

Paul's Ethics and Paul's Experience: Law and Love in Galatians

I

Accounts of Paul's ethics or his attitude towards the Jewish law regularly identify and discuss the connection between law (νόμος) and love (ἀγάπη) in Galatians 5:13–14.¹ Building on the fundamental assertion of 5:1—that Christ has liberated 'us' from slavery with the result that 'we' are free—Paul contemplates two possible manifestations of the Galatians' freedom.² While there is the potential for behaviour that arises from continued slavery to the flesh (εἰς ἀφορμὴν τῆ σαρκί), another form of slavery is also possible: one characterized by mutual love (διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις).³ The ethical dualism that Paul articulates at 5:13 and then fleshes out in 5:14–6:10 has already been hinted at in 5:6. In the new order established by Christ's saving work apart from the law (5:4–5), and so now available to the Gentile Galatians in Christ without the need for circumcision (5:6), the only thing that matters is a faith that is worked out through love (πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη, cf. Gal 6:15).⁴ At first glance, therefore, the relationship between law and love can be neatly explained with reference to strongly antithetical tenor of Paul's account of salvation history in the context of the Galatian crisis. Law belongs to the period before the arrival of faith (3:23–25) and is therefore aligned with slavery to the flesh. Faith is the hallmark of the new creation (3:26) and is made visible through slavery to one another through love (5:13). If these were the only things that Paul said, then we might conclude that law and love relate to each other as another example of the apocalyptic antimonies that drive Paul's theology as it comes to expression in Galatians.⁵

Anyone who reads Galatians carefully, however, quickly realizes that things are not that straightforward. Immediately after his call to love-slavery, Paul appeals to the law in support of that call:

ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ πεπλήρωται, ἐν τῷ ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν.

For the whole law is summed up in a single word, the one that says 'you will love your neighbour as yourself' (Gal 5:14, translation mine).

Several things are clear about this remarkable reversal in the law's fortune and command a significant degree of scholarly agreement. First, the law that is said to be fulfilled is the Torah.⁶ Whatever one's

¹ Paul's formulations in other letters, specifically the concessive phrase of 1 Cor 9:21 (μὴ ὢν ἄνομος θεοῦ ἀλλ' ἔννομος Χριστοῦ) and the even closer parallel in Romans 13:8–10 (ὁ γὰρ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἕτερον νόμον πεπλήρωκεν... πλήρωμα οὖν νόμου ἢ ἀγάπη), are complex enough to require their own investigation. For the purpose of this essay I keep the focus almost exclusively on collocation of law and love in the argument of Galatians.

² 5:1 marks the transition from Paul's allegorical consideration of the motif of slavery/freedom in the Hagar allegory (Gal 4:21–31) to concrete parenesis grounded in the consequent identity of the Galatians as τέκνα τῆς ἐλευθέρας. The ἡμεῖς, in the context of the epistolary situation, connotes Paul and his audience although, as is often the case in soteriological statements in Paul, it also carries a more universal and generic meaning (see e.g. Gal 1:4; 3:13; 4:6).

³ For a nuanced reading see Barclay, *Obedience*, pp. 108–110. Σάρξ is, of course, notoriously difficult to translate here, as elsewhere in Paul, though arguably the NRSV choice of 'self-indulgence' is unhelpfully specific.

⁴ With the majority of modern commentators, I read the participle ἐνεργουμένη in the middle voice. Despite deBoer's attempt to argue that Christ is the implied subject of 5:6b, the reference to the Spirit in 5:5 and the use of ἐν Χριστῷ and reference to circumcision in 5:6a all suggest that human faith and love are being referred to, thus connecting closely to the parenesis of 5:13–14. See de Boer, *Galatians*, pp. 318–319.

⁵ See the classic discussion in Martyn, 'Apocalyptic Antimonies', summarized in Martyn, *Galatians*, pp. 570–574.

⁶ The strongest objection to this point comes from Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*, pp. 36–42. E. P. Sanders offers a clear rebuttal in *Paul, The Law and the Jewish People*, pp. 96–97.

decision about the meaning of the phrase νόμος τοῦ Χριστοῦ in Gal 6:2, a verse that we will explore in detail below, it is the Jewish law that is fulfilled in 5:14. The explicit citation of LXX Lev 19:18 suggests as much.⁷ And while it is true that Paul's appeal to a single commandment as fulfilment of the law must be understood differently from formally similar arguments in Jewish literature, in all cases the strategy is aimed at (re)orienting the understanding of and adherence to Torah.⁸ Secondly, Paul's use of the language of fulfilment is not intended to re-introduce Jewish patterns of Torah observance into the Gentile Galatian assemblies. We must take seriously the difference implied by the move from reference to 'doing' the whole law (ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι, Gal 5:3) and 'fulfilling' the whole law (ὁ πᾶς νόμος πληροῦν).⁹ The language of fulfilment, used elsewhere in Galatians to denote the fundamental shift in the ages resulting from the Christ-event (Gal 4:4), suggests that Paul conveys here the idea of 'the total realization of God's will in line with the eschatological fullness of time in the coming of Christ.'¹⁰ Thirdly, it is clear that Paul's citation of Lev 19:18 serves his broader parenetic purpose in Galatians 5–6. The individual imperatives contained in 5:15–6:10, while undoubtedly drawing on a range of pre-existing ethical traditions, serve Paul's overarching argument in the letter, providing an indicative account of what it means for the Galatian community to embody, individually and together, Spirit-enabled life in the new creation.¹¹ Central to Paul's vision is the importance of 'other-regard'.¹² The love of neighbour spoken of in 5:14 provides the rationale for Paul's appeal for mutual service in 5:13b and is repeatedly specifically unpacked in the following verses in positive and negative ways.¹³ The Galatians are instructed not to consume each other (5:15), and are exhorted to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit, the first item of which is love (5:22–23), thereby eschewing the works of the flesh (5:19–21).¹⁴ They are to restore the transgressor into fellowship (6:1), bear one another's burdens (6:2), show appropriate humility (6:3), share good things with those who teach (6:6), and work for the good of all, especially for the community of faith (6:10). These specific maxims are, in a sense, Paul's commentary on 5:14.

The question to be explored in this essay is how we might go about explaining this fascinating tension in Paul's thought as it comes to articulation in the argument of Galatians. Clearly, Paul is able at times to pitch law and love in opposition to each other. But, as we have just seen, law and love can also be aligned in a relationship whereby the Galatian practice of mutual love can be seen to fulfil the law. In seeking an explanation, we shall turn first to Paul's reference to the 'law of Christ' in 6:2 where we will find good reasons for concluding that the phrase Paul continues to refer to a fulfilled Torah. I subsequently argue

⁷ The use of the resumptive ἐν τῷ seems to function as a kind of citation formula. Marcion's substitution of ὑμῖν for ἐνὶ λόγῳ is an indication from reception history that the Torah is in view.

⁸ Martyn rightly insists that Paul's strategy here cannot be reduced to that of identifying an 'entry point' into or underlying principle for the law (see Appendix A to Comment #48, Martyn, *Galatians*, 515–518 and cf. Barclay, *Obedying*, 136.). Nevertheless, the similarity at the level of the argument (relationship to the whole through consideration of the one and explicit appeal to Lev 19:18) between Paul's formulation and numerous other Jewish texts makes it clear that the Torah is in view here. See traditions about Jesus of Nazareth in Mark 12:28–24//Matt 22:34–40; Luke 10:25–28, Akiba in *Gen. Rab.* 24:7; *y. Ned.* 9:4, 41c; *Sipra Kedoshin* 4:12, and Hillel in *b. Šabb* 31a, cf. *Jas* 2:8. Philo similarly recasts the structural argument to philosophical ends (*Spec.* 2.63). The reference in *Mek. Vyayassa* (on Exod 15:26) states that the person who 'deals [in business] in good faith and enjoys a good reputation... carries out the whole Torah' (translation Neusner). Other texts place law observance and reference to Lev 19:18 (often with Deut 6:4) in close relationship, but do not specify that the one constitutes some form of summary of the other. See *T. Iss.* 5:1–2; *T. Dan.* 5:1–3; *Jub.* 7:20; 20:2.

⁹ See Westerholm, 'On Fulfilling', pp. 229–237, Barclay, *Obedying*, p. 139,

¹⁰ Barclay, *Obedying*, p. 140.

¹¹ This formulation draws to a substantial degree on the seminal work by Barclay, *Obedying*, see especially pp. 216–235.

¹² Here drawing on the general argument made in Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, pp. 204–245.

¹³ Borse, *Der Brief an die Galater*, p. 191.

¹⁴ The shift from the language of 'works' in 5:19 to that of 'fruit' in 5:22 is closely related to that between 'doing the law' and 'fulfilling the law' discussed above. Barclay notes that even the traditional vice list of 5:19–21 has eight terms relating to 'community dissension' at its heart, suggesting that this is a key issue at stake for Paul (*Obedying*, p. 153).

this more positive assessment of law (in contrast to other statements in Galatians) makes best sense not only as a theological claim, or as a response to the rhetorical exigence of Galatians, but also as a pointer to Paul's own reoriented understanding of the law. Drawing on Lou Martyn's account of the 'two voices' of the law, I propose we bring Paul's own experience into focus, a move that allows us to speak of Paul's double perspective on the law. This leads us to take seriously the third appearance of the law/love connection in the letter, occurring in Gal 2.19–21. In this crucial text, we gain some insights into Paul's own renegotiation of his Torah relationship in the light of the Christ-event. Paul's own experience, then, is generative of his subsequent account of the relationship between law and love.

II

There is no escaping the connection between 5:13–14 and Paul's reference to the law of Christ in Gal 6:2. It is established most obviously through the repeated use of a verb with the **πληρ-** root in relation to **νόμος**. Yet, the precise nature of that connection depends on the interpretation of the phrase **νόμος Χριστοῦ** in the context of the immediately preceding exhortations in 6:1–2. Three issues are explored below in the hope that the discussion will integrate Gal 6:2 closely into the wider argument of Galatians. First, we must try and work out what Paul is referring to when he instructs the Galatians to 'bear one another's burdens', and consider the relationship between that command in 6:2a with those found in 6:1. Secondly, we must dive into the ongoing debate about whether the Mosaic law is connoted by **νόμος** in this verse. Finally, as a way of leading us into our consideration of 2:19–21, we must ask about the relationship between Christ and law implied by the genitive construction that Paul uses. Scholarly discussion of this text often focusses almost exclusively on the second of these questions but, as we shall see, the likely connection to the surrounding exhortations, and the explicit connection with Christ, provide us with clues to understand Paul's treatment of the relationship between law and love.

1. Galatians 6:1 takes its place the beginning of a series of parenthetic maxims which, together, spell out some of the ways that the Galatians can 'adhere to the Spirit' (5:25).¹⁵ Negatively, this means for Paul avoiding behaviours that generate conflict in interpersonal relationships (5:26). Positively, it means an appeal to the relationships of fictive kinship that are so crucial to the Galatians' new identity (**ἀδελφοί**) and which generate a willingness to restore a person back into the community (6:1).¹⁶ This work is to be done in a spirit of gentleness, and with regard to the possibility that any individual might, in turn, be tempted to sin and therefore in need of restoration.¹⁷ Given the lack of any conjunction at 6:2 it is likely that this practice of community restoration evokes the more general exhortation to 'bear one another's burdens'.¹⁸ While the connection is often noted, the seriousness of the scenario invoked by Paul's words is often missed. The implication of Paul's words is that the **παράπτωμα** is significant enough to create exclusion from the community; the breaking of relationship with former **ἀδελφοί**.¹⁹ The term is used elsewhere in Paul to describe the fundamental trespass of Adam (Rom 5:15–20) which occasioned Christ's death (Rom 4:25). In 2 Cor 5:19 it is contrasted with the work of reconciliation inaugurated in

¹⁵ The translation of **στοιχῶμεν** is not straightforward. The notion of 'adherence' preserves the connection with Paul's other usage in Galatians 6:16 where he speaks of 'adherence to this rule' (**τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ στοιχεῖν**), referring to the statement about the reality of the new creation (6:15).

¹⁶ The importance of fictive kinship language for Paul's construction of early Christian identity is emphasized by Aasgaard, *My Beloved Brothers and Sisters*. Aasgaard notes the connection between 'sibling address' and 'issues of love and self-renunciation', see p. 283, a point developed in Aasgaard, "Role Ethics in Paul".

¹⁷ The phrase **ἐν πνεύματι πραΰτητος** is related to the **πραΰτης** which is the fruit of the Spirit (5:23) but refers now to the manifestation of the Spirit's work in the behavior of the community (cf. the sense in 1 Cor 4:21). Paul shifts from the 2nd personal plural to the 2nd person singular in 6:1b, indicating that each individual must take care not to become the **ἄνθρωπος** of 6:1a.

¹⁸ So Garlington, 'Burden Bearing', pp. 151–183, Moo, *Galatians*, p. 376; Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 547.

¹⁹ The scribal addition of **εξ υμῶν** reflected in a few MSS may reflect the community-directed nature of the transgression.

Christ and proclaimed by Paul and his communities. The use of the passive verb *προλημφθῆ* may well suggest the agency of ‘transgression’, which can ‘entrap’ someone; a sense that overlaps with Paul’s personification of *ἁμαρτία* elsewhere.²⁰ While a number of scholars read the term as referring to a ‘mild failing’, the need for restoration to the community suggests a serious offence against the community.²¹ The argument that Paul has in mind the kinds of failings reflected in the vice-list of 5:19–21 would only support this view.²² It must be admitted that Paul’s pastoral strategy here is different from that deployed in 1 Cor 5:1–5, but his aim throughout this section is to encourage behaviour that will secure the unity of the Galatian community in light of the threat from the ‘intruders’ who alone deserve (from Paul’s perspective) the judgement implied in the Pauline curse.²³

Thus, among the many burdens that members of the Galatian community might bear on behalf of another, the focal point here is on the cost that comes from securing reconciliation with someone who has placed themselves outside of the community.²⁴ Paul immediately recognizes that the act of restoration places the restorer in a position of danger: they may be tempted to follow suit (6:2). Paul may have one eye on those who have succumbed, to the ‘other gospel’ of the intruders and a potential scenario in which they persuade other members of the Galatian community to join them. While oblique, Paul’s language is call to the Galatians to be prepared to engage in that work of restoration for the sake of unity, which is to say for the sake of the gospel. This makes 6:1–2 an appeal not just related to various forms of general ethical behaviour, but to Paul’s vision of the implications of the Christ event. The situation that led Paul to write Galatians—the challenge to his authority and the turn to a *ἕτερος εὐαγγέλιον* (1:6)—is not far in the background. To restore a person back to the community and so, within the terms of Paul’s rhetoric, back to Christ and the gospel, is nothing less than the work of the Spirit.²⁵ The use of the term *νόμος* at the conclusion of the virtue list of 5:22–23 and the ‘regulatory’ language in 5:25 (*στοιχῶμεν*), followed by specific exhortations to mutuality and restorative practice, leads naturally into the idea that that the Christ event can somehow be explained by reference to ‘law’.²⁶

If this reading of 6:1–2 is close to being on the right lines, we can see that there is an obvious connection to the sentiments of 5:13–14. The relationship between these sections of Paul’s parenthesis is not merely linguistic (*[ἀνα]πληρώω + νόμος*) but conceptual. The era inaugurated by the coming of Christ is marked by freedom and life in the Spirit (5:13, 25). Consequently, the Galatians are to avoid the vices of

²⁰ For this reading of Gal 6:1 see Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 272 who also suggests that the choice of term may be an intentional contrast to the verb *στοιχῶμεν* in 5:25. Those whom sin has caused to lose their footing are to be restored by those whom the Spirit enables to ‘keep in step’. The overall sense of the phrase *ἐν τινι παραπτώματι* would then be instrumental. Longenecker (p. 228) translates ‘entrapped by sin’. The same idea is articulated in different terms in Rom 7:8–12.

²¹ A number of scholars downplay the significance of the situation implied by 6:1–2. Bruce speaks of ‘an isolated action which may make the person who does it feel guilty’, Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 260.

²² See e.g. Betz, *Galatians*, p. 296.

²³ 1 Cor 5:5 should be understood as a curse directed internally towards a member of the Corinthian assembly according to Smith, ‘*Hand This Man Over to Satan*’. On the curse language in Gal 1.8–9 see Moreland, *The Rhetoric of Curse in Galatians*.

²⁴ 6.2a is clearly aphoristic and, as such, can have general applicability, so François Vouga, *An die Galater*, p. 147, and others. This does not exclude the idea of a situation-specific connotation at the level of Paul’s argument. The suggestion that the ‘burdens’ of 6:2 are financial obligations related to support of the Pauline mission and/or the Pauline collection has not secured support. See Strelan, ‘Burden-Bearing and the Law of Christ’, pp. 266–276 and the rejoinder in Young, “Fulfil the Law of Christ”, pp. 31–42.

²⁵ Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 216, points to the connection between burden-bearing and law-observance in Judaism, reflected in texts such as Luke 11:46; Acts 15:10. This is not quite the sense intended in Gal 6:2 and, needless to say, those texts do not reflect the general sense in Judaism that the yoke of the Torah was not an intolerable burden to bear. See e.g. Deut 30:11; *m. ’Abot* 3:5; *m. Ber.* 2:2.

²⁶ Insofar as Gal 5:23 concludes an argumentative proof designed to unpack the Spirit/law dualism of 5:18 (*εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε, οὐκ ἐστὲ ὑπὸ νόμον*) the concluding *κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος* must include a reference to the Torah. See e.g. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 313, Moo, *Galatians*, p. 367.

competitiveness and conflict (5:13, 15, 26) and cultivate the mutuality and concern for others epitomized in the call to mutual service (5:13), the love-command (5:14) and demanded by the present situation of real and potential community conflict (6:1–2). In this light, Paul is not stating that love constitutes obedience to the Torah, but that a community that practices such love thereby lives up to the vision of the law articulated in the love-command.²⁷ In the words of Furnish, this mutual love is the ‘power of the new age already present.’²⁸

2. Paul’s treatment of νόμος in Galatians inevitably demands consideration of the meaning of the phrase ‘law of Christ’ in 6:2. Setting aside those positions that have won little scholarly support, we are left with two basic interpretative trajectories.²⁹ The first position retains a close connection with Paul’s ‘law’ language elsewhere in Galatians and thus understands νόμος in 6:2 as a reinterpreted Torah.³⁰

Alternatively, Richard Hays and others have made a case for reading νόμος in a generic sense to refer to the paradigmatic ‘structure of existence’ in which the Galatians now live by virtue of their incorporation into Christ.³¹ Given the antithesis between the law and Christ in texts like Gal 5:4, the sentiments of Gal 6:2:

must fall upon [Paul’s] readers’ ears as a breathtaking paradox. The sentence is intelligible within the context of Galatians only if the word *nomos* is invested with a different meaning: not the torah of Moses, not a body of rules, but a regulative principle or structure of existence, in this case the structure of existence embodied paradigmatically in Jesus Christ.³²

David Horrell is right, I think, to suggest that these two ideas do not stand in a relational of total mutual exclusion. In particular, a recognition that there are strong arguments for connecting 6:2 to 5:13–14, and for thereby retaining a Torah-dimension to the ‘law of Christ’ phrase, does not preclude a strong endorsement of Hays’ proposal that the connotation of the phrase can only be understood by reference to Paul’s account of Christ’s self-giving love elsewhere in the letter.³³ In my view the evidence supporting the Torah-dimension of the law of Christ is overwhelming. First, Paul uses νόμος on 31 other occasions in Galatians and the reference in each case seems to be to the Jewish law.³⁴ Reference to the Mosaic law is also the focus in all of the most proximate occurrences to that in 6:2 (5:14, 18, 23; 6:13). As we have noted, the strong linguistic and conceptual connection between 5:13–14 and 6:2 invites the idea that the ‘whole law’ fulfilled in the love-command is itself the law of Christ, i.e. the Torah now ‘redefined and fulfilled by Christ in love.’³⁵ Paul’s later use of the same trope in Rom 13:8–10 only supports this conclusion. Bruce Longenecker is therefore correct in counselling that it would be ‘unwise to evaporate

²⁷ See Westerholm, ‘On Fulfilling’, p. 233, and *Israel’s Law*, pp. 201–202. Westerholm rightly notes that Paul’s view is therefore fundamentally retrospective, a point which will become important below.

²⁸ Furnish, *The Love Command*, p. 96.

²⁹ Betz’s suggestion, that the phrase derives from a formulation of Paul’s opponents in Galatians is problematic above all because Paul’s usage in Gal 6:2 is wholly affirming (contrast the critique of ἔργα νόμου at Gal 2:15–16, 3:1, 5, 10). The enigmatic use of ἔννομος Χριστοῦ in 1 Cor 9:21 also speaks against it.

³⁰ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 223, suggests that this view ‘comes closest to commanding widespread current assent’. Wilson, ‘The Law of Christ’, pp. 123–144 highlights the importance of Barclay’s discussion in the debate.

³¹ Similarly, see Winger, ‘The Law of Christ’, for whom νόμος is here used ‘only in the loose sense that, in the new world brought by Christ, it has a function like that of the law in the old’ (p. 538).

³² Richard B. Hays, ‘Christology and Ethics’, p. 276.

³³ See also Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue*, p. 173, n. 31.

³⁴ See Stanton, ‘The Law of Moses’, p. 114, Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 555 and n. 40. The possible exceptions to this conclusion are Gal 2:19 (on which see below) and Gal 5:23 (on which see above).

³⁵ Barclay, *Obedience*, p. 134, who also notes that ‘fulfilment’ language is Paul’s favourite way describing the Christian relationship to the Torah (pp.136–137). To the extent that Matthew (e.g. Matt 5:17–20) and James (e.g. Jas 2:8–13) can be seen as challenging Paul’s notion of ‘fulfilment’ of the law, they bear witness to the idea that the Torah is in view in these texts, on which see Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew*.

all reference to the Mosaic law' at Gal 6:2.³⁶ This leaves us with a paradox, but further consideration of the likely significance of the genitive construction, law *of Christ*, will point us in the right direction towards a plausible explanation.

3. The precise meaning of the phrase 'law of Christ' has, of course, been widely debated.³⁷ We can safely set aside the proposal that the phrase ὁ νόμος τοῦ Χριστοῦ connotes some notion of a 'messianic Torah', now enshrined in the Jesus tradition.³⁸ The most persuasive account of what it means for Paul to speak of the law of Christ can be found in the work of J. L. Martyn who, in a number of publications has sought to explain the logic of Paul's thought with reference to the basic dualistic structure of his theologizing.³⁹ For Martyn the law of Christ is 'the law that has found its genesis in Christ's act vis-à-vis the law'.⁴⁰ Torah is meant on both sides of this equation. Christ defeats the law's curse, and consequently brings the law's (originary) promise to completion. Thus, the law of Christ is the 'law in the hands of Christ'.⁴¹ The relationship between the Mosaic/Sinaitic law and the law of Christ is that of 'two voices' within the law, one cursing and the other promissory, a 'cleavage' in Paul's understanding of the law that 'may be related to the advent of Christ, his advent being the event that has enacted that distinction'.⁴² While there are different things said about the law in Romans, that letter retains the dual sense that Paul attributes to νόμος in the light of the Christ event:

ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ
ἤλευθέρωσέν σε ἀπὸ
τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου (Rom 8:2)

Martyn's description of the law's 'two voices' is misleading, however. By attributing duality to the law itself, we are diverted away from the necessary attention to Paul's hermeneutical and rhetorical account of the law. Paul's theologizing *creates* the law's duality for his audience (differently in Romans and Galatians, I would suggest). Although Paul presents this dual perspective for his audience in the form of an 'objective' account of the status of Torah in the new creation, it is clear from the argumentative and polemical context of Galatians that such a view of the law is a distinctively *Pauline* interpretation. It is better, I think, to refer to this instead as Paul's 'bi-focal' perspective on the law. The law of Christ points us not so much to an ambiguity within the law itself, but to Paul's own re-orientated relationship to the law.

III

How can we explain this reorientation? How did Paul's bi-focal perspective on the law emerge? How do we account for the emphatic connection between the law and mutual love in Gal 5:13–14 and Gal 6:2? Gal 2:19–20 surely gives us a clue.

The importance of Gal 2:20 for understanding Paul's reference to the law of Christ in 6:2 was clearly set out by Richard Hays in his influential article on 'Christology and Ethics in Paul'. Together with other formulations in the letter, Paul's reference to 'the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me' serves as a summary of the 'redemptive self-giving' that establishes the 'structure of existence' in which

³⁶ Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham's God*, pp. 85–6.

³⁷ We cannot discuss the history of scholarship here. See the survey in Vouga, *Galater*, 146–147 and also Schürmann, "Das Gesetz des Christus", Garlington, 'Burden Bearing',

³⁸ See Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, pp. 59–65 for arguments against this view.

³⁹ As well as the Galatians commentary see Martyn, 'Crucial Event' and Martyn, 'Nomos'. In the latter essay Martyn affirms that 'Paul's use of *nomos* plus genitive offers an important clue to a truly strange view of the Law' (p. 578).

⁴⁰ Martyn, 'Crucial Event', p. 59.

⁴¹ Martyn, 'Crucial Event', p. 59, cf. Martyn, 'Nomos', p. 583. Martyn's scheme is worked out in full detail in his commentary: see *Galatians*, especially Comment #48, pp. 509–514 and Comment #50, pp. 554–558.

⁴² Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 508. See the whole discussion of the 'two voice of the law' on pp.506–508. The notion of a 'cleavage' in the law derives from the classic essay by Paul W. Meyer, 'The *Worm* at the Core'.

the Galatians now live.⁴³ In Hays' words the Galatians are 'now summoned by God to live, by the power of the Spirit, in a free life of service which recapitulates Jesus Christ's self-giving.'⁴⁴

But this does not go far enough. Galatians 6:2 is related to Gal 2:19–20 not only by virtue of its appeal to Christ's self-giving love, but also by means of the bi-focal perspective on the law that, as we have seen, is implicit at 6:2 (and 5:13–14) but made explicit in 2:19. Paul's new life, lived 'to God, and 'by faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me' is the result of his death 'to the law through the law' (διὰ νόμου νόμῳ ἀπέθανον). In the argument of Galatians 2:15ff, Paul, by means of recollection of his encounter with Peter in Antioch, has been insisting that no-one is justified on the basis of Torah-observance. Gal 2:19–20 provide a rationale for this claim, framed explicitly in the first person singular and thus bringing the autobiographical material of chapters 1–2 to a close.⁴⁵ Paul states that he has 'died to the law', an image that clearly reflects the soteriological model of dying and rising with Christ which immediately follows in 2:20. There can be no doubt given the argumentative context in which this statement takes place that Paul is referring to the Mosaic law. However, the notion that such a process of separation from the law occurs διὰ νόμου is clearly problematic. Elsewhere, the instrument of death to the law's power is clearly Christ's own death, as 2:19b makes clear.⁴⁶

2:19a has, understandably, long been a *crux interpretum*. There are, broadly speaking, four kinds of explanation that command assent in modern scholarship. For some, the only way through the confusion is to read διὰ νόμου in a weak sense, indicating the circumstances in which Paul died to the law. It is a shorthand reference to Paul's 'former life in Judaism' (Gal 1:13 cf. the ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι of Gal 2:15).⁴⁷ Perhaps the dominant explanation at the present time is aptly summed up by Matera: 'Paul has died to the law...[t]his happened *dia nomou* ("through the law") because Christ died under the law (3:13).'⁴⁸ To be crucified with Christ is to participate in an event in which the law is present through the pronouncement of a curse, but which thereby redeems from the curse of the law. While possible, this view suffers from the problem that while Paul connects his death to the law with his co-crucifixion, the focus of 2:19a is on Paul's death to his nomistic existence, not the law's role in effecting Christ's death. If this is Paul's meaning, it is less than transparent.⁴⁹ The idea that Paul's bi-focal perspective on the law here at 2:19 can be explained by subsequent usage is, however, helpful. Even more opaque is an explanation that appeals to Paul's zeal for the law, which brought him into direct conflict with the early Jesus movement.⁵⁰ This would require διὰ νόμου to be something like an abbreviation of 'through my zeal for the law which led me to meet Christ on the way to Damascus', which surely stretches things too far. More traditional readings have emphasized the preparatory role of the law in leading Paul to Christ through conviction of sin or through its role as the παιδαγωγός, appealing to Gal 3:19–24.⁵¹

One might have expected Martin Luther to take this last course of interpretation. Instructively, however, Luther adopts an even older interpretation that, in my view, demands re-consideration, and provides us with a clear link to Paul's link between law and love/other-regard in Gal 5–6. Noting Paul's 'amazing' and 'most delicious language' in this verse, Luther identifies the law through which Paul has died to the law as

⁴³ Hays, 'Christology', pp. 276–277.

⁴⁴ Hays, 'Christology', p. 289

⁴⁵ Note the parallels between the formulations in 1:13–16 and 2:19–21, noted by de Boer, *Galatians*, p. 159.

⁴⁶ Cf. Rom 7:4: καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐθανατώθητε τῷ νόμῳ διὰ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

⁴⁷ See Winger, *By What Law?*, pp. 151–152 suggesting that διὰ refers to 'attendant circumstances', and Borse, *Galater*, p. 117, who argues that διὰ is used 'modally' rather than instrumentally.

⁴⁸ Matera, *Galatians*, p. 95.

⁴⁹ Hays notes that Paul could have written 'through the *cross* I died to the Law', which would have made the argument and connection to 3:13 much clearer. See Hays, 'The Letter to the Galatians', pp. 242–243.

⁵⁰ See e.g. Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 143; Dunn, *Galatians*, p. 143; de Boer, *Galatians*, p. 160.

⁵¹ So, differently, Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 118; Betz, *Galatians*, p. 122; Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 91.

‘grace itself’.⁵² In other words, Paul is talking about Christ’s saving work through self-giving love: the law of Christ.⁵³

I suggest that the connection established between law and love in 5:13–14 and 6:2 provides the lens through which we can understand Paul’s strange formulation in 2:19. The major problem for most interpreters is that they try to read *διὰ νόμου* ‘prospectively’ and negatively: either as a description of the key factor in whatever crisis propelled Paul the Jew towards his transformative experience; or as a reference to the law’s curse that attended Christ’s death. But ‘through the law’ is not an account of anything that led up to or attended Paul’s death to the law. It is Paul’s retrospective description of what he can now say that he *experienced in that death*: the law that consists in self-giving love, and reconciliation of the transgressor (cf. 2:18). The implications of this suggestion are that, conceptually, Gal 2:19–20 presupposes Gal 6:2 as well as explains it. Paul is stating that he has died to the Mosaic Torah by means of the Torah now fulfilled in Christ through love. That act of love and self-giving both breaks and reorders Paul’s relationship to and understanding of the law: Christ’s *ἀγάπη* creates Paul’s bi-focal perspective on *νόμος*.

Richard Hays is right to suggest that ‘Paul seeks to ground his exhortations in the life-pattern revealed in a single paradigmatic event: the cross.’⁵⁴ But in relation to the specific question of the law’s continuing function as a norm for moral behaviour in Galatians, what counts is Paul’s *experience* of the cross, interpreted as the definitive revelation of divine love. 2:19–20 clearly an attempt to ground the argument of 2:15–17 in Paul’s own experience. This is marked by the shift from the first person plural forms of 2:15–17 to the dominant first person singular forms of 2:18–21 marked in vv.19–20 by emphatic first person singular pronouns.⁵⁵ Paul here is neither articulating some inherent bifurcation in the law’s nature (cursing versus promissory; ceremonial versus moral) nor is he spelling out a developed theology of the law’s place in salvation history post the Christ-event. Paul’s ability to speak of the law with specific reference to the priority of love is the result of a transformation in his relationship to the law based on his experience of love. In making this emphasis, I am not attempting any kind of nuanced psychological or experiential analysis of Paul’s words (although such has been attempted). It is clear that accounts of religious experience regularly draw on categories of interpretation that are the result of the experience rather than on those that generated the experience in the first place. Paul is no different here. I am inviting us to take seriously the fact that Paul’s formulation of his bi-focal perspective on the law—“dying to the law through the law”—in explicitly personal terms, provides us with a likely foundation for his later formulation of that bi-focal perspective in the argument of Galatians. I make no claims about the nature of the experience, only that Paul’s new configuration of the relationship between law and love is the result of a process of personal renegotiation of his own relationship to Torah.

IV

Law versus Love, or Law and Love? There are statements in Galatians to support both summaries of the relationship between *νόμος* and *ἀγάπη*. Christ’s self-offering in death is both the event that sets the Galatians free from *νόμος* (a freedom that Paul now believes to be under threat). The cross is also now the paradigmatic event in the law’s fulfilment, such that the Torah’s command to love of neighbour can also be viewed as the law of Christ. It is possible that the tension generated by these two ideas is the product of opposing dynamics in Paul’s theology. It is undoubtedly true the paradox comes into clearest view in the argument of Galatians, and is therefore the product of Paul’s distinctive rhetorical aims at different points in the letter. However, I propose that the tension between these perspectives can only be

⁵² Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, pp. 155, 161–162.

⁵³ Reading Gal 2:19 as a reference to the law of Christ/law of faith (cf. Rom 3:27) has an ancient pedigree. It is found in Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Galatians–Philemon*, p. 13 and is more recently affirmed by Lagrange, *Épître aux Galates*, 51.

⁵⁴ Hays, ‘Christology’, 288.

⁵⁵ I do not think, with Lambrecht, ‘Paul’s Reasoning’, p. 163, that Paul is thereby returning ‘to the concrete Antioch incident’. Instead the appeal is to Paul’s personal experience.

fully accounted for by taking into consideration the possibility that together they reflect Paul's own renegotiation of his relationship to Torah in the light of the Christ-event. Paul's experience of Christ's self-giving love exerts decisive pressure on his relationship to Torah, to the extent that love is identified *as* law and thus as the way to life.

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