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THE ROLE OF THE PEDAGOGUE IN GALATIANS

Michael J. Smith

IN DISCUSSING THE BELIEVER'S RELATIONSHIP to the Law and to God in Galatians 3:23–4:7 Paul used two figures from the culture of his day. First, he looked back and used the word “pedagogue” to describe the function of the Old Testament Law over Israel before the time of Christ: “Therefore the Law has become our tutor [*παιδαγωγός*] to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor [*παιδαγωγόν*]” (Gal. 3:24–25). Second, he looked at the relationship believers have with God and used the word “adoption” to describe the position of believers as that of sons: “so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (4:5). While the act of adoption is familiar today, the role of the pedagogue in Paul's day is not. Therefore an examination of the meaning, person, and function of the pedagogue can help believers understand the passage in Galatians.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the cultural background of the word *παιδαγωγός* and to demonstrate how Paul used this figure in his argument in Galatians.

THE FIGURE OF THE PEDAGOGUE IN GALATIANS

THE LEXICAL MEANING OF THE TERM *Παιδαγωγός*

The word *παιδαγωγός* occurs only three times in the New Testament, twice in Galatians 3 (vv. 24–25) and once in 1 Corinthians 4:15. The *παιδαγωγός* was a “boyleader,” the man, usu. a slave . . . whose duty it was to conduct the boy or youth . . . to and from school and to superintend his conduct gener.; he was not a ‘teacher.’”¹ Longenecker notes that the “etymology of the word sug-

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gests (*pais plus agōgos*), a ‘child-tender.’² In English the word “pedagogue” refers to a teacher, but the Greek word does not have that meaning. Like the word “tutor,” the rendering “schoolmaster” in the King James Version is also misleading. The *παιδαγωγός* “was distinguished from the *didáskalos*, for he gave no formal instruction but administered the directives of the father in a custodial manner—though of course indirectly he taught by the supervision he gave and the discipline he administered.”³ It would seem reasonable, therefore, that a better translation for *παιδαγωγός* is “custodian,” since the word “tutor” is too closely associated with the idea of formal teaching.

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE *Παιδαγωγός*

To understand the term *παιδαγωγός* it is important to note that Paul made use of a figure drawn from three different cultures. Young notes that in Paul’s day the

originally Attic custom [of employing a pedagogue] was still widely employed; not only by the Greeks, but also by the Romans. Indeed, a pedagogue may even have been used by well-to-do Jews, for it is frequent as a loan word in the Jewish sources. The custom, then, of placing one’s children in the care and oversight of a trusted slave was a continuous (and ever widening) practice from the fifth century B.C. until late into imperial times. There were, of course, changes in aspects of the custom, but the essential details of the role remained virtually unchanged from Plato to Libanius and the Emperor Julian.⁴

The custom of having a pedagogue was so common in Paul’s day that any of his readers would have well understood his meaning. “When Paul depicts the Law as a ‘pedagogue’ in the period of history before Jesus Christ came as ‘the offspring’ of Abraham, and those ‘under the Law’ as children ‘under a pedagogue,’ he introduces a conceptual field behind which there is a wealth of virtually universal experience in antiquity.”⁵

References to a *παιδαγωγός* are found frequently in Jewish

1 Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 748.

2 Richard N. Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19–4:7,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25 (March 1982): 53.

3 *Ibid.*, 55.

4 Norman H. Young, “*Paidagogos*: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor,” *Novum Testamentum* 29 (1987): 150.

5 David J. Lull, “‘The Law Was Our Pedagogue’: A Study in Galatians 3:19–25,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105 (1986): 494.

rabbinic writings, “where the Hellenistic origin of the concept is shown by the fact that *pedagog* is a Greek loan word.”⁶ A number of parables in the Genesis Rabbah use the word “pedagogue.”⁷ Also Josephus referred to a *παιδαγωγός* a number of times in his writings and even wrote of his own son being under such an arrangement.⁸ Paul, however, introduced a new concept in using *παιδαγωγός* as a metaphor for the Law.

There are also several places in the Talmud [e.g., *Exod Rab* 21:8; 42:9⁹] where Moses is depicted as Israel’s pedagogue, or where Moses, Aaron and Miriam are so presented [*Num Rab* 1:2¹⁰], or Moses, David and Jeremiah [*Deut Rab* 2:11]. But there is no passage in the extant Jewish literature where the Mosaic Law itself is spoken of as a pedagogue. 4 Maccabees¹¹ comes close in referring in 1:17 to the Law as bringing *paideia* (“instruction,” “discipline”) and in speaking in 5:34¹² of the Law as a *paideutēs* (“teacher,” “instructor”), yet without directly calling the Law a *paidagōgos*.

From such a collection of Greek and Jewish references it can be seen that Paul’s use of *paidagōgos* in Gal 3:24–25, though creatively applied, is not an isolated phenomenon.¹³

THE PERSON OF THE *Παιδαγωγός*

In most contexts the *παιδαγωγός* was a household slave, although occasionally he was hired specifically for the role of pedagogue. Young also observes that “most of the pedagogues were of foreign

6 Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19–4:7,” 54.

7 Genesis Rabbah 28:6 reads, “This may be illustrated by the case of a king who entrusted his son to a teacher [tutor] who led him into evil ways,” and 31:7 states, “It is as if a royal prince had a tutor and whenever he did wrong, his tutor was punished” (*Genesis*, vol. 1 of *The Midrash Rabbah*, trans. H. Freeman [London: Soncino, 1977]).

8 Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19–4:7,” 54.

9 In Exodus Rabbah 42:9 Moses is compared to a pedagogue (*Exodus–Leviticus*, vol. 2 of *The Midrash Rabbah*, trans. H. Freeman [London: Soncino, 1977]).

10 “Furthermore, did I not assign to you three special tutors, Moses, Aaron, and Miriam?” (*Numbers–Deuteronomy*, vol. 3 of *The Midrash Rabbah*, trans. H. Freeman [London: Soncino, 1977]).

11 Fourth Maccabees 1:17 reads, “And this wisdom, I assume, is the culture we acquire from the Law, through which we learn the things of God reverently and the things of men to our worldly advantage” (James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* [New York: Doubleday, 1985], 2:545).

12 “I will not play you false, O Law my teacher.”

13 Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19–4:7,” 55.

origin—the spoils of war, or other means.”¹⁴ Whereas in Greek society brothers sometimes shared one pedagogue, in Roman society there were several pedagogues in each family, including female overseers for girls.¹⁵

Furthermore the pedagogue was usually an older household servant. “The role of a child-guardian is compared with the physical and mental powers of a door-keeper; few therefore were inclined to waste a fit young slave on such an undemanding task.”¹⁶ Not everyone, however, held such a low view of the task. Longenecker cites Plato’s characterization of pedagogues as “not those who are good for nothing else, but men who by age and experience are qualified to serve as both leaders (*hēgemonas*) and custodians (*paidagōgous*) of children.”¹⁷ Normally the *παιδαγωγός* was a male who oversaw a young boy and carried a large responsibility for the boy’s upbringing.

Ramsay adds another differentiation between the pedagogues in Greek and Roman cultures, explaining why some had teaching duties while others did not. “In that day [i.e., Paul’s time] it would appear that the *paidagogoi* were trusted servants and faithful attendants, standing in a very close relation to the family (in which they were slaves). Their duty was not to teach any child under their charge, but simply to guard him. Among the Romans, who adopted this institution from the Greeks, the *paidagogos* gave some home instruction to the child: he was a Greek-speaking slave, who looked after the child, and taught him to use the Greek language,”¹⁸ not by means of formal instruction but in daily conversation.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE *Παιδαγωγός*

“The child generally came to the pedagogue immediately after the mother, wet-nurse . . . and nanny . . . had completed the educational process at its most basic level. This was usually at age seven, and the boy remained in the charge of the pedagogue until late adolescence. . . . The pedagogue therefore had a role that spanned

¹⁴ Young, “*Paidagogos*: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor,” 151.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19–4:7,” 53.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁸ Wm. M. Ramsay, *A Historical Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (1900; reprint, Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1978), 382–83.

some eleven or twelve years of his charge's life."¹⁹

The role of pedagogues probably varied from family to family and culture to culture, but all seem to have had certain responsibilities in common. As a constant companion to the child, the pedagogue escorted the child to and from school, carrying books or other objects, sometimes securing an education for himself in the process. He took the child to athletic practice, oversaw his meals, made him do his homework, protected him from harm, and supervised his social engagements. Twenty-four hours a day the pedagogue accompanied the child in virtually every activity of life.

In that close association the pedagogue was responsible for the moral development of the child by disciplining him when he erred and protecting him from harmful influences. Young cites Libanius as saying, "For pedagogues are guards . . . of the blossoming youth, they are keepers . . . they are a fortified wall . . . they drive out the undesirable lovers . . . thrusting them away and keeping them out, not allowing them to fraternize . . . with the boys."²⁰ In another passage Libanius praised a pedagogue as a "protective wall . . . and as a prison . . . stronger than the secret chamber of Danae."²¹ A pedagogue was comparable to a shepherd over sheep or to a pilot over a ship. "More importantly, the pedagogue was a moral guide and was to be obeyed. . . . so the pedagogue was supposed to assist in the first pace toward virtue."²² The pedagogue was responsible for every aspect of the child's upbringing from correcting grammar and diction to controlling his or her sexual morals. Reciting a pedagogue's advice, Seneca said, "Walk thus and so; eat thus and so, this is the proper conduct for a man and that for a woman; this for a married man and that for a bachelor."²³

Physical punishment was often used to help shape a child's character and behavior. While some pedagogues were humane in their supervisory roles, others were overly brutal and punishment was abusive. Plato described this child-pedagogue relationship.

With the return of daylight the children should go to their teachers; for just as no sheep or other grazing beast ought to exist without a herdsman, so children cannot live without a tutor [*παιδαγωγῶν*], nor slaves without a master. And, of all wild creatures, the child is the

¹⁹ Young, "Paidagogos: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor," 156-57.

²⁰ Ibid., 159.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 161.

most intractable; for in so far as it, above all others, possesses a fount of reason that is as yet uncurbed, it is a treacherous, sly and most insolent creature. Wherefore the child must be strapped up, as it were, with many bridles—first, when he leaves the care of the nurse and mother, with tutors [*παιδαγωγούς*], to guide his childish ignorance, and after that with teachers of all sorts of subjects and lessons, treating him as becomes a freeborn child. On the other hand he must be treated as a slave; and any free man that meets him shall punish both the child himself and his tutor [*παιδαγωγός*] or teacher, if any of them does wrong.²⁴

Plato also recalled a conversation between Socrates and the young boy Lysis, in which Socrates asked, “Someone controls you?” Lysis replied, “Yes, he is my tutor [*παιδαγωγός*] here.” “Is he a slave?” Socrates queried. “Why, certainly; he belongs to us,” responded Lysis, to which Socrates mused, “What a strange thing, I exclaimed; a free person controlled by a slave!”²⁵

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE *Παιδαγωγός*

In the relationship between pedagogue and child, certain attitudes were bound to surface, many of them negative. Young cites examples of pedagogues who were rejects from the other worker slaves or were considered more useless than the others. He notes that they were often old, decrepit, sullen-faced, and grumpy. Others were mean, overly strict, sometimes brutal, and not always reliable in disseminating good advice to their charges.²⁶ Sometimes, of course, the children were at fault. Carcopino quotes Plautus who wrote about a “precocious adolescent” who dragged his tutor Lydus wherever he wanted to go and would “remind him sharply of his servile state: ‘Look here,’ he says, ‘am I your slave or are you mine?’ To such a question there was only one answer . . . and we need not imagine that Lydus was the only tutor in Rome to whom it was frequently addressed.”²⁷

On the other hand good attitudes toward the pedagogues were evident. In a mother’s letter to her schoolboy son she expressed great respect for the pedagogue. “I took care to send and inquire about your health and to learn what you were reading. [Diogenes

²⁴ Plato, *Laws* 808 D, E, trans. R. G. Bury, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926).

²⁵ Plato, *Lysis* 208 C, trans. W. R. M. Lamb, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925).

²⁶ Young “*Paidagogos*: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor,” 152–53, 160–61.

²⁷ Jérôme Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, ed. Henry T. Rowell, trans. E. O. Lorimer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1940), 104.

your teacher] said it was the sixth book, and he testified at large to the conduct of your attendant [*παιδαγωγός*]. So now, my child, you and your attendant [*παιδαγωγός*] must take care to have you placed under a suitable teacher. Many salutations from your sisters and the children of Theonis, whom the evil eye shall not harm, and from all our friends by name. Salute from me your esteemed attendant [*παιδαγωγός*] Eros . . . [addressed] to her son Ptolemaeus."²⁸

Young also gives many good examples of positive attitudes toward a pedagogue. "From the classical tragedies to Hellenistic romances one finds a frequent, warm, and deserved expression of affection towards former pedagogues."²⁹ Some pedagogues risked their lives and even died for their charges. Young notes that it was not uncommon for a charge to give his pedagogue his freedom when the charge reached adulthood and they separated.³⁰ Paul's use of the word *παιδαγωγός* in 1 Corinthians 4:15 compares the tutor to the father. He tells the Corinthians, "For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel." The father was higher because he was a blood relative, but often the pedagogue became a surrogate father to his charge.³¹

THE POSITION OF THE CHILD UNDER THE *Παιδαγωγός*

Understanding Galatians 3:24–25 is aided by recalling that the *παιδαγωγός* was the slave and the child was the free person for as long as the *παιδαγωγός*-child relationship existed, though it often seemed the opposite. An analogy from Aristotle is instructive here in light of the application of the principle to Paul's use of the figure in Galatians. "Our indulgences should be moderate and few, and never opposed to principle—this is what we mean by 'well-disciplined' and 'chastened'—; and the appetitive part of us should be ruled by principle, *just as a boy would live in obedience to his tutor* [*παιδαγωγός*]."³² A child needed to be treated as a slave in or-

²⁸ Oxyrhynchus Papyri 903, *Select Papyri*, vol. 1, ed. A. S. Hunt and C. C. Edgar, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1932).

²⁹ Young, "*Paidagogos: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor*," 165.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ However, this relationship did not rule out the use of strong discipline. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians just a few verses later, "What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?" (1 Cor. 4:21). Even a father disciplines strongly at times.

³² Aristotle, *Ethics 5–8*, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926) (*italics added*).

der to keep youthful wantonness in check, just as the Israelites, coming out of Egypt as a new nation, were in need of help as they went to live among the pagan Canaanites. Plato also wrote, as noted earlier, that during youth a child needed to be treated as though he or she were a slave.³³ And as noted earlier, Socrates remarked that it was strange for a free person to be controlled by a slave.³⁴ Perhaps Paul, as he wrote to the Galatians, was amazed that anyone would *choose* to go *back* under such an arrangement.

THE ROLE OF THE Παιδαγωγός IN GALATIANS 3

THE PROBLEM IN THE CHURCH IN GALATIA

In writing the letter to the Galatians Paul dealt with a justification–sanctification problem in the church. This letter is early, having been written just before the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). Paul had returned from his first missionary journey and would soon go to Jerusalem for this council of church leaders. The church in Galatia had been established during Paul's first journey. Evidently some false teachers had come into the church after his visit³⁵ and persuaded the church that in order to please God they needed to be keeping the Law.

Understandably this idea came from the background of Judaism. From the time of Ezra down to the first century A.D., Judaism had moved from a temple-centered religion to a Law-centered religion. Hence believing Jews were bringing this focus with them into Christianity. The main issue in the Galatian churches was a sanctification problem, not a soteriological one. Paul identified this problem in Galatians 3:3 when he said, "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" They had begun the Christian life by putting their faith in Jesus Christ, and they were transformed by the Holy Spirit, who took up residence in them. Now, however, some Jews were saying that the believers needed to obey the Law also. The issue was similar to the problem at the Jerusalem Council. Should Gentiles who come to Christ be required to keep the Law as if they were Jews?

³³ Plato, *Laws* 808, E.

³⁴ Plato, *Lysis* 208, C.

³⁵ For a discussion of the identity of Paul's opponents in Galatia see Walt Russell, "Who Were Paul's Opponents in Galatia?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147 (July–September, 1990), 329–50.

PAUL'S ARGUMENT IN GALATIANS

In addressing this problem in his letter Paul began by stating his amazement that the Galatian readers would desert the gospel message of grace he had brought them and instead pursue a distorted gospel (1:1–10). In a biographical section (1:11–2:21), he reminded them that his message was received by revelation from Christ Himself (1:11–24). He demonstrated the content of his message by relating the incident when the Jerusalem church leaders gave him the right hand of fellowship after he encouraged them to accept Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile believer (2:1–10). Paul concluded that section of the letter with his confidence in the gospel (vv. 11–21), which prompted him to confront an example of blatant hypocrisy in Antioch. Paul wrote that he had confronted Peter because Peter was compelling the Gentiles to live like Jews. Paul's conclusions were given in verses 19–21. "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

Having sinned, Paul needed to die, but Christ paid the penalty, and, having been crucified with Christ, Paul was now dead to the Law. That gave Paul a new relationship, and now Christ lived in him. The result was that he lived by faith in the One who had freed him. To go back under the Law, as Peter was doing, was to say that Christ died needlessly, and that would nullify God's grace.

In chapters 3 and 4 Paul continued to explain the necessity of faith over works as the principle for a life that is pleasing to God.³⁶ In 3:1–5 he argued that since the Galatians were saved by faith, they should not retreat from that position to go back to the Law as a means of pleasing God. In verses 6–9 he recounted the basis on which Abraham was declared righteous. Just as on the basis of Abraham's faith God told him that all the nations would be blessed in him, they too were declared righteous on the basis of their faith.

³⁶ Galatians 3 includes five arguments, and chapter 4 presents three pictures of the necessity of faith over Law as the way to please God. The five arguments are (a) how people are saved (3:1–5), (b) how Abraham was saved (vv. 6–9), (c) the curse of the Law (vv. 10–14), (d) that the promise preceded the Law (vv. 15–18), and (e) that the purpose of the Law was over (vv. 19–29). The three pictures present the facts that believers are sons and not slaves (4:1–11), the messenger is related to his message (vv. 12–20), and an allegory of Isaac and Ishmael illustrates these truths (vv. 21–31).

Abraham was before the Law, but the next example is from within the period when the Law was operable. Those who did not obey the Law were under a curse (vv. 10–14), but Habakkuk had written that “the righteous man shall live by faith” (v. 11; Hab. 2:4). Christ had taken the curse of the Law by dying in their place, and in Him the blessing of Abraham has come to the Gentiles so that they too can be justified by faith. Then in a historical section (Gal. 3:15–18) Paul stated that the promise given in the Abrahamic Covenant cannot be nullified by the Law, which came later. The Abrahamic Covenant was given before the Law and continued past the Law. Having illustrated the priority of faith over the works of the Law, Paul addressed the obvious question, “Why the Law then?” (v. 19).

PAUL'S ANALOGY OF THE LAW AS A *Παιδαγωγός*

In answer to that question Paul presented the analogy of the Law as a pedagogue in 3:24–25. He described in chapter 4 the next stage of spiritual maturation, namely, adoption. That the concept of the pedagogue continues into chapter 4 can be seen from Paul's use of terms, even though the word *παιδαγωγός* is not present.

Other roles that are related to or identified with that of the pedagogue are *νοθητής*, *παιδοτρέφης*, *παιδευτής*, and *ἐπίτροπος*. The last mentioned is also used by Paul in close association with *παιδαγωγός* in his argument in Gal. 3:23–4:7. Although Plutarch distinguished between slave-stewards of property and slave-tutors of children . . . generally the *ἐπίτροπος* was also a guardian of a child (or children). The *ἐπίτροπος* acted as a trustee-guardian of some orphaned minor (often a relative). The *ἐπίτροπος* was a legal appointment whereas the *παιδαγωγός* was a social position made by the father. However, there are common factors in the roles which brought the words together in metaphorical usage.³⁷

Longenecker also notes the continuation of the analogy of the pedagogue into chapter 4.

There can be no doubt that the illustration of Gal 4:1–7 of a son in a patrician household is meant to illumine what is said in 3:23–29 and to carry on the analogy of the pedagogue in 3:24–25. The titles *epitropos* and *oikonomos* of 4:2 have given rise to a great deal of discussion as to their precise meaning and the exact law the apostle had in mind. But there can be no doubt that they were meant in some way to be synonymous with *pedagōgos*. This is particularly clear for *epitropos*, which was a frequent term in Greek and became a loan word in Hebrew for the guardian of a minor.³⁸

³⁷ Young, “*Paidagogos*: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor,” 155.

³⁸ Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19–4:7,” 56.

From Paul's argument in the book two main concepts are evident: the temporary nature of the Law and the matter of guardianship. Although the concept of the pedagogue includes other ideas, these two aspects seem to be the focus of what Paul had in mind as he used this analogy.

The Law was a παιδαγωγός in that it had a temporary function. One of the most obvious aspects of the pedagogue-child relationship in any culture is that it was temporary. "While the young master was a child he differed not at all from a slave. [When he reached maturity], however, the pedagogue's dominance ended, and the young man became master *de facto* and not simply *de jure*."³⁹ Xenophon described the actual arrangement with the pedagogue: "When a boy ceases to be a child, and begins to be a lad, others release him from his moral tutor [*παιδαγωγός*] and his schoolmaster: he is then no longer under a ruler and is allowed to go his own way."⁴⁰ The pedagogue-child relationship was not permanent, although a *different kind* of relationship developed at times, based on friendship and respect.

That the Law had a temporary function is made clear by Paul in Galatians 3:19–4:7. Paul had just stated that the Law, which was given 430 years after Abraham, cannot nullify a promise that was to extend all the way to Christ as the chosen "Seed." The Law fit within a specific time period, as seen by a number of temporal markers: (1) The Law "was added . . . *until* [*ἄχρις*] the seed would come" (3:19); (2) "But *before* [*πρό*] faith came" (v. 23); (3) "the faith which was *later* to be revealed [*εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλύφθηναί*]" (v. 23); (4) "the Law has become our tutor to lead us *to* [or 'until,' *εἰς Χριστόν*] Christ" (v. 24); (5) "But *now* that faith has come [*ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς πίστεως*]" (v. 25); (6) "we are *no longer* [*οὐκέτι*] under a tutor" (v. 25); (7) "*as long as* [*ἐφ' ὅσον χρόνον*] the heir is a child" (4:1); (8) "*until* [*ἄχρι*] the date set by the father" (v. 2); (9) "But *when* [*ὅτε*] the fullness of the time came" (v. 4); (10) "Therefore you are *no longer* [*οὐκέτι*] a slave" (v. 7).

Example four above ("the law has become our tutor to lead us *to* [or 'until,' *εἰς Χριστόν*] Christ" (3:24) needs clarification. Some have taken this to mean that as the pedagogue brought his charge to school each day and delivered him to the teacher; so the Law functioned in bringing Israel to Christ as the Teacher. Longenecker described this idea as "a positive educational development from the

³⁹ Young, "Paidagogos: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor," 174.

⁴⁰ Xenophon, *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*, 3.1, trans. E. C. Marchant, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1925).

religion of Israel to Christianity.”⁴¹ This view, however, cannot be correct for a couple of reasons.

First, the role of Christ in the context is not that of a teacher. Instead He is the promised “Seed” which was to come (3:19), He is the One who came to take the curse of the Law for humankind (vv. 13–14), and He is the Redeemer (v. 13; 4:4–5). There is nothing in the text about Jesus being the believers’ Teacher. As Eadie notes, “The phrase *εἰς Χριστόν* is very naturally understood as meaning ‘to Christ,’—the pædagogus bringing the child to the Teacher. So the Greek Fathers, with Erasmus, Elsner, etc. But this idea does not suit the imagery, for Christ is here not regarded at all as a Teacher, but rather as a Redeemer, as the following clause distinctly implies, as well as the commencing imagery of the next chapter.”⁴²

Second, *εἰς* is to be taken in a temporal sense. Young summarizes that “*εἰς* with the accusative can have a temporal meaning (e.g., *εἰς ἐμέ*, ‘up to my time’), and the parallel *εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν* (3:23) demonstrates that this is the meaning of *εἰς Χριστόν* (i.e., ‘up to the time of Christ’). The *εἰς* in verses 23 and 24 is thus periodic: the law was up to the time of Christ, until the revelation of the coming faith.”⁴³ The *εἰς* then is to be taken in a temporal sense and is parallel to *ἄχρις* in 3:19 (“until the seed would come”).

Thus Paul was saying that the Law was definitely terminated. A parallel from a secular source confirms this. The conversation cited earlier between Socrates and Lysis continued to explore the constraints his parents had placed on Lysis. Socrates asked, “What reason can they have for so strangely preventing you from being happy and doing what you like? Why do they maintain you all day long in constant servitude to somebody, so that, in a word, you do hardly a single thing that you desire?” Lysis replied quite succinctly, “It is because I am not yet of age, Socrates.”⁴⁴ The implication is that when he was of age, the parental constraints would be removed. At the “fullness of the time” (4:4) God sent His Son to make a change in the program for those under the Law. They were to be redeemed in order to become full adult sons (v. 5). Just as the period of being under a pedagogue was bound to come to an end for

⁴¹ Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19–4:7,” 59.

⁴² John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1894; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 283.

⁴³ Young, “*Paidagogos*: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor,” 174.

⁴⁴ Plato, *Lysis*, 208 C–209, A–B.

a child, so the period of Israel being under the Law was bound to come to an end. That period under the Law was for “children,” but “the fullness of time” had come and the period of childhood was over, marked by the coming of Christ. “This temporal force of the analogy of the *παιδαγωγός* is the guide to selecting from the semantic range enjoyed by the term. Of the various ways in which *παιδαγωγός* functioned in Paul’s culture . . . Paul’s employment of the term requires that we understand it in such a way that it serves a perfectly appropriate function for a period of time, after which it no longer serves this particular function.”⁴⁵

This ending of the role of the pedagogue became Paul’s main argument to the Galatians about the ending of the role of the Law.

With the coming of Christ the supervisory function of the Law ended, just as the services of a pedagogue ended when his charge comes to maturity. Any endeavor on the part of a son who has reached maturity and come into possession of his inheritance to revert back to the supervision of an administrative guardian would be a reversion to childishness—it would be a return to what Paul calls “the elemental teachings/principles of the world” (*ta stoicheia tou kosmou*). For when God moves forward in his redemptive economy, any reversion or standing still becomes a “worldly” act, no matter how good or appropriate such a stance once was.⁴⁶

Termination of the *role* of the Mosaic Law, however, in no way diminishes its *value*. The Law continues to reveal God’s holiness and so it can be used in a proper way (1 Tim. 1:8), even though its regulations are abolished.

The Law was a παιδαγωγός in that it functioned as a guardian for Israel. Again there were many responsibilities of a pedagogue, but the concern in this article is only with those responsibilities that parallel Paul’s emphasis on the role of the Law and that fit his purpose in Galatians. Dunn observes that in Galatians Paul was primarily concerned with only certain aspects of the Law.

“Works of the law” denote all that the law requires of the devout Jew, but precisely because it is the law as identity and boundary marker which is in view, the law as Israel’s law focuses on these rites which express Jewish distinctiveness most clearly. . . . “Works of the law” refer not exclusively but particularly to those requirements which bring to sharp focus the distinctiveness of Israel’s identity. It is because they have such a crucial role in defining “Jewishness,” membership of the covenant people, that circumcision and food laws feature so prominently in discussion of the law and righteousness. What lies be-

⁴⁵ T. David Gordon, “A Note on ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΟΣ in Galatians 3.24–25,” *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 152.

⁴⁶ Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19–4:7,” 59.

hind so much of the debate is the identity crisis which Paul's work among the Gentiles precipitated for his fellow Jewish Christians.⁴⁷

Therefore Paul brought up specific issues like circumcision, dietary laws, and the Jewish calendar in his argument in Galatians because these are the kinds of things the Law delineated as boundaries for Israel. Ephesians 2:11–16, where Paul wrote of the wall between Jews and Gentiles, demonstrates the dividing aspect of the Law.

Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time *separate* from Christ, *excluded* from the commonwealth of Israel, and *strangers* to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were *far off* have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down *the barrier of the dividing wall*, by abolishing in His flesh *the enmity*, which is the *Law of commandments contained in ordinances*, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity (italics added).

The italicized words in these verses call attention to Paul's emphasis that the Law served to divide Israel from the Gentiles and keep them separate. Jewish literature was also aware of this excluding guardianship factor of the Law. In the Letter of Aristeas the author described the Old Testament Law in this way: "In his wisdom the legislator, in a comprehensive survey of each particular part, and being endowed by God for the knowledge of universal truths, surrounded us with unbroken palisades and iron walls to prevent our mixing with any of the other peoples in any matter, being thus kept pure in body and soul, preserved from false beliefs, and worshipping the only God omnipotent over all creation."⁴⁸

The aspects of the Law that Paul mentioned in Galatians seem to fit with this same idea that the Law was a wall, a boundary separating Jews from Gentiles. He spoke of the circumcision that marked a Jew as "separate" (mentioned thirteen times in the letter; see 2:3–12; 5:2–11; 6:12–15), he rebuked Peter for rejecting the free fellowship of Jews with Gentiles (2:11–14), and he mentioned the observance of ritual days in the Jewish calendar.

⁴⁷ James D. G. Dunn, "Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3.10–14)," *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985): 531.

⁴⁸ "Letter of Aristeas" (139), trans. R. H. Shutt, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:22.

"Law" in Galatians seems to refer to such regulations that controlled Jewish social life and restricted association with the Gentiles. . . . The law, for Paul, is often a shorthand for the religion of Judaism with its exclusive taboos which prevented any social or religious union with the Gentiles. The restriction of the law as a *παιδαγωγός* was that it guarded and confined Israel with a retinue of amoral regulations that kept it from freely relating to the Gentiles *qua* Gentiles. It is this rather than any moral insights which the law contained (5:23) that made Paul hostile towards the national Sinai covenant. In Christ this separation of Jew and Gentile which the law demanded was abolished (3:28).⁴⁹

Gordon agrees that this guardianship of Israel from the Gentile nations was the focus of Paul's figure of the pedagogue. "*This 'guardian' understanding of παιδαγωγός is that which makes most sense of the context in Galatians.* The particular aspects of the Torah which cause the problem at Galatia are those aspects which most clearly distinguish Jew from Gentile."⁵⁰ Israel needed a fence for a time to protect the nation from intermarriage with the Gentiles along with an infusion of their pagan ideas and practices. Now that the promised Seed had come, however, the protection provided by the Law was no longer needed. Lenski also agrees with this analysis of the pedagogue. "Yes, all the ceremonial regulations served just as a slave-guardian did for the boy in his charge. These regulations kept the Jews from mingling with the Gentiles, the bad boys who had no guardian, whose influence and associations would bring pagan contamination."⁵¹

Lull cites stories about pedagogues who exhibited this guardianship function. "Affection for pedagogues was justified by tales about slave attendants who were loyal to their charges, even to the point of dying trying to defend them in attack in the streets. In *Rhetorica ad Herennium* . . . a story is told of a wealthy master of a household who, when his house was under siege, entrusted his children's safety to their pedagogue, who was to hide and defend them and to see to it that they were raised safely to adulthood."⁵² In another story an old pedagogue, seeing pirates taking his charge off to be sold as a slave, threw himself into the ocean, swimming toward the pirate ship in an effort to protect him.⁵³ Such was the

⁴⁹ Young, "*Paidagogos: The Social Setting for a Pauline Metaphor,*" 173.

⁵⁰ Gordon, "A Note on ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΟΣ in Galatians 3.24–25," 153 (italics added).

⁵¹ R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 182.

⁵² Lull, "The Law Was Our Pedagogue: A Study in Galatians 3:19–25," 490.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

role of the Law over Israel, to protect her from outside influence, to preserve her life, to see her safely to “adulthood.”

This idea of guardianship is directly supported in the immediate context by two words Paul used. The first word, *συγκλείω*, is in Galatians 3:22–23: “But the Scripture has shut up [*συνέκλεισεν*] everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept in custody [*ἐφρουρούμεθα*] under the Law, being shut up [*συγκλειόμενοι*] to the faith which was later to be revealed.” *Συγκλείω* means “close up together, hem in, enclose.”⁵⁴ Paul used it again in Romans 11:32, but a good illustration of its meaning comes from the one other usage in Luke 5:6, which refers to Peter and some others who caught many fish. “They enclosed [*συνέκλεισαν*] a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break.” That is a picture of what the Law did for Israel; it enclosed them, so to speak, in its net.

The second word is *φρουρέω*, which also has the idea of guarding, confining, and holding in custody.⁵⁵ This word was used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:32 to describe how “in Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding [*ἐφρούρει*] the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me.” They had taken action to surround the city and hem it in so Paul could not get out. Paul also used the word in Philippians 4:7. “And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard [*φρουρήσει*] your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” God’s peace has a guarding effect on believers’ hearts and minds. Peter used the word in 1 Peter 1:5 in writing about believers “who are protected [*φρουρουμένους*] by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” God guards believers in order to make sure they reach their destination of heaven.

These verses illustrate the point of Paul’s metaphor about the Law serving as a pedagogue in guarding Israel like a wall (Eph. 2:14) “until the seed would come” (Gal. 3:19) so that they might be justified by faith (v. 24), until “the fullness of the time” when Christ arrived (4:4). Israel was under “protective custody.”⁵⁶ Young states that “the presence of *φρουρέω* and *συγκλείω* in close conjunction [in Gal. 3:22–23] makes it clear that Paul’s main point—if not his only point—in the metaphor is not a matter of discipline, edu-

⁵⁴ Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 952.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1066–67.

⁵⁶ Leon Morris, *Galatians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 118.

cation, instruction, or punishment, but *restriction*. That is, that under the law Israel experienced a curtailment of freedom akin to the limitations imposed on a child by a pedagogue.⁵⁷ But, as Paul wanted the Galatians to see, the promise of blessing to all nations in Abraham has come through the Seed, Christ, who imparts life, righteousness, and justification (vv. 19, 21, 24). The Holy Spirit has also been given (vv. 2–3), the principle of faith in Christ has been fully revealed (v. 23), the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile has been broken down (v. 28), and sonship is now available to believing Jews and Gentiles alike. That means that “it is no longer [οὐκέτι] necessary or proper for such protection to continue. The *παιδαγωγός* has completed its protective task; the people of God have ‘come of age.’ This does not close the discussion about a possible continuing role of other functions of Torah, but as the Torah is being employed at Galatia, to distinguish Jews from Gentiles, its function is indeed terminated.”⁵⁸

SUMMARY

The concept of a *παιδαγωγός* was well known in Paul’s day. The term was freely used in Greek, Roman, and Jewish literature. Pedagogues were a common part of daily life in those cultures and may have been present in the homes of Galatian believers. The pedagogues had a variety of responsibilities. In a unique way Paul applied the role of the pedagogue to the Old Testament Law given on Mount Sinai.

The Law was a *παιδαγωγός* in two respects. First, it had only a temporary role, during which time, it served as a strict guardian. The Law was a *παιδαγωγός* until the promised Seed, Christ, came. When Christ accomplished His work on the cross, the *παιδαγωγός*-role of the Law was over.

Second, the Law guarded Israel from being contaminated by the Gentile religions around her. The Law guarded Israel by being a wall to keep her locked in and Gentile sinful practices locked out. The spiritual role of the Law parallels the role of the *παιδαγωγός*. “The role of these household slaves was to keep their wards from harm and to prevent them from making shambles of the estate, which someday they would inherit; therefore, the purpose of the ‘enslaving character’ of their roles is precisely one of ‘protection,’

⁵⁷ Young, “*Paidagogos*: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor,” 171.

⁵⁸ Gordon, “A Note on ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΟΣ in Galatians 3.24–25,” 154.

not only of the household but also of the child.”⁵⁹ In this way spiritually immature Israelites were kept until the Messiah, the promised Seed, arrived, bringing release from the *παιδαγωγός* into a life of faith, the control of the Spirit, and the fellowship of all believers without restrictions. With this coming of the promised Seed, the temporary role of the guardian-*παιδαγωγός* was completed. There are still other benefits to the Law, but the role of a temporary restrictive wall was over.

The fact that something like this has ended, however, is not negative. The Law had been restrictive and oppressive (Acts 15:10), but with the ending of that childhood relationship, the spiritual future was very bright and attractive. Paul then discussed a second family relationship figure to show the Galatians the tremendous position into which God had now moved them—the position of adopted sons, with all its accompanying rights and privileges.

⁵⁹ Lull, “The Law Was Our Pedagogue: A Study in Galatians 3:19–25,” 496.



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