*) that introduces this paragraph signals Paul's surprise at the Galatians' reversal. They have been redeemed from slavery and made sons of God and

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<sup>179</sup>As a reminder, *social change* is the process of reevaluating one's current group memberships and social standing as a means of improving their perceived value. Social change is often employed by those who are unable to improve their social standing by means of social mobility.

<sup>180</sup>And perhaps have already begun to make. Unless the present tense form of *παρατηρεῖσθε* is conative (as argued by de Boer, *Galatians*, 275), it suggests that the Galatians have already started adhering to the Jewish calendar. This may be the first step in their Judaizing process, soon to be followed by circumcision. So Bruce, *Galatians*, 205; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 182; Matera, *Galatians*, 158; Dunn, *Galatians*, 229; Fee, *Galatians*, 160; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 279; Moo, *Galatians*, 277; Das, *Galatians*, 425.



heirs. To return willingly to their previous state would be ludicrous. The *ἀλλά*, therefore, expresses a disjuncture between the Galatians' sonship/heirship and their unbelievable decision: “you were slaves and then were made sons, *but* now you are deciding to become slaves again.” What the Galatians are doing defies common sense.<sup>181</sup>

Paul begins by reminding the Galatian believers of their former status when they were pagans: “at that time (τότε), not knowing God, you were enslaved to those things which by nature are not gods.” The language of slavery echoes 4:1-3, where Paul had spoken of the underage heir being “no different from a slave,” and being “enslaved to the fundamental elements of the cosmos.”<sup>182</sup>

Subsequent to that slavery, of course, came “the fullness of time,” the apocalyptic intersection of the old world and the “New Creation,” at which the Father sent out the Son to obtain redemption and effect adoption. All of this Paul consolidates under the explanation, “but now (νῦν), after coming to knowledge of God; rather, having been known by God . . . .” Paul's “correction” emphasizes once again the divine initiative (as opposed to their own self-efforts) that brought about their status change.

The contrast between the “then” and the “now” could not be greater, yet the Galatians are attempting to regress to their former status. Although they did not realize it, their submission to the Jewish calendar was a willful (θέλετε) return (ἐπιστρέφετε)<sup>183</sup> to a

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<sup>181</sup>Betz, *Galatians*, 213, describes the implication of the *ἀλλά*: “If the previous argument holds, Paul contends, then the present plans of the Galatians must be self-contradictory.” This explanation fits the *ἀλλά* better than the contention that it serves to contrast the Galatians' new status as sons of God with their former situation. Paul communicates that contrast with the μὲν . . . δέ construction of 4:8-9. The *ἀλλά*, therefore, performs a different function. The πῶς in 4:9, which highlights the stupidity of their decision, supports the tone set by the *ἀλλά*. Contra R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 179; Moo, *Galatians*, 275.

<sup>182</sup>Moo, *Galatians*, 275.

<sup>183</sup>The biblical authors frequently use ἐπιστρέφω to describe conversion to God (e.g., 1 Sam 7:3; Ps 22:27 [21:28 LXX]; Isa 19:22; 45:22; 55:7; Lk 1:16; Acts 3:19; 9:35; 11:21; 14:15; 15:19; 26:18, 20; 28:27; 2 Cor 3:16; 1 Thess 1:9; 1 Pet 2:25). Alternatively, ἐπιστρέφω may describe apostasy from God

slavery no different from their old pagan religious practices.<sup>184</sup> In describing their practice of the Jewish calendar, Paul uses στοιχεῖα, “return,” “again” (2x), and “anew” to emphasize that he saw little difference between their performance of “works of the Law” and their old religious practices.<sup>185</sup> Unlike in 4:3, Paul briefly explains how practicing certain elements of the Torah equates to slavery to στοιχεῖα.<sup>186</sup> He focuses on the calendar (ἡμέρας παρατηρεῖσθε καὶ μῆνας καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἐνιαυτούς) as an example of this enslavement, implying that both Jewish and pagan practice control their practitioners by the cycles of the sun and moon.<sup>187</sup>

Another common element between the στοιχεῖα of pagan religious practice and the “works of the Law” is that they are both “weak and destitute” (ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχά).

Paul has described the Law as powerless to confer life, righteousness, inheritance, and the

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(e.g., Deut 31:18, 20; Judg 8:33; Ps 78:41 [77:41 LXX]; Jer 11:10; cf. 2 Pet 2:22). Several commentators believe Paul evokes this sense of the term (e.g., Betz, *Galatians*, 216; Dunn, *Galatians*, 225; Das, *Galatians*, 421). In the LXX, ἐπιστρέφω occurs most often in the context of a repentant “return” to God (Deut 4:30; 30:2, 8, 10; Isa 6:10; 44:22; Jer 3:10-22 [5x]; 4:1; 5:3; 8:5; 24:7; et al.). Paul is reversing this biblical motif of the return of Israel to her God to point out the foolishness of “(re-)turning” to false worship, a false worship characterized, ironically, by Torah observance.

<sup>184</sup>Most commentators agree that the “days, months, seasons, and years” of 4:10 refers to or includes the Jewish calendar. See Bruce, *Galatians*, 206; R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 182; Matera, *Galatians*, 157; Dunn, *Galatians*, 227-28; Fee, *Galatians*, 160; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 279; Moo, *Galatians*, 278. Paul uses generic terminology rather than specifically Jewish words “to maximize the similarities between the observances the Galatians have left behind and those they are, or are contemplating, taking up.” Rightly Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 299; Betz, *Galatians*, 218; de Boer, *Galatians*, 276; Das, *Galatians*, 423-25.

Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 297-98, argues that the emperor cult lies in the Galatian believers' religious past, and thus the “days, months, seasons, and years” of 4:10 refers to “the calendrical feasts and days of the Emperor cult.” Although the suggestion supplies a plausible background, it is ultimately unverifiable and suffers from want of additional evidence within the letter.

<sup>185</sup>Das, *Galatians*, 422, notes the extreme rarity with which Greek authors combined πάλιν and ἄνωθεν. For Paul, the Galatians' turn is so astonishing that he can't resist the tautology. Cf. Wis 19:6.

<sup>186</sup>De Boer, *Galatians*, 275, notes, “Unless there is some similarity, either conceptually or formally (or both), between the observance of the law and the worship of the *stoicheia*, Paul could not very persuasively make the move of equating the situation under the *stoicheia* from which the Galatians came with the situation under the law to which they are now wanting to turn.” See also Bruce, *Galatians*, 204; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 301-2.

<sup>187</sup>De Boer, *Galatians*, 275; Moo, *Galatians*, 278.

Spirit (2:21; 3:2, 5, 11, 18, 21).<sup>188</sup> Paul viewed the Galatians' pagan religious past in precisely the same manner. Thus, the Galatians' dependence upon “works of the Law” to supply blessings that the Law could not provide equates to their previous submission to pagan religion.

Paul concludes this paragraph by shaming the Galatian believers.<sup>189</sup> If theological arguments could not persuade them, perhaps his pathos could.<sup>190</sup> Therefore, he appeals to their sense of honor, with the rhetorical suggestion that he had wasted his efforts among them.<sup>191</sup> In the honor/shame society of the Roman Empire, authors could effectively employ such statements to move their listeners to response.

This shaming technique matches the tone set by the rest of the paragraph, where Paul has already questioned the Galatians' common sense, for who in their right mind would willingly turn from a true knowledge of God back to enslavement by pagan religion and “those that by nature are not gods”? Paul's aporia regarding the Galatians' regression from the gospel led him to challenge their integrity and intellect. These threats to their intelligence and honor might persuade the Galatians to abort their Judaizing campaign.

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<sup>188</sup>Soards and Pursiful, *Galatians*, 203, state that the στοιχεῖα, “including 'the Law,' are powerful enough to enslave (3:10, 22; 4:5), but they are impotent to grant life (3:21).”

<sup>189</sup>Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 302; Das, *Galatians*, 426.

<sup>190</sup>Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 296, says, “[Paul] knows that the appeals to the emotions and to the Galatians' own experiences are more likely to move them than all the logic in the world.”

<sup>191</sup>“Paul here deploys heavy rhetorical artillery in order to keep the Galatians from becoming observers of the law.” So de Boer, *Galatians*, 271.

Paul echoes the lament of Isaiah 49:4, κενῶς ἐκοπίασα καὶ εἰς μάταιον καὶ εἰς οὐδὲν ἔδωκα τὴν ἰσχύον μου. Rightly Bruce, *Galatians*, 207; Fee, *Galatians*, 161.

## Social Identity in Galatians 4:8-11

In 4:8-11, Paul builds upon his earlier description of the στοιχεῖα. Here, Paul avers that the Galatians' efforts to follow the Jewish calendar equated to a return to the same στοιχεῖα to which they had previously been enslaved. The Galatians viewed this religious observance as a means of obtaining the Abrahamic inheritance. They thought they could improve their social standing and benefits by becoming “sons and heirs of Abraham” through Judaizing practices. Yet Paul reveals that their efforts at progress (social mobility) were actually a regression to a prior status. The Galatians were trying to “return all over again” to an inferior social standing (described by Paul as slavery) from which they were unable to escape the first time apart from divine intervention. Paul describes the Galatians' erstwhile service as devotion “to those by nature not being gods,” then adds that the στοιχεῖα they seek to serve are “weak and destitute” (ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχά). In saying this, he means that they are unable to provide life, righteousness, or inheritance. Nor can they move one to a status of sonship (either of Abraham or of God). All they can do is enslave. Therefore, adherence to the στοιχεῖα by means of “works of the Law” causes a backwards move, followed by a complete restriction of social mobility. They provide no social benefits, while preventing their adherents from making social progress. The στοιχεῖα and “works of the Law” are a dead end street.

Paul contrasts this social mobility “dead end” with the initiative and power of God. Whereas the στοιχεῖα of “works of the Law” are “not-gods” who can supply no benefits or advancement, God himself—the same God who supplies the Spirit and works powers among them (3:5)—is the one they can rely on for sonship, inheritance, life, and righteousness. The path of social mobility is trod by those who have πίστις, not those “from ἔργα νόμου.”

In 4:3, Paul described the Galatians' past in pagan religion as a slavery ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα. Later, he refers to the Galatians' desire to follow the Jewish calendar as a return to στοιχεῖα slavery (4:9-10).<sup>192</sup> In this, he reveals that pagan religion and the Jewish Torah share this enslaving function. The στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου are revealed as universal despots. Once again, ethnicity—a primary characteristic of social identity—is revealed as irrelevant for obtaining sonship and inheritance. All people, whether Jew or Gentile, are enslaved to the στοιχεῖα. Likewise, the pathway for all to redemption and inheritance is “through God” and his work in Christ.

Finally, Paul appeals to the Galatians' sense of honor by implying that their efforts to follow “works of the Law” have wasted his labors among them. Appealing to their sense of propriety, and implying that their recent maneuvers are shameful, Paul invokes one of the strongest social factors in Greco-Roman culture. A few verses later he implies that their actions might nullify the blessing (μακρarisμός, 4:15) they deserved for the generous manner in which they originally welcomed him. Yet now, the Galatians, by their actions, have made Paul—their spiritual parent—their “enemy.” They have forced him to endure “labor pangs” (ὠδίνω) a second time (πάλιν, 4:19)! Paul makes it clear that the Galatians' vacillations are a shameful personal insult against his apostolic work among them (4:11).<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>192</sup>The flow of thought in 4:3-5 also suggests that being ὑπὸ νόμον equates to being ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα, although some commentators suggest that Paul differentiates between the “we” of 4:3 and the “those under Law” in 4:5a. On this, see the exegesis above.

<sup>193</sup>On this see especially J. Paul Sampley, “Paul and Frank Speech,” in *Paul and the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*, ed. J. Paul Sampley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 299-304.

## Conclusion

Galatians 4:1-11 is the climax of Paul's sonship motif in Galatians. Although he will appeal to the theme later in the “allegory” of 4:21-31, the apex of his argument resides here. In 4:1-3, Paul uses the metaphor of an underage heir to summarize his preceding argument regarding the Law. Verse 3 summarizes the condition of all humanity under the Law. We were all enslaved. This is followed in 4:4-6 by the kerygma of the incarnation and suffering of the Son, in order to redeem those enslaved under Law and to bring about their adoption. This, accompanied by their reception of the “Spirit of the Son,” qualifies believers in Christ for the coveted inheritance provided through God the Father. Galatians 4:8-11 expresses Paul's perplexity at the foolishness of the Galatians for not recognizing their son-heir status, and for attempting to become “Abraham's offspring” and heirs by observing the Law, which to Paul had the same end result as the Galatians' previous pagan worship—slavery to the στοιχεῖα.

To some interpreters, 4:1-7 appears to be a mere recapitulation of Paul's arguments in previous sections. It is better, however, to view it as the climactic summary toward which Paul has carefully been working. Each pithy kerygmatic statement of 4:1-7 represents a major conclusion for which he has painstakingly argued in a previous section: the Law's restrictive role as “overseer and steward” (3:24-25); universal enslavement (3:10, 22); Christ's arrival in the “fullness of time” (3:19, 23-25); his death “under Law” to redeem “those under Law” (2:19-20; 3:13); the adoption into the families of Abraham and God, regardless of ethnicity (3:8, 14, 26-29);<sup>194</sup> the reception of the Spirit as evidence of adoption (3:2-5, 14); and the consequent status as heirs (3:29).

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<sup>194</sup>Notice that Paul does not slow down to explain that redemption and adoption transpire “in Christ” and “from faith,” and never from “works of the Law.” He is able to leave out such important details in this new pericope only because of the groundwork laid in earlier sections of the letter.

Apart from the preceding arguments, Paul would be unable to articulate this synopsis so succinctly. Paul's exegetical and argumentative labors in the earlier section supply proven content with which he can build the consolidated summary in 4:1-7. Galatians 2:15-3:29 provides the building materials, and 4:1-7 is the completed house.<sup>195</sup> It builds resoundingly to the conclusion of utmost import to the Galatian believers: “if you are a son, you are also an heir through God.”

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<sup>195</sup>It is perhaps only a slight overstatement to say that 4:1-11 represents the sum and substance of the entire central section of Galatians (2:15-5:12).

## CHAPTER 6

### ADOPTION AND SOCIAL IDENTITY THROUGHOUT THE PAULINE CORPUS

The preceding chapters have demonstrated that Paul uses the adoption metaphor in Galatians as a means of confirming the Galatian believers in their “in Christ” identities. Paul responds to a crisis created by rival teachers who claimed that the Galatians needed to submit to circumcision and other “works of the Law” in order to become “seed of Abraham” and qualify for the inheritance God promised to the patriarch. Paul's strategy was to demonstrate to the Galatian believers that the necessary relationship to Abraham was supplied neither by biological descent nor by “works of the Law,” but through union with Christ by faith. Because Christ is the one true “seed of Abraham” to whom the promise pointed, and because the Galatians' baptism united them with Christ, they too were offspring and heirs of Abraham. Thus, the mechanism by which believers qualify for the inheritance is adoption, the means by which believers of any ethnicity—Jew or Gentile—become both offspring of Abraham and sons of God. No believer is a natural son of God; only Jesus Christ is, and believers are adopted into sonship via union with Christ. Believers' adoption is confirmed and inaugurated by the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. The Law of Moses does not supply the desired relationship to Abraham or the benefits of righteousness, life, inheritance, and the blessing of Abraham.

A surface comparison of Paul's argument in Galatians with the letters to the



Roman and Ephesian churches reveals an impressive array of thematic similarities. For example, all three epistles feature the motifs of sonship, inheritance, Spirit, promise, ethnicity, and being “in Christ.” Additionally, the ideas of “works of the Law” and becoming “offspring of Abraham” are prominent in Romans.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that *υιοθεσία* recurs in all three letters as well. This common matrix of themes suggests that Paul uses *υιοθεσία* in similar situations. It appears to be the case that *υιοθεσία* shows up where ethnicity is a question of primary concern among believers in Christ. A negative proof of this is the fact that questions of ethnicity and Law-observance occur only sporadically in the remaining letters of the Pauline corpus.<sup>2</sup> This concluding chapter aims to test this hypothesis by conducting a brief examination of the letters to Rome and Ephesus and their use of the *υιοθεσία* metaphor.

### **The Epistle to the Romans**

Over the past 40 years, the related questions of the historical circumstances and purpose(s) of Romans have produced reams of scholarly conjecture.<sup>3</sup> While it is

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<sup>1</sup>The absence of these two themes from Ephesians is easily explained by the situation in Ephesus, which was nearly the opposite of the scenario in Galatia. Far from Judaizing, the believers in Ephesus were guilty of a supercessionist attitude toward the Jewish roots of their religion. Rather than seeking to attach their identity to Abraham or perform “works of the Law” in order to attain the inheritance, they devalued the historical genesis of the promises they had obtained in Christ. Thus, this letter opposes a historical precursor to Marcionism by reminding the Ephesians that their previous state was one in which they were separated from citizenship in Israel, alienated from the covenants of promise, hopeless, without God, far away, aliens, and strangers. The removal of the Law by the work of Christ had the positive effect, not of wresting the promises from Israel and granting them to Gentile believers, but of eliminating the dividing wall which separated Gentiles from the people of Israel. Rather than replacing Israel as God's people, the Gentile believers have been united with, reconciled to, and made co-citizens with the saints.

<sup>2</sup>E.g., 1 Cor 7:17-20; 9:20-23; Phil 3:2-11; Col 2:16-23; 1 Tim 1:8-11.

<sup>3</sup>See esp. *The Romans Debate, Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991); also A. Andrew Das, *Solving the Romans Debate* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007); L. Ann Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans: A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); Richard N. Longenecker, *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul's Most Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 147-60; James C. Miller, *The Obedience of Faith, the Eschatological People of God, and the Purpose of*

clear that no consensus among scholars is forthcoming, the vast majority now agree that whatever Paul's reasons were for writing Romans (and there were probably multiple), they were likely based upon historical circumstances. To put it another way, Romans, just like the other Pauline letters, was written as a result of specific historical exigencies, and was not simply a compendium of Pauline theology.<sup>4</sup>

A careful analysis of Romans,<sup>5</sup> combined with some external historical data, reveals that at least one major purpose of the letter was to resolve misunderstandings related to ethnicity and the people of God.<sup>6</sup> The internal evidence includes Paul's universal indictment of humanity (1:18-3:19), the question of the advantage of the Jews (2:12-3:9), the debate over “works of the Law” (3:20-31), the nature of Abrahamic lineage (4:1-25; 9:6-13), an excursus regarding the Law (7:1-8:8), and the theodicy concerning God's righteous treatment of Israel *κατὰ σάρκα* (9:1-11:32).<sup>7</sup> The body of the

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*Romans* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000); Paul S. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith: The Purpose of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans* (London: SCM, 1971); Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996); A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (London: T&T Clark, 2004).

<sup>4</sup>Johan Christiaan Beker, “The Faithfulness of God and the Priority of Israel in Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” *Harvard Theological Review* 79 (1986): 11, calls Romans “a profoundly occasional letter.” Beker’s “contingency and coherence” model (see idem, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980], 11-12) emphasizes the fact that all of Paul’s letters “make the gospel a word on target for the particular needs of his churches,” i.e., they apply the unchanging gospel message to specific historical circumstances based upon the need of each situation.

<sup>5</sup>Just as in Galatians, the interpreter must rely primarily upon mirror reading when attempting to discern the *Sitz im Leben* of Romans. As a result, any historical reconstruction is necessarily provisional.

<sup>6</sup>This is not to exclude other purposes of the letter. Many scholars rightly note that Paul had multiple purposes in penning Romans. See, e.g., Mark A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 187-210; Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*; Miller, *The Obedience of Faith, the Eschatological People of God, and the Purpose of Romans*; Longenecker, *Introducing Romans*, 147-60. The point here is simply to affirm that one of these reasons was to deal with intra-church conflict resultant of misunderstandings regarding ethnicity.

<sup>7</sup>A simple word count corroborates the idea that Romans focuses on ethnic issues. For example, Paul uses the term Ἰουδαῖος eleven times in Romans (compared with fifteen in the remainder of his corpus); Ἕλληνα occurs six times (compared with seven in the other letters); ἔθνος appears twenty-nine times (opposed to twenty-five).

epistle concludes with Paul's famous teaching regarding “the Strong and the Weak,” which most commentators believe reflects an ongoing debate between Gentile and Jewish believers in the Roman churches (14:1-15:12).<sup>8</sup>

In addition, external data supplies a plausible historical backdrop for a situation in which ethnic tensions could have arisen.<sup>9</sup> Several scholars note a correlation between the historical datum of Claudius' expulsion of Jews from Rome and the purposes of Romans.<sup>10</sup> A popular reconstruction goes as follows: Christianity in Rome originally had a Jewish character, being established by Jewish believers who emphasized adherence to the Law.<sup>11</sup> Claudius expelled Jews from Rome around 49 C.E.<sup>12</sup> The edict was rescinded approximately five years later, upon Nero's accession to

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<sup>8</sup>The best evidence that this section applies to a Jew-Gentile controversy is its conclusion, which teaches that Christ became a servant both to confirm the patriarchal promises for the Jews and so that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. Paul follows this with a scriptural catena which emphasizes that all peoples together will hope in and praise God (15:7-13). See Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 205.

<sup>9</sup>Of course, Galatians and much of the book of Acts demonstrate that questions regarding ethnicity were a live topic of debate for early believers in Christ, and no extenuating circumstances were necessary for controversy to arise. Therefore, the scenario in Rome—in which some Gentile believers were (apparently) despising Jewish believers for their scruples, while some Jewish believers were (apparently) judging Gentile believers for their liberties—requires no corresponding historical testimony in order to present a plausible situation.

<sup>10</sup>For the following reconstruction, see Wolfgang Wiefel, “The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome and the Origins of Roman Christianity,” in *The Romans Debate, Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 85-101; James S. Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 12-13; James C. Walters, *Ethnic Issues in Paul's Letter to the Romans: Changing Self-Definitions in Earliest Roman Christianity* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993); J. Paul Sampley, “The Weak and the Strong: Paul's Careful and Crafty Rhetorical Strategy in Romans 14:1-15:13,” in *The Social World of the First Christians*, ed. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 40-52; Miller, *The Obedience of Faith, the Eschatological People of God, and the Purpose of Romans*, 61-95; Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*, 64-65; Dennis C. Duling, “Ethnicity and Paul's Letter to the Romans,” in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*, ed. Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris (London: Routledge, 2010), 81-82.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Ambrosiaster, *Ep. Rom.* 17.48.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Suetonius, *Claud.* 25.4; Orosius, *Hist. Adv. Pag.* 7.6; Acts 18:2. Scholars differ over whether the expulsion was universal or limited in scope. Another edict of 41 C.E. described by Dio Cassius, *Hist. Rom.* 60.6.6-7, likely describes a different action, reflecting escalating tensions revolving

the throne. During the interval, in the absence of Jewish leadership, the Roman churches were forced to transition to Gentile leadership, and as a result, discarded some traditional Jewish practices which they saw as non-essential to their Christian faith and practice.<sup>13</sup> Thus, Roman Christianity became “a gentile phenomenon.”<sup>14</sup> The rescinding of the expulsion led to the return of many of the Jews, creating immediate conflict over traditional Jewish practices, such as dietary and calendar observance, and “works of the Law.”<sup>15</sup> The believers on the conservative side of the spectrum insisted that “works of the Law” were required for believers. Those on the progressive, or “strong,” side, thought “works of the Law” were optional. The disagreement was sharp enough to create divisions within the church, and Paul wrote the letter in part to provide definitive resolution to the debate over the role of traditionally Jewish practices within the Christian community, in the hopes of unifying the Roman congregations with a common understanding of these issues. Although clearly rejecting any salvific efficacy for “works of the Law,” Paul takes an irenic position with regard to circumcision, food, and calendar observance.<sup>16</sup> Believers could still practice these “works,” but with the

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around Jewish people in Rome.

<sup>13</sup>Walters, *Ethnic Issues*, 61.

<sup>14</sup>Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 170-71; Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries*, trans. Michael Steinhauser, ed. Marshall D. Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 15.

<sup>15</sup>An alternative reconstruction sees Roman Christianity as becoming a purely Gentile phenomenon. After the rescinding of the expulsion edict, Jewish believers never returned to the Roman churches. An intramural debate then arose among Gentile believers “over the necessity and extent of Christianity’s ties with Judaism.” So Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*, 197; Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 15.

It is best, however, to view the Roman church as having at least a minority Jewish populace. It is difficult to imagine Paul writing Rom 2:17-23 to an exclusively Gentile audience who were guilty of a supercessionist attitude toward Jews (cf. 11:16-22). Furthermore, several Jewish names appear in the greetings of Rom 16:1-15 (the position taken in this study is that Rom 16 is integral to the letter).

<sup>16</sup>Although Paul positions himself among “the Strong” group (14:14; 15:1), and believes that

recognition that they do not matter compared to “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (14:17). All believers should cast aside judgmental or disdainful attitudes toward one another, and take on instead the attitude of God and Christ (14:3; 15:7), both of whom welcomed the “weak” and the “strong,” the Jew and the Gentile.

The above reconstruction, though tentative, demonstrates that the Roman believers in Christ were experiencing their own sort of identity crisis when Paul wrote this letter. It seems likely that some Gentile believers were exhibiting a supercessionist attitude toward the Jewish roots of their religion, including both its people and practices (11:17-24; 14:1-15:7).<sup>17</sup> Perhaps the recent hardships experienced by Jewish people in Rome, combined with the Gentile believers' rise to leadership and majority status within the church, fueled the idea that the Jews had been rejected and replaced. By contrast, another segment of the believers in Rome remained committed to “works of the Law,” considering circumcision, food laws, and calendar observance to be of ongoing relevance (2:28-29; 3:19-31; 14:1-15:7).<sup>18</sup> Thus, the Roman believers were experiencing

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food, drink, and special days are intrinsically *adiaphora*, he does not command “the Weak” to cease these practices, as might be expected in light of his strategy in Galatians. Surprisingly, he places the onus upon “the Strong” to forsake their rights and help “the Weak” bear their weaknesses (15:1), in spite of the fact that he has already made it clear that “works of the Law” will not justify (3:19-20, 28; 4:2-5). This different approach demonstrates how distinct the problems in Rome were from those in Galatia. In Rome, there was no danger of Gentile believers Judaizing. Their response, instead of kowtowing to the insistence upon “works of the Law” (as the Galatians were doing), was to “despise” (ἐξουθενέω, 14:3) the conservatives for their “weakness.” It was perhaps the entrenched intransigence of both sides that led to Paul's crafting of such a balanced response, as opposed to the one-sided approach evinced in Galatians. Proponents on both sides of the dispute were probably guilty of “causing divisions and stumbling blocks” (16:17).

<sup>17</sup>William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2008), 113, argues for a scenario in which “gentile Christ-followers had both the power and the inclination to try to force Jewish Christ-followers to 'gentilize.’” Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*, 206, states that “conservative Jewish Christians were in danger of being cut off from the main body of the church.” Walters, *Ethnic Issues*, 64, calls it a “mirror version” of the Antioch Incident. None of these descriptions perfectly fits the scenario, as it seems the believers on the conservative side of the debate were just as entrenched as the progressives. Neither the “Judaizers” nor the “gentilizers” were budging, which is why Paul urges both sides to “welcome” one another (14:1; 15:7).

<sup>18</sup>It is too simplistic to describe this group as “Jewish believers.” It probably contained a

an identity crisis in which the complex relationships between the Law, Jewish identity, and “Christian” identity needed to be clarified.

### **Adoption out of Slavery in Romans 7:4-8:17**

Paul responds to the crisis in the Roman churches with theological clarification. Many of the issues are the same as those in Galatians. Paul speaks of justification by faith alone, apart from “works of the Law”; the example of Abraham and believers' relationship to him; Gentile inclusion on the basis of faith; the Law and slavery; being “in Christ”; the Spirit, freedom, and life. It comes as no surprise, then, that Paul's adoption metaphor once again plays a central role in describing how believers transition out of slavery, and into sonship. Those familiar with the argument of Galatians hear again in Romans 7-8 the same core kerygma of Law/slavery → redemption/freedom → adoption/Spirit/inheritance.<sup>19</sup> This story line is illustrated by Table 8, on the next page:

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mixture of Jewish believers, proselytes, and other Gentile believers who viewed these practices as important. This is probably why Paul addressed the food and calendar debate in Rom 14:1-15:7 as a “weak”/“strong” issue, instead of a Jew/Gentile one. Nevertheless, 15:8-12 confirms that the groupings generally followed ethnic lines.

<sup>19</sup>Trevor J. Burke (*Adopted into God's Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006], 129) notes that both Gal 3 and Rom 7 focus on “the old era of the Torah,” whereas Gal 4 and Rom 8 key in on “the new epoch of the *pneuma*.”

Table 8. The story line of Romans 7-8

Law/Slavery	<p>“another law . . . taking me captive” (7:23)</p> <p>“I am enslaved in my mind to . . . a law of sin” (7:25)</p> <p>“. . . a spirit of slavery again unto fear” (8:15)</p>
Redemption/Freedom	<p>“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus freed you” (8:1)</p> <p>“you did not receive a Spirit of slavery again unto fear” (8:15)</p>
Adoption/Spirit/Inheritance	<p>“as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (8:14)</p> <p>“you received a Spirit of adoption” (8:15)</p> <p>“if children, also heirs” (8:17)</p>

Although in Romans Paul nuances his discussion of the Law in order to emphasize its goodness, contrasted with the overwhelming sinfulness of sin and weakness of the flesh, the same end result as in Galatians occurs. Those under the Law experience “condemnation” (κατάκριμα, 8:1) and slavery. Because of the crippling weakness of human flesh and the surpassing sinfulness of sin, people are unable to please God and obey the Law (7:7-24; 8:7-8), and the Law is therefore completely powerless to create life (8:3). It only feeds sin's power, creating death in sinners (7:8-11). The solution, as in Galatians, is found in Christ's incarnation and death (8:1-3). God condemns sin by sending Christ to the cross, and empowers believers to please him in obedience by giving them the Spirit (8:4).<sup>20</sup> The presence of the Spirit in believers signals the end of slavery and death, and the beginning of life and sonship (8:9-16). And sonship, just as in Galatians, implies inheritance.

We find, therefore, that the first time υιοθεσία occurs in Romans, it follows

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<sup>20</sup>The sending of the Son in Rom 8:3 “in the likeness of sinful flesh . . . to condemn sin in the flesh” mirrors the sending of the Son in Gal 4:4-5 “coming from woman, coming under Law, to redeem those under Law.” Noted by Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 108.

the same pattern as its use in Galatians. It fills the same role in the same overarching narrative. The slavery and condemnation levied by the Law is nullified by a redemptive rescue performed by Christ the Son, then replaced by sonship, Spirit, and inheritance.

### **Adoption and Suffering in Romans 8:17-39**

In Romans 8:17, Paul's adoption teaching takes an unexpected turn. Instead of focusing on the inheritance, as he had in Galatians, Paul begins to speak at length of believers' suffering. Believers are co-heirs with Christ, "provided we suffer together with him, so that we might also be glorified with him" (8:17). The theme of suffering then dominates the remainder of the chapter (8:18-39). Although the letter nowhere clearly indicates that the Roman believers were experiencing active suffering or persecution, the sudden shift in focus implies that Paul is addressing a current concern of the Romans (cf. 5:2-5). It seems likely that they were suffering, and perhaps their travails were even leading them to question God's faithfulness to them.<sup>21</sup>

Paul's response to this is to point once again to their adoption. Yet this time, unlike in Galatians, Paul teaches about adoption's future benefits. Adoption provides hope for the present, because it represents freedom from sin and the Law's condemnation (Gal 4:4-5; Rom 8:15)<sup>22</sup> and a guarantee of the inheritance (Gal 4:7; Rom

<sup>21</sup>Rom 13:1-7 may indicate that the Roman Christians were suffering persecution from government officials. However, another explanation for Paul's sudden focus on suffering lies closer to hand: Paul knows that he is about to discuss the fate of Israel. Jewish believers, having already been expelled from their homes in Rome for several years, upon their return to Rome had to suffer from the boastful anti-Jewish attitude exhibited by their Gentile brothers-in-Christ, the very group that should have provided them solace and assistance. The minority "remnant" of Jewish believers in Rome were tempted to question God's faithfulness to them, whether his promises to them had failed (9:6), and whether he had rejected his people (11:1). Maybe they were wondering, just like Elijah, whether they were "left alone" (11:3), and needed to be reminded that "the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable" (11:29). Their concerns about rejection also carried an implicit application to the Gentile believers, for if God did not keep his word to Israel, then how could Gentile believers expect him to be faithful to them?

<sup>22</sup>The best explanation for the phrase "slavery again unto fear" is that it refers to fear of the Law's condemnation as a result of slavery to sin. Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New



8:17). But there are also future aspects to adoption; there is a “future glory to be unveiled to us” (Rom 8:18). The sonship of believers is as yet incomplete. We have yet to be revealed fully as the sons of God, for we anticipate “the redemption of our body,” for which we hope and anxiously await (8:23). The Spirit is granted not only to make us sons now (8:14-16), but also to guarantee the consummation of our sonship in the future (8:23) and to help us in our state of weakness and suffering in the meantime (8:26-27). Only when we are fully conformed to the image of Jesus' sonship (8:29)—meaning that we obtain a glorified body like his—will our “groaning” cease and our adoption be complete.<sup>23</sup> Adoption, then, brings hope to those who are suffering (8:24-25).

The way Paul uses υιοθεσία in Romans 8:23 shows that the adoption metaphor was not solely a response to questions about ethnicity in the people of God. The metaphor was flexible enough to supply comfort to believers in the midst of suffering as well. Suffering, like nothing else, has the ability to sow doubt regarding the goodness and faithfulness of God. Trials and troubles often lead to the question, “Has God rejected us?” For this reason, Paul reminds the Roman believers that the Holy Spirit is the “firstfruit” (8:23) and guarantee of a future redemption, that in our weakness and groaning the Spirit intercedes for us with groans of his own (8:26), that God did not spare his own Son but gave him over for us (8:32), and that our adoption, though inaugurated, has yet to reach consummation (8:23). The adopted of God can live hopefully in the midst of suffering.

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International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 500; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 424.

<sup>23</sup>Moreover, the consummation of believers' adoption will transpire alongside the liberation of Creation from its bondage to futility and suffering (8:19-22). There will be “New Creation” all around.

## Adoption and Israel in Romans 9-11

As the sequel to the hope-filled paean of 8:31-39, Paul broaches the subject of God's faithfulness to Israel. Given the recent history of the churches in Rome, the question is entirely apropos, and it is no accident that Paul asks if the word of God concerning Israel has failed (9:6) immediately after confirming that God will never abandon those whom he has adopted in Christ. Paul writes the comforting promises of 8:31-39 with the full knowledge that he will next address God's loyalty to Israel.<sup>24</sup>

It is perhaps for this very reason that the first possession Paul assigns to the “Israelites” is the *υιοθεσία*, the adoption as God's son.<sup>25</sup> Paul has just spoken of the *υιοθεσία* of believers in Christ, and how this adoption liberates them from the condemnation of the Law and grants to them life and peace. Moreover, he has shown that believers' adoption brings hope and solace in the midst of suffering and apparent rejection, a promise of future glory, and a guarantee that nothing will separate them from God's love. This precise promise—that adoption means nothing can separate them from God's love—is the same promise that Romans 9:4 implies has been given to the “Israelites.” God does not cast aside his children.

The question Paul asks in Romans 9-11 is more about God than it is about Israel. Does God keep his word? If he cannot be shown to have been faithful to Israel, then how can believers in Christ trust him to keep his promises to them? In other words,

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<sup>24</sup>We should remember that many centuries would pass before chapter divisions were inserted into the biblical writings. Furthermore, the headings in our Bibles and scholars' treatments of chapters 9-11 as a hermetically separated discourse have calloused modern readers to think of a natural disjuncture between “8:39” and “9:1.” In Paul's original letter, what is now known as 8:39 led directly into 9:1.

<sup>25</sup>Although the OT never uses *υιοθεσία* to refer to Israel, the concept of Israel as God's son permeates the Scriptures. Cf. Exod 4:22; Deut 1:31; 14:1; 32:6; Isa 1:2; Jer 3:19; 31:9, 20; Hos 1:10; 11:1. Cf. Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 57-58.

if the word of God to Israel has failed, then the promises of 8:31-39—that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus—are vain eloquence. But 8:31-39 is not empty bluster, for in Paul's mind all the promises of God are “Yes!” in Christ Jesus.<sup>26</sup> In this sense, the question of Romans 9-11 has been answered before the asking. Paul sincerely believes that nothing will separate adopted believers from the love of God, and he therefore also believes that nothing will separate Israel, the original adopted son of God, from God's love. Everything Paul has said about the adoption, suffering, preservation, and glorification of believers in 8:15-39 applies equally as well to the elect remnant of Israel.

God's “purpose on the basis of election” (9:11) plays an important role in answering the question of God's faithfulness to Israel. If God had promised that every descendant of Abraham or Isaac was an “Israelite,” then his word would have failed. But, “not all the ones from Israel are Israel, nor are all the children offspring (σπέρμα) of Abraham” (9:6-7).<sup>27</sup> Just as Isaac was σπέρμα, but Ishmael was not; just as Jacob was σπέρμα, and Esau was not; so God's purpose for Israel was based upon “gracious election” (11:5), and he has kept his promise at all times through an elect remnant.

Ultimately, the adoption of Israel will have a grand consummation, when “the Rescuer will come forth from Zion” and “will turn away godlessness from Jacob.” He will confirm the covenant he made with them “when I forgive them their sins.” In this way, “all Israel will be saved” (11:26-27). Because “the gifts and call of God are

<sup>26</sup>Cf. 2 Cor 1:20. In Rom 9-11, this “Yes” transpires when “all Israel will be saved” when Christ the Rescuer comes forth from Zion to turn back godlessness from Jacob and forgive their sins (11:26-27).

<sup>27</sup>Paul uses σπέρμα in a theological (spiritual), rather than physical, sense here, just as he used it in response to the Galatian controversy. The distinction is far more clear in Romans, where he juxtaposes σπέρμα to τέκνα, matching the difference between “children of promise” and “children of flesh.”

irrevocable” (11:29), God has not rejected his people (11:2). Yet this has not guaranteed them an existence free from suffering or one in which the elect remnant has not appeared to dwindle (11:2-5). As part of God's inscrutable plan, he has “locked up all unto disobedience, so that he might show mercy upon all” (11:32). The small remnant of Jews coming to believe in Jesus at the present time signifies not a rejection of Jews, but a time for Gentiles to be grafted in, which will climax with a final act in which Jews will be received in their “fullness” (11:12, 15, 30-31).<sup>28</sup>

### **The Epistle to the Ephesians**

Perhaps less is known about the circumstances of the letter to Ephesus than any other piece of Pauline correspondence.<sup>29</sup> The universal nature of its teachings consistently defies attempts at mirror-reading. Due to an infamous textual variant in its first verse, even its destination is a matter of vigorous debate. For this reason, any reconstruction of a *Sitz im Leben* for Ephesians risks building upon a foundation of sand. Yet one must not, for these reasons, plead ignorance and give up on efforts to understand the letter within its historical setting. Just as with the other letters of the Pauline corpus, one should expect Ephesians to be a “word on target” for its recipients.<sup>30</sup> It is the task of biblical scholars to learn as much about that “target” as is realistically possible with the information that is available. Because the present study seeks to learn about Paul's use of adoption terminology within the context of the formation of

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<sup>28</sup>The movement of adoption → suffering/apparent rejection → eschatological hope in Rom 9-11 follows the progression of Rom 8:15-30.

<sup>29</sup>See the quote by John Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: Continuum, 2001), 12: “The trouble with Ephesians can be summed up quite simply: it has no setting and little obvious purpose!”

<sup>30</sup>Cf. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 12, for the “word on target” concept.

“Christian” identity, it will seek to recreate a plausible understanding of the background and purpose of Ephesians in order to better understand the force of *υιοθεσία* in Ephesians 1:5.<sup>31</sup>

Ephesians was most likely written to a primarily or exclusively Gentile church or churches.<sup>32</sup> The letter addresses the members of its audience as “Gentiles” (2:11; 3:1), and it assumes that they formerly “walked as the Gentiles” (4:17). By contrast, it speaks of Jews in the third person as a group with whom its Gentile auditors have been reconciled (2:11-22). Therefore, it is unlikely that there were many Jews in the audience.

Ephesians aims to alter the attitude of its Gentile readers toward the Jews. The author reminds them that, before Christ, they were “alienated from the people of Israel, strangers of the covenants of promise,” and “far away” (2:12-13, 17). Their separation from Israel, in fact, was closely related to their situation of being “hopeless and without God” (2:12). The cross reconciled them, not just to God, but also to Jewish believers. Christ's death removed the hostility and the dividing wall which separated Jews from Gentiles. Christ united them, “making peace” (2:14-16) and unity (1:10, 2:14-15; 4:3-6, 13). This harmony makes Jews and Gentiles “fellow citizens” and “members together of

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<sup>31</sup>This study will not delve into the controversial matter of the authorship of Ephesians. Because the objective is to conduct a canonical survey of *υιοθεσία*, it does not depend upon Pauline authorship. Therefore, Ephesians will be treated here as “Pauline” while generally avoiding any affirmations, positive or negative, regarding Paul's responsibility for the letter.

<sup>32</sup>Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1-3*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1974), 10; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1990), lxxvi; Nils Alstrup Dahl, *Studies in Ephesians: Introductory Questions, Text- & Edition-critical Issues, Interpretation of Texts and Themes* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 446; Margaret Y. MacDonald, “The Politics of Identity in Ephesians,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26 (2004): 420; Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 26; Thomas M. Winger, *Ephesians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 142-43.

one body,” and “builds them together” into one building (2:19-22; 3:6).

The themes of unity and peace could simply speak of an accomplished fact, yet the persistence of the motif implies that Ephesians was meant to remedy an interpersonal problem among its recipients. It is difficult to explain the constant appeals to peace and unity, and the reminders that the hostility between groups has been taken away, without also concluding that there was some sort of ethnic dispute in Ephesus. The fact that the author refers to the fusion of Gentile and Jewish believers into “one new man” in Christ, “fellow-citizens,” a single edifice built together for the dwelling place of God by the Spirit, and a “body together” (σύσσωμα, 3:6) shows that the hostility occurred between Gentile and Jewish believers. William S. Campbell plausibly suggests that the issue may be “the acceptance of Jewish Christians qua Jews.”<sup>33</sup> It sounds like Gentile believers were rejecting Jewish believers on the basis of their ongoing Jewish identity and practice.

Ephesians takes a different approach to ethnicity than do Galatians and Romans. There is no mention of “works of the Law,” and the terminology which proliferated in the earlier debates about justification and the Law (νόμος, περιτομή, περιτέμνω, δικαιοσύνη, δικαιώω, δίκαιος, λογίζομαι, σπέρμα, Abraham) is conspicuously rare or altogether absent. These facts suggest that, unlike in the other two scenarios, there was no Judaizing problem in Ephesus. No one was worried about “how to be justified” or debating the role of “works of the Law” for membership in Abraham's progeny.

Ephesians' tone toward the Law is also different from that in Galatians and

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<sup>33</sup>William S. Campbell, *Unity and Diversity in Christ: Interpreting Paul in Context* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), 142; similarly Ralph P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, Interpretation* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1991), 5; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 26.

Romans. In the earlier epistles, Paul had taken a nuanced approach which affirmed the Law's positive role in the divine plan (even if that role had the primary effect of pronouncing condemnation, the Law was still good).<sup>34</sup> In Ephesians, however, the Law is entirely negative, for it only served as “a partition” to separate Jews from Gentiles, thereby causing hostility between ethnic groups. Ephesians aligns with both Galatians and Romans in its affirmation that the Law was nullified by Christ (Eph 2:14-15; cf. Gal 3:19, 25; Rom 7:4; 8:2; 10:4). The reason for this affirmation, however, is unique in Ephesians. Whereas in Galatians and Romans, the end of the Law meant that believers were not under its authority, in Ephesians the cancellation of the Law means that Gentiles have been brought near so that Jewish and Gentile believers may be reconciled one to another (2:13-15).

Thus, it appears that a major purpose of Ephesians is to correct the faulty attitudes of Gentiles toward Jewish believers. Perhaps the problem in Ephesus was an attitude of boastful supercessionism, akin to one of the problems evinced in Romans. The letter aims to correct this wrong attitude by teaching how the cross brings together peoples of disparate ethnic descent, specifically by reconciling “the so-called uncircumcision” with “the so-called circumcision” (2:11). The motif of “peace” and “unity,” combined with the teaching about how the cross has destroyed the enmity between Jew and Gentile and created “one new man,” may indicate that there were Jewish believers in Ephesus who had been excluded by the Gentile believers on the basis of their ongoing Jewish lifestyle.

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<sup>34</sup>The circumstances in both Galatia and Rome called for a more careful description of the Law's role, for in both scenarios there were Law-defenders who would not be convinced by a lopsided indictment of the Law, such as the one in Eph 2:14-15. By contrast, the nature of the problem in Ephesus meant that no one was concerned about affirming a positive historical role for the Law.

Words with a συν-, συμ-, or συγ- prefix proliferate in the letter, demonstrating the author's desire that the Gentile believers recognize the integral connection they share with Jewish believers.<sup>35</sup> This συν- terminology harmonizes with the “body” and “building” metaphors to image a composite of believers from every ethnic background who have become “members belonging to one another” (4:25). Combined with the language of alienation from 2:12-19, the “together” terminology implies that the Gentiles were the ones who had to move the farthest (cf. 2:17, “you who were far away”) in order to be reconciled to the Father. The letter refers only to the Gentiles as the ones who were “aliens and strangers” (2:19), and they become “fellow citizens,” “fellow heirs,” and “fellow sharers of the promise” (2:19; 3:6) through a joining together with “the saints.”<sup>36</sup>

In short, Ephesians aims to humble Gentile believers by reminding them of the Jewish roots of their faith and the fact that they only partake of its great benefits through reconciliation to and union with the people of God. True to this goal, the letter urges Gentile believers to “walk worthily of the calling you have received, with all humility and meekness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:1-3).

The exhortations for unity throughout Ephesians depend upon the fact that there is one God who is the Father of all (4:6), from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named (3:14-15). Such familial terminology pervades the epistle. God is

<sup>35</sup>Συμπολίτης (2:19); συναρμολογέω (2:21; 4:16); συνοικοδομέω (2:22); συγκληρονόμος, σύσσωμος, συμμετοχος (3:6); σύνδεσμος (4:3); συμβιβάζω (4:16). By contrast, the Ephesians are not to become συμμετοχοι with the “sons of disobedience” by “sharing (συγκοινωνέω) in their fruitless works of darkness” (5:6-7, 11).

<sup>36</sup>The language is reminiscent of Rom 11:17-24, where Gentile believers are grafted in to the olive tree. It also aligns well with Paul's teaching in Galatians 3:26-29 that believers become “offspring of Abraham” through union with Christ, the true “Seed of Abraham.”



called “Father” more in Ephesians than anywhere else in the Pauline corpus,<sup>37</sup> while the terminology of “sons” and “children” occurs throughout the letter. Those outside of Christ are “sons of disobedience” and “children of wrath” (2:2, 3; 5:6). Believers, by contrast, are “beloved children” (5:1), “children of light” (5:8), and “members of the household of God” (2:19).

Ephesians introduces this onslaught of family language in 1:5 with the metaphor of υιοθεσία. In the context of 1:3-14, the concept of adoption is undeveloped. It merely functions as the second in a lengthy list of “spiritual blessings” with which the Father has blessed us “in Christ.” Believers have been elected, predestined for adoption, redeemed, forgiven, made heirs, and sealed with the Holy Spirit. Rather than explaining these blessings individually, Ephesians 1:3-14 serves as an introduction to several themes which will fortify the rich theology of the remaining chapters.<sup>38</sup>

As has become obvious, the family motif pervades Ephesians. Those who once were simply “darkness” become “light” (5:8)—that is, the “sons of disobedience” and “children of wrath” are made into “beloved children” and “members of God's household.” This is what adoption in Ephesians 1:5 means. It is not the move of an orphan into a family, but the transition from an old family—characterized by

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<sup>37</sup>Marianne Meye Thompson, *The Promise of the Father: Jesus and God in the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 122, emphasizes the connection between “the unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ” and the fact that Ephesians refers to God as Father more than any other letter.

<sup>38</sup>Barth, *Ephesians*, 97, calls 1:3-14 “a digest of the whole epistle . . . replete with key terms and topics that anticipate the contents of what follows.” Winger, *Ephesians*, 219-21, refers to 1:3-14 as the “table of contents” for the epistle. Other scholars more accurately state that only some of the elements in the proem introduce themes that are developed later in the letter. E.g., Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 18-19; Peter T. O' Brien, *Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 93. Ephesians' persistent use of familial language and emphasis upon God's fatherhood show that the theme of adoption is one of those items from the introduction that is developed throughout the letter.

disobedience, wrath, and darkness—to a new one filled with light, love, peace, and unity.

Both Jewish and Gentile believers are “reconciled” and granted “access” to God the Father through the work of Christ (2:16-18). Thus, even though Jews are characterized as “those who were near,” this is simply meant to highlight the greater gulf that distanced the Gentiles, “who were far” from God. Both Jews and Gentiles needed reconciliation and access to the Father; there was a hostility between all people and God until Christ destroyed it, and then he “preached the gospel of peace to you who were far and to those who were near.” Thus, it follows that adoption in Ephesians is for all people, not simply Gentiles, even though the Gentiles' reconciliation was one of greater distance than that of the Jews.

Through adoption, God becomes the sole “Father of all” (4:6). Jewish and Gentile believers have both been reconciled vertically to the same Father God, and in the process also experience horizontal reconciliation to one another. Former enemies become brothers and sisters.<sup>39</sup> While the cross of Christ destroys the division between Jews and Gentiles (2:14-15) and enmity between all people and God (2:16-18), the Holy Spirit works as the agent of reconciliation both horizontal (4:2-4) and vertical (2:18).

Although some scholars argue that Ephesians presents believers as a new “third race,” this is not the case.<sup>40</sup> Although Ephesians teaches that believers receive a new eschatological identity “in Christ,” it never states that their ethnicity is eradicated.

<sup>39</sup>Thus, Ephesians' use of the adoption motif exhibits what modern sociologists have dubbed the “Common Ingroup Identity Model,” or “recategorization.” In this model, two formerly hostile groups are united under a common superordinate identity. The new unity, which functions at a higher level than the social groupings that cause their enmity, serves to nullify the hostility between two formerly irreconcilable social groups.

<sup>40</sup>Contra Lincoln, *Ephesians*, lxiii-lxiv; Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary (New York: T&T Clark, 1998), 269.

Their new identity is a spiritual one, and although it is superordinate to their ethnic identities, it does not replace them. Ephesians still calls the Gentile believers in Ephesus “Gentiles” (2:11; 3:1, 6). Although they are instructed to strip off the old person and put on the new person (4:22-24), this does not entail a removal of their physical ethnicity (neither does it do so for Jewish believers). Instead, it calls for a rejection of their old spiritual identity. Whereas formerly they were “darkness” and “sons of disobedience,” now they have a new identity as “beloved children” of God and “children of light.” Although ethnically they remain Gentiles, they are no longer to live as unbelieving Gentiles do (4:17).

Believers' new personhood and identity are defined “in Christ.”<sup>41</sup> They are to strive to attain to the “mature man,” which in context refers to “the building up of the body of Christ” and “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (4:12-13). Christ is the head of the Church, which is his body, comprised of both Jewish and Gentile believers, who are fastened together by its ligaments. The absence of any believer from the body of Christ would diminish its full stature, and a lack of love among its constituent parts would weaken it (1:22-23; 2:15; 4:15-16).<sup>42</sup> Thus, believers of every ethnicity make up integral and unique parts of the body of Christ. Their new identity “in Christ” entails that they live in accordance with this status by rejecting the “fruitless works of darkness” and becoming instead “imitators of God” and “children of

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<sup>41</sup>“In Christ” occurs at a higher frequency in Ephesians than any other NT writing: 1:1, 3, 10, 12, 20; 2:6, 7, 10, 13; 3:6, 11, 21; 4:32. Cf. also “in him”: 1:4, 9, 10; “in whom”: 1:7, 11, 13; 2:21, 22; 3:12; “in the Beloved”: 1:6; “in the Lord Jesus”: 1:15; “in the Lord”: 2:21; 5:8; 6:1, 10. The συν- prefix verbs in 2:5-6 (συνεζωοποίησεν, συνήγειρεν, συνεκαθάτισεν) also overlap the “in Christ” motif.

<sup>42</sup>In a related metaphor, believers are built together into a building in which Christ Jesus is the cornerstone (2:20-22). Ephesians places special emphasis upon the concepts of “increase” and “fullness,” implying that the body of Christ in Ephesus was in some way incomplete (πληρώω 1:23; 4:10; πλήρωμα 1:23; 4:13; ἐποικοδομέω, 2:20; αὐξω, 2:21; συνοικοδομέω 2:22; οἰκοδομή 4:12, 16; αὐξησις, 4:16). This is consistent with the hypothesis that some believers in Ephesus were excluding others.

light” (4:17-5:20).

In conclusion, in Ephesians one finds once again that *υιοθεσία* occurs in the context of a controversy revolving around ethnicity. Believers in Christ misunderstood how ethnicity factored in to their “in Christ” identity and membership in the people of God. It appears that Gentile believers were exhibiting a supercessionistic, perhaps even anti-Jewish, attitude. Their lack of understanding regarding the Jewish heritage of Christianity called for a hearty reminder of their past.<sup>43</sup> This anamnesis set plainly before their eyes not only the Jewish heritage of their Christianity (inheritance, election, covenants of promise, Jesus the Jewish Messiah), but also painstakingly reminded them of their former status outside of Christ (dead in trespasses, following the desires of the flesh, children of wrath, hopeless, godless, far away, enemies of God, strangers and aliens). Additionally, it required a repetition of the teaching that reconciliation to God was accompanied by a reconciliation to Jewish believers as well. Thus, “adoption through Jesus Christ” brings both vertical and horizontal reconciliation.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Lincoln, *Ephesians*, xxxvii, emphasizes how Ephesians uses anamnesis to recall “the heritage of the past in a way that is formative for present attitudes and actions.”

<sup>44</sup>Daniel K. Darko, “Adopted Siblings in the Household of God: Kinship Lexemes in the Social Identity Construction of Ephesians,” in *The T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014), 345, states, “Ephesians, like the undisputed Pauline letters, adopts fictive kinship lexemes to construct the identity of the church as the multi-ethnic household of God in which mutual interdependence and concord are imperative.”

A. T. Lincoln's commentary consistently emphasizes how Ephesians functions to establish the identity of its readers. Other helpful studies on identity in Ephesians include Carmen Bernabé Ubieta, “Neither *Xenoi* nor *paroikoi*, *sumpolitai* and *oikeioi tou theou*’ (Eph 2:19): Pauline Christian Communities: Defining a New Territoriality,” in *Social-Scientific Models for Interpreting the Bible*, ed. John J. Pilch, 260-80 (Leiden: Brill, 2001); MacDonald, “The Politics of Identity in Ephesians;” Benjamin Dunning, “Strangers and Aliens No Longer: Negotiating Identity and Difference in Ephesians 2,” *Harvard Theological Review* 99 (2006): 1–16; Campbell, *Unity and Diversity in Christ*, 127-45; Mikael Tellbe, *Christ-Believers in Ephesus: A Textual Analysis of Early Christian Identity Formation in a Local Perspective* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009); idem, “The Prototypical Christ-Believer: Early Christian Identity Formation in Ephesus,” in *Exploring Christian Identity*, ed. Bengt Holmberg (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 115-38; Darko, “Adopted Siblings in the Household of God: Kinship Lexemes in the Social Identity Construction of Ephesians.”

## **Similarity and Diversity among Paul's Uses of the Ὑιοθεσία Metaphor**

This study has shown that Paul's five uses of Ὑιοθεσία all occur in letters which respond to dilemmas in which believers in Christ misunderstood the relationship between their new faith and ethnicity. In Galatians, Paul counters a false teaching which claimed that Gentile believers needed to Judaize by observing “works of the Law” in order to become “seed of Abraham” and qualify for the coveted inheritance. In Romans, there appears to be not only a Judaizing faction who relied upon “works of the Law,” but also a Gentile majority who exhibited a supercessionist attitude over against Jews and so-called “weak” believers who followed some Jewish practices. Finally, Ephesians responds to a situation in which Gentile believers were in danger of fully rejecting the Jewish heritage of their faith and their Jewish fellow believers.

The two most similar uses of Ὑιοθεσία occur in Galatians 4:5 and Romans 8:15. In both instances, Paul teaches how believers move from a state of slavery occasioned by the Law and sin into a position of sonship, freedom, and inheritance. The freedom is bought by redemption through Christ, and sonship is achieved through union with Christ and the presence of his Spirit within believers. This teaching functions to show that Christ, not the Law, is the means of becoming a member of the people of God.

The other three instances of the Ὑιοθεσία metaphor display its versatility. Romans 8:23 and 9:4 demonstrate how adoption provides comfort for believers undergoing suffering and entertaining doubts regarding God's faithfulness to them. The Spirit, received by believers at the time of their adoption, helps them endure suffering. Meanwhile, believers are encouraged by the fact that their inaugurated adoption has yet to achieve its consummation. The Spirit is the first-fruit and proof that all those who

God has predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son will reach glorification. In a similar way, Romans 9:4 provides comfort for Jewish believers facing doubts about God's faithfulness to them. His word to them has not failed. He has adopted them, and his gifts and call are irrevocable. The adoption still belongs to them.

Finally, Ephesians 1:5 introduces the theme of adoption to believers who needed to be reminded that they were not children of God by nature. Ephesians constantly emphasizes that Gentile believers only enjoy their status as “beloved children” in spite of their former selves. Although they were “dead,” “darkness,” “hopeless,” and “without God,” they were made “children of light.” This was not their own doing, but only resulted because God, being rich in mercy and love, made them alive in Christ. This reminder served to humble them from a state of arrogant pride against Jewish believers and the Jewish roots of their faith.

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## ABSTRACT

### ADOPTION AND THE FORMATION OF ESCHATOLOGICAL IDENTITY: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF *υιοθεσία*

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Paul used divine adoption (*υιοθεσία*) as a religious metaphor in a rich and diverse way. The variety of approaches to this theme in scholarship attests to this depth and richness. This study argues that the most important purpose of *υιοθεσία* within the Pauline correspondence was to help create, define, and ground the identity of believers in Jesus Christ in the early church, especially in the face of difficult and disconcerting questions regarding the role of ethnicity within the eschatological people of God. To this end, this study combines the modern tool of Social Identity Theory with detailed exegesis of key texts in Galatians in order to demonstrate that *υιοθεσία* is an eschatological event which creates a new identity for believers in Jesus Christ and functions as a resolution to difficult questions regarding ethnicity and membership in the people of God.

Chapter 1 provides a summary and critique of the most important recent studies of *υιοθεσία*, followed by a brief outline of the contours of Social Identity Theory. Chapter 2 gives an introduction to the historical and theological background to Paul's letter to the Galatians. This includes an exegetical overview of Galatians 2:15-21, along with an introductory summary of how Social Identity Theory relates to Paul's rhetorical strategy in the epistle.



Chapters 3, 4, and 5 supply detailed exegesis of key passages within Galatians, with specific reference to how they contribute to the theme of adoption within the epistle, and noting how Paul follows patterns recognizable to the categories of modern sociology.

Chapter 6 addresses the four other occurrences of υιοθεσία within the Pauline corpus (Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Eph 1:5). It offers a brief analysis of the background and purpose of these epistles, and supply an introductory foray into the adoption pericopae. Finally, it will give a synopsis of primary conclusions from each of the texts, and attempt a synthesis of these results.

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