

This commentary emphasising the ethical aspects of Galatians seeks to prove that Galatians is not only fighting legalists but also a second party of Paul's opponents, who were totally opposed to the Old Testament and the Law, and lived immorally in the name of Christian freedom, a view especially endorsed by Wilhelm Lütgert's commentary of 1919. Paul is fighting against the abrogation of the Old Testament Law as well as against using this Law as way of salvation instead of God's grace.



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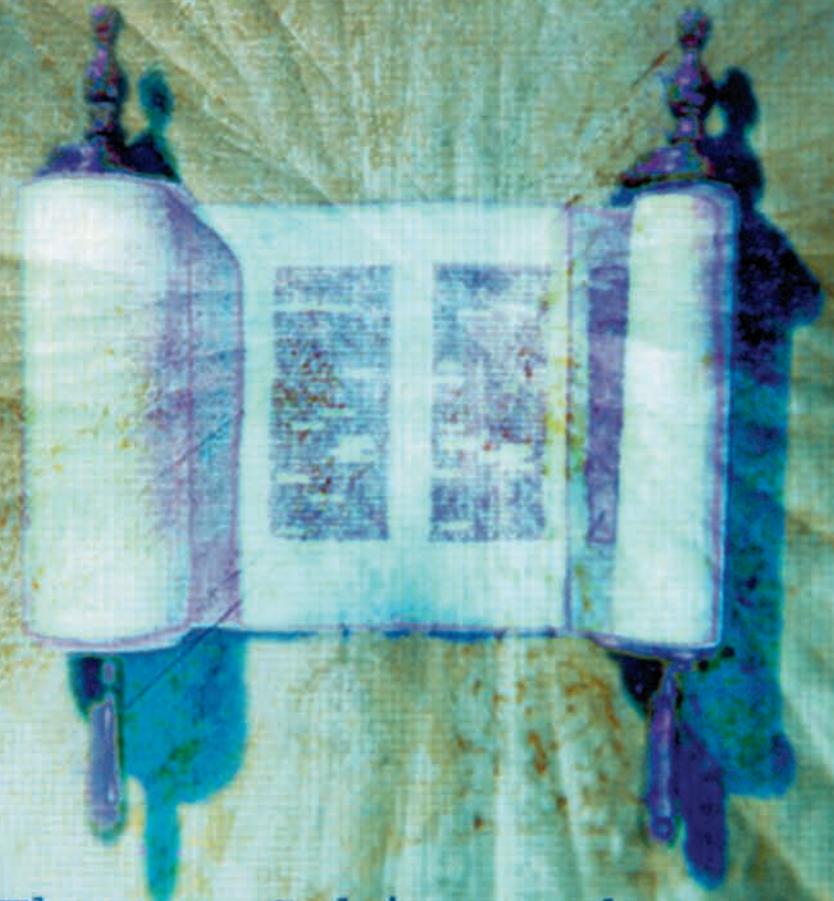
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Thomas Schirmacher Law or Spirit?

Law or Spirit?

Galatians between Legalism
and Antinomianism



Thomas Schirmacher

Thomas Schirrmacher

Law or Spirit?

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Thomas Schirrmacher

Law and Spirit

Galatians between Legalism and Antinomianism

translated by Cambron Teupe

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**Dedicated to the Memory of Wilhelm Lütgert
1867-1938)**

"Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"

(Paul, in Galatians 4:16, in 49 AD)

"For Christ has freed us from the curse of the Law, not from obedience to it."

(Martin Luther, 1532, Sermon on Galatians 3:23-24)

"The freedom which Christ gives, is not heathen lawlessness."

(Wilhelm Lütgert in his commentary on Galatians, 1919)

Introduction

Proposition: The Epistle to the Galatians should not be understood merely as a rejection of Judaism and the Legalismus.

Paul's letter to the Galatians is, with 2,300¹ words, much shorter than the book of Romans or the letters to the Corinthians, but treats fewer themes than they do, although the problems of their intended audiences have much in common. Galatians is, however, more unified in its subject matter, not only than the longer Pauline epistles, but also than Ephesians, which is of equal length, or than the shorter letters.² Indeed, it concerns only the relationship of Christians to Old Testament Law.

Many Christians believe that Galatians was written to refute Old Testament Law and to oppose its use in the New Testament Church. They claim that believers must live only under the guidance of the Holy Spirit rather than according to the commands given by God under the Old Covenant.

However, this biased view of Galatians as anti-Jewish or anti-Old Testament does not, do justice to the book. Just as he does in Romans,³ Paul too often speaks positively of the Law and the Old Testament, to then reject it completely in Galatians. He opposes the 'Libertines' and the 'Pneumaticists' (Christians who held the Holy Spirit for a license for immorality and licentiousness) too definitely to permit this letter to deal only with the dangers of legalism.

Indisputably, Paul warns against the effort to be justified by works. No one can be saved by works of the Law (Gal. 2:16), for Christ would then have been crucified in vain (2:21). No one receives the Spirit of God through the Law (3:2), nor does the Law come from faith (3:12), so that Christ had to die in order to redeem us from the curse of the Law (3:13).

¹. Cornelius Van-derWaal, *Search the Scriptures*, Vol. 8, *John-Romans*, (St. Catherines, Canada: Paideia Press, 1978), p. 81. Comparison of the number of words in the other Pauline epistles in descending order: Rom: 7100 words, 1 Cor: 6800, 2 Cor: 4600, Eph: 2400, Col: 1750, Phil: 1700, 1 Thess: 1550, 2 Thess: 850. The letters to individuals are shorter.

². With one exception. The shortest Pauline epistle, Philemon, deals with only one issue.

³. See the last section of this book, as well as Lütgert, *Römerbrief*, and Schirmacher, *Römerbrief 1+2*, particularly Vol. 1, pp. 32ff, 280-281, 291.294, and Vol. 2, pp. 14-53, 242-262.

Whoever tries to be justified by the Law (5:4) must keep its commands completely (5:3), not only parts such as circumcision (6:13).

In this study, I will demonstrate three propositions:

1) The warning against the Law is, in reality, a warning against misusing the Law as the way to salvation, and against forcing Gentile believers to submit to ceremonial regulations (circumcision, for example), but not a warning against the proper use of God's standards for Good and Evil.

2) The Galatian church had two violently opposed parties, both of which Paul criticizes with equal force. One group misused the Law as a way of salvation and wanted to force Old Testament ceremonial laws (such as circumcision) on Gentile Christians. The other discarded Old Testament Law (such as the Ten Commandments) completely and tried to justify their immorality by claiming to live 'in the Spirit' according the teaching of 'freedom' in Christ.

3) Paul attacks both the legalism of the one party and the lawlessness of the other, thus condemning misuse of the Law as the way of salvation as well as criticizing the rejection of the Old Testament moral law. To Paul, freedom from the Law meant freedom from its curse and the liberation of Gentile believers from its rituals. This liberty does not suspend God's commandments, but enables the believer to practice the love which they define and require. Wilhelm Lütgert describes this succinctly: "The liberty which Christ gives is not heathen lawlessness."⁴

⁴. Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, p. 39.

Acknowledgement

The best explanation of the Epistle to the Galatians, in my opinion, was published by Wilhelm Lütgert (1867-1938)⁵ in 1919⁶. His interpretation, which is directed against the accusation that Galatians completely repudiates Old Testament Law, provides the basis of my book, although not all of my ideas can be found in his text.⁷ I have dedicated my book to him for this reason.

Lütgert's view was adopted by James Hardy Ropes⁸ in 1919 and by Frederic R. Crownfield⁹ in 1945¹⁰. Particularly the Swedish Lutheran, Ragnar Bring, has shown in his commentary on Galatians¹¹ that Paul did not repeal the moral law.

⁵. See Werner Neuer, "Wilhelm Lütgert: Eine kleine Einführung in Leben und Werk eines vergessenen Theologen", *Jahrbuch für evangelikale Theologie* 1 (1987), pp. 108-124).

⁶. Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*. See also Fuller, *Unity*, pp. 459-480.

⁷. See Schirmacher, *Ethik* 2, pp. 34-47 for a representation and summary of Lütgert's arguments.

⁸. James Hardy Ropes, "The Singular Problem of the Epistle to the Galatians", *Harvard Theological Review* 14 (1929).

⁹. Frederic R. Crownfield, "The Singular Problem of the Dual Galatians", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 64, (1965) pp. 491-500.

¹⁰. F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* in *New International Greek Commentary* (1982, repr. Exeter, G. B.: Paternoster Press; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 23-25. Compare the (repudiating) representation of the history of Lütgert's interpretation of the Epistle to the Galatians. Bruce adds to the list Johannes Munck, *Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte*, Acta Jutlandica: Aarsskrift for Aarhus Universitet XXVI (Ejnar Munksgaard, Kopenhagen: 1954), p. 79-126; English; *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, (London, 1959), p. 87ff. Munck has distanced himself from Lütgert, however, without following the traditional interpretation. James Hardy Ropes, Frederic R. Crownfield and Johannes Munck have developed Lütgert's ideas further, and assume that the Judaists were Gentile believers. "The Judaist opponents in the Book of Galatians are Gentiles", states Mauck, *Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte*, p. 79. According to this position, the two opponents in the Galatian church were both Gentile. The major argument is that the Judaist heretics wanted to be circumcised (Gal. 6:13), which demonstrates them to be uncircumcised Gentiles. As we will see, Gal. 6:13 refers to Antinomists, who possibly wanted to perform a heathen castration. Even if we prefer to follow Lütgert's assumption, that the Judaists were Jews, the position of these three theologians does not affect the arguments in this book.

¹¹. Ragnar Bring, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1968)

Besides Lütgert, I often refer to my books on Romans and on ethics,¹² for they treat many issues from the viewpoint of the whole Scripture, which are here considered from the viewpoint of Galatians. Repetition of statements of these issues from my books could not always be avoided, particularly in the fundamental excurses.

Chapters which do not deal directly with Galatians, but provide important background material, or present parallels to the message of the book, are marked as excurses, but belong to my text and are essential to understanding my proposition.

Each chapter will be introduced by a summary proposition and the relevant text of Galatians (New King James Version). I will not deal with the following texts against justification by works: Galatians 2:18-21, 4:21-31, 5:2-5.

This work is not intended to be a commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians,¹³ but as a presentation of an alternative interpretation. It will investigate Paul's attitude to the issue of legalism and lawlessness from an ethical standpoint. For this reason, some sections will be discussed thoroughly, others only mentioned.

I would like to express my gratitude to my wife, Christine, to my mother, Ingeborg Schirmacher, to my sister, Ingrid von Torklus, to my former student and friend, Titus Vogt, and to Cambron Teupe from our local church, for their thorough proofreading.

Cambron Teupe has already translated dozens of my articles into English and again has done a marvelous job with this book.

Notes and Literature

Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version. Italic texts within this translation show changes of this translation by the author, if not noted otherwise.

¹². Schirmacher, *Römerbrief 1+2, Ethik 1+2*.

¹³. I have also omitted a discussion on the usual introductory questions. I agree with Helge Stadelmann, "Die Vorgeschichte des Galaterbriefes", *Bibel und Gemeinde* 82 (1982) 2: pp. 153-165 and 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*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 84, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995), that the epistle was written in 49 AD to the churches in southern Galatia which Paul had founded during his first missionary journey (See Stadelmann on the arguments for the so-called Southern Galatian theory and the refutation of the so-called North Galatian theory).

Abbreviated titles will be used for the following books:

Daniel P. Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible. Unfolding God's Plan for Humanity*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992): *Fuller, Unity*.

Wilhelm Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist: Eine Untersuchung zur Vorgeschichte des Galaterbriefes*, Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie 22, no. 6, (Gütersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann, 1919): *Lütgert, Gesetz und Geist*.

Wilhelm Lütgert, *Der Römerbrief als historisches Phänomen*, Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie 7, no. 2. (Gütersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann, 1913): *Lütgert, Römerbrief*

Thomas Schirrmacher, *Ethik*, 2 vols. (Neuhausen, Germany: Hänssler, 1994): *Schirrmacher, Ethik 1+2*.

Thomas Schirrmacher, *Paulus im Kampf gegen den Schleier: Eine alternative Sicht von 1. Korinther 11, 2-16*, Biblia et symbiotica 4, (Bonn, Germany: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 1993): *Schirrmacher, Paulus im Kampf*.

Thomas Schirrmacher, *Der Römerbrief*, 2 vols. (Neuhausen, Germany: Hänssler, 1994): *Schirrmacher, Römerbrief 1+2*.

The two parties in the Galatian Church

Proposition: There were two opposing parties in the Galatian church. The legalistic group taught that obedience to the Law is necessary to salvation; the lawless group rejected the Law altogether.

C. S. Lewis writes appropriately:

“The devil ... always sends errors into the world in pairs – pairs of opposites. And he always encourages us to spend a lot of time thinking which is the worse. You see why, of course? He relies on your extra dislike of the one error to draw you gradually into the opposite one. But do not let us be fooled. We have to keep our eyes on the goal and go straight through between both errors.”¹⁴

*Accordingly, there are many Scriptures which address two contradictory errors at once. The church in Corinth, for example, was divided in its opinions in almost all issues.*¹⁵ Some ate no meat which had been sacrificed to idols, while others, in order to eat such meat, even participated in the sacrifices. Some believed in sexual liberty, others renounced sexuality even in marriage. Paul seldom agreed with either party completely, but reproved both equally, for neither position conforms to divine standards.

Many commentators assume that the Galatian church faced Paul with one heretical opinion and that the only subject of the letter to the Galatians to be the warning against legalism, the return to circumcision, and to the belief that obedience of the Law can justify Man before God: “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” (Gal. 5:4).

There are several arguments against this view:

1) The Book of Galatians itself mentions dissension in the church. The most obvious example is Galatians 5:5: “But if you bite and devour one another beware lest you be consumed by one another!”¹⁶. Judging from the context, this verse can hardly describe personal conflicts, but rather disagreement on the role of Old Testament Law. This also applies to Galatians 5:26. “Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”

¹⁴. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), p. 160.

¹⁵. See Schirrmacher, *Paulus im Kampf* and Schirrmacher. *Ethik* 1, pp. 575-596

¹⁶. Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, p. 9.

2) While the church consisted mostly of Gentile believers, Paul addresses issues typical of Jewish Christians. This would seem to indicate that he was dealing with both Jewish and Gentile heresies.¹⁷

It is very improbable that a Gentile church would completely yield to a typically Jewish temptation without reason. Dissension between Gentile believers who followed the Jewish errors, and others who rejected them by using unbiblical reasoning would explain Paul's frequent mention of conflict.¹⁸

Jewish and Gentile believers differed automatically on the issue of circumcision, for only non-Jews could be commanded to be circumcised. Galatians 5:6 and 6:15 speak of the one group's pride in its "circumcision" and of the other's pride in its "uncircumcision".¹⁹

3) The book of Galatians frequently addresses only one part of the church, as in Galatians 4:21, for example. "Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?" Paul is speaking only to those members of the church who lived according to the Law, which would indicate that not all agreed on this issue.²⁰ Another example is Galatians 5:4: "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace", which addresses the members who sought justification under the Law. Although he generally rejects the idea of two camps in the Galatian church²¹, Theodor Zahn believes that Paul is addressing only a part of the church here.²²

Galatians 6:1 also addresses only part of the membership, when Paul writes, "you, who are spiritual"²³ or ("You who consider yourselves more spiritual."). Here, the apostle is addressing those who believed themselves to be more spiritual than the others. Theodor Zahn called these people 'pneumaticists'²⁴. He compares them with the 'strong' of Romans 14 and

¹⁷. Ibid., p. 9-11.

¹⁸. Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁹. See the details below.

²⁰. Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, p. 11.

²¹. Theodor Zahn, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, (1922; reprint. Wuppertal, Germany: R. Brockhaus, 1990) p 250.

²². Ibid., pp. 1-9.

²³. Lütgert. *Gesetz und Geist*, p. 12-13.

²⁴. Theodor Zahn. *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, op. cit., p. 250. Lütgert refers to Zahn in *Gesetz und Geist*, pp. 13-14.

15, who held themselves for better Christians than the ‘weak’ Jewish believers.²⁵

4) There is no disagreement on the fact that the Galatian congregations included Christians deceived by Judaism into keeping Old Testament law, at least in part. Texts which warn against immorality, and rejecting the Law altogether prove that there was a second party in the church, as well. As in other letters, Paul opposes a misinterpretation of freedom from the Law: “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh.” (Gal. 5:13-14). This misguided liberty can hardly have originated with the Judaists²⁶, but requires the presence of enemies of the Law.

5) Paul continually contradicts these liberal believers with the positive aspects of the Law. This is most obvious in his answer to the question, “Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not!” (Gal. 3:21). Besides, the Law is “our tutor” (Gal. 3:24), which in Scripture is a title of honor.

The Law is therefore not the opposite of the promise, but has a significant educational purpose and introduces us to Christ (Gal. 3:21-24), a quality ascribed to no other person or thing. The Law is fulfilled by love (Gal. 5:14) and opposes the works of darkness.

Explanation of the theological terminology used for the two parties

The Legalists

Judaists (not to be confused with Jews) – Christians, mostly Jewish, who wanted to force the Gentile believers to keep Old Testament ceremonial law, or who considered obedience to the Law necessary to salvation.

*Nomists*²⁷ (from the Greek ‘nomos’ = Law) – Christians, mostly Jewish, who wanted to force the Gentile believers to keep Old Testament ceremonial law, or who considered obedience to the Law necessary to salvation.

The Lawless

AntiJudaists (Greek ‘anti’ = against and ‘Judaists’) – Opponents of the Judaists (See above).

²⁵. See Schirmacher, Römerbrief 2, pp. 263-284, and *Ethik* 1, pp. 560-596.

²⁶. Lütgert. *Gesetz und Geist*, pp. 15-16.

²⁷. Do not confuse with Theonomists. See following note.

Pneumaticists (Greek ‘pneuma’ = spirit) – Christians, probably Gentiles, who rejected Old Testament Law and relied on the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Libertines (Latin- ‘libertas’ = liberty) – Christians, probably mostly Gentiles, who rejected all forms of Law, who believed in complete moral freedom and who lived immorally.

*Antinomians*²⁸ – Christians, mostly Gentiles, who completely rejected the moral law.

5:19-20), but never the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). For this reason, Christians fulfill “the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2).

Paul did not have to defend the Law to the Judaists, but it was necessary to explain its value and significance to the Libertines.

As so often in his letters²⁹, Paul must address opponents who hold two extreme positions. In the Epistle to the Galatians these are the Jewish Christians, who hoped to be saved by the Law, particularly by the ceremonial regulations, and, on the other hand, the Gentile believers, who wanted to abandon the moral law of God completely.

²⁸. This expression originated during the Reformation (See Schirrmacher. *Ethik* 1, pp. 697 and 753). Compare the expression, ‘autonomy’, which comes from the Greek word ‘autos’ = ‘self’ and ‘nomos’ = Law, and means ‘a law unto ones self’. The term, ‘theonomy’ (from the Greek ‘theos’ = God and ‘nomos’ = Law) describes the view that the Old Testament moral law, including the regulations for punishment and politics, is still completely valid.

²⁹. See the notes on Romans and Corinthians.

Galatians 1:1-5: No human gospel, as the lawless believed

Proposition: At the very beginning of his letter, Paul refutes the accusation of the Pneumaticists that his Gospel was too Jewish due to its Jewish Christian origin. In his blessing, he hints that a believer can never justify wickedness with pious reasons.

Galatians 1:1-5: “Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom [be] glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Repeatedly, beginning with the very first verse, Paul refutes the accusation that he received his Gospel from men, an idea which came probably not from Judaists, but from Pneumaticists, who alleged Paul’s teaching to have originated with the Jewish Christian leadership in Jerusalem, so that he had not broken with the Law completely, but defended the validity of its moral requirements.

The greeting and the following blessings (Gal. 1:3-5) also contain a sarcastic remark against the pneumaticists, “... that He might deliver us from this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father, ...” (vs. 4). Christ has not redeemed us for redemption’s sake, but for the sanctification of the believer, who is to live according to God’s will, and not according to his own desires.

(Excursus) Asked for whom Christ died on the Cross, most Christians answer spontaneously, “For all men!” Most Scriptures which deal with this question, however, speak clearly of His death or His coming for “the church” or for “us”. (cf. Mt. 1:21, John 10:15, Rom. 5:8, Rom. 8:4, 31-33, II Cor. 5:21, Gal. 1:3-5, Eph. 5:25,

I John 4:10, compare Eph. 1:4, John 17:9).³⁰ Paul emphasizes this particularly in Galatians. He says, for example, “Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself *for our* sins, that He might

³⁰. See Schirmacher, *Ethik* 1, pp. 642-655 for a more thorough discussion; Schirmacher. *Römerbrief* 1, pp. 229-236, 252-259.

deliver *us* from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.” (Gal. 1:3-4). Galatians 3:13 is similar, “Christ has redeemed *us* from the curse of the law, having become a curse for *us* ...” In Galatians 2:20, he speaks of himself, “... 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 for *me*.” (author’s italics)

Galatians 1:6-10: Paul is not, as the libertines claimed, preaching another Gospel

Proposition: The libertines accused Paul of teaching a different, false Gospel, because he retained Jewish elements, allegedly out of human deference to the apostles at Jerusalem, instead of abandoning Judaism and the Law altogether.

Gal. 1:6-10: “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, *although there is no other*; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ *any more*.”

In this text, we find the allegation that Paul was preaching a different Gospel³¹. He could have referred to other evangelists or to angels, but instead takes up the accusation that he had adulterated the true Gospel out of consideration for others. Even if that had been so, the message he had first preached would be the true Gospel, and anything he might say out of consideration for the opponents in Galatia would be adulteration. Apparently, the Pneumaticist party had received revelations from ‘angels’, which allowed them a lawless, dissolute Christianity. Paul curses these revelations, just as he does the teachings of those who hoped to be saved by keeping the Law and not by faith in Jesus Christ’s sacrifice.

“The Pneumaticists’ accusation is the background to the defense and the query in Galatians 1:10, ‘For do I now persuade me, or God? Or do I seek to please men?’ Wilhelm Lütgert clarifies this allegation, which we will later consider in more depth when we investigate Galatians 5:11 and 6:12: ‘If he still preached circumcision, as his opponents alleged, he did it, they accused, in order to oblige the apostles.’”³²

³¹. Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, pp. 89-93.

³². *Ibid.*, p. 92.

Galatians 1:10-24 and 2:1-14: Paul had not received his Gospel from men, as the libertine party had alleged

Proposition: In Galatians 1:10-24 and 2:1-14, Paul demonstrates not only his independence from the apostles in Jerusalem, but also from other leading Jewish believers, in order to counter the Pneumatics' allegation that he had retained Jewish elements in his message and had not rejected the Law strongly enough out of deference to Jewish Christians.

Galatians 1:10-24: "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not *of human character*. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught [it,] but [it came] through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and [tried to] destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called [me] through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those [who were] apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Now [concerning] the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which [were] in Christ. But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once [tried to] destroy." And they glorified God in me."

Galatians 2:1-14: "Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with [me.] And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. Yet not even Titus who [was] with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And [this occurred] because

of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. But from those who seemed to be something – whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man – for those who seemed [to be something] added nothing to me. But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as [the gospel] for the circumcised [was] to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we [should go] to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. [They desired] only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do. Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not *according to the right way of the truth of the gospel*, I said to Peter before [them] all, ‘f you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?’”

Galatians 1:10-24 is again addressed not to the Judaists, as some assume, but to the Pneumaticists³³. Paul wishes to establish the fact that, “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.” (vs. 11).

“The accusation against which Paul was defending himself must have been that he had received his message from men, not from God, and from tradition, not revelation³⁴.”

The first verse of the epistle emphasizes this point: “Paul, an apostle, not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father ...”

It is striking that Paul actually never explains how God had revealed the Gospel to him. He only discusses the fact that he had not received it from

³³. Ibid., p. 42-52

³⁴. Ibid., p. 42.

men, that is from specific individuals. (He does not discuss against the argument, that he received from people in general.)

“The negative form of his evidence cannot be explained as proof of a positive statement, but simply as an indication that his opponents claimed that he had received his message from specific people.”³⁵

The accusation of dependence on the apostles would have been unreasonable coming from the Judaisers, for whom they were the authority. Coming from the Pneumaticists, however, the allegation is understandable – they accused Paul of not heeding the voice of God, as they claimed to do themselves, but of relying on the Jewish apostles.³⁶

Verses 18 to 21 confirm this conclusion³⁷. When Paul answers that he had seen only Peter and James, this must be to refute an accusation.

“This vow refers most probably only, but above all, to the assurance that Paul had met only Peter and James, none of the other apostles; these two, and only these two. If he swears to this statement, then the allegation against which he is defending himself must be refuted by it, particularly by its negative part.”³⁸

The accusation against Paul must have imputed him of preaching a lawless Gospel received not from God, but from specific apostles. The popular question, “Which of the apostles was meant?” is insignificant.

“The conclusion is, that Paul is not defending himself against the accusation that he had received his message from Peter or James, but against the allegation that he had it from another apostle. He had, however, not received it from men at all, and the only apostles he could have received it from at the time, were Peter and James. That he could have heard it from them is impossible.”³⁹

Paul continues this discussion in the following chapter.⁴⁰ He does not use the apostles’ recognition to prove his divine mission. Even when assuring his audience that “Those who seemed to be something” had approved his work, he adds, “... whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man ...” but refutes the imputation that he had deferred to “false brethren secretly brought in, (who came in by

³⁵. Ibid., p. 43.

³⁶. Compare Ibid., p. 46-47.

³⁷. Ibid., p. 47-52.

³⁸. Ibid., p. 49.

³⁹. Ibid., p. 49-50.

⁴⁰. Ibid., p. 52-57.

stealth ...” or had submitted to Peter, James or to any other respected apostle (Gal. 2:4-6).

“If we conclude that Paul’s enemies alleged that circumcision had been demanded of him in Jerusalem, and that he had had to submit, then we must ask who had originated the rumor? The traditional answer is, the Judaisers. Now, however, they brought the accusation that Paul had submitted to the authority of Peter or James, and a recognition of the teaching of circumcision⁴¹”

The true opponents must be sought among the Pneumaticists and the Antinomians, who accused Paul of deferring to the requirement of circumcision.

This is confirmed in Galatians 2:11-14⁴², for Paul’s statement that he had contradicted Peter and had brought him back to the true message of the Gospel, can only be an argument against the accusations of the lawless Pneumaticists, not against those of the Judaisers.

⁴¹. Ibid., p. 55.

⁴². Ibid., p. 57-58.

Galatians 2:15-17: The privilege of the Jews refutes the lawless party

Proposition: After demonstrating his independence from the Judaists, which had enabled him to rebuke Peter, the evangelist emphasizes to the Gentile believers the difference between Gentiles and Jews, who are still God's chosen people. All others are refugees from a world of sin.

Galatians 2:15-17: "We [who are] Jews by nature, and not sinners *from* the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, [is] Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!"

We assume, along with Wilhelm Lütgert and Theodor Zahn⁴³, that the next segment, Galatians 2:15-21⁴⁴, does not belong to the preceding text, Paul's answer to Peter.

"These words are no confrontation, but a defense, one which Paul would not have needed in Antioch, for he had not been censured there. Rather, he had attacked Peter ..."⁴⁵

Paul is thus not defending himself against Peter in this section, but against the accusations of the Galatians. His defense begins with the words, "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles", – "we" meaning the Jewish Christians. After demonstrating his independence from the Judaists, which enabled him to oppose even Peter, he stresses the difference between Jews and Gentiles.

"Paul is not only speaking in Peter's and in his own name, but, as he clearly states, in the name of all Jewish believers, those who were Jewish by birth and had become Christians. They have become Christians as Jews, not like those who are sinners out of the Gentiles. This does not mean, that they are Jewish rather than Gentile sinners, but, that as born Jews, they are not sinners like the Gentiles. This is not the judgment of Paul, the Jew, but of Paul, the apostle. Although the basis of his message is the fact that all men sin, he does not de-

⁴³. Theodor Zahn., op. cit., p. 120-137.

⁴⁴. Lütgert. *Gesetz und Geist*, p. 35-42.

⁴⁵. Ibid., p. 36.

clare all men to be sinners: rather he uses this expression not to describe the character that all men have by sinning, but to designate the heathen ‘sinners’, Gentile and Israelite, who neither recognize nor keep the Law.”⁴⁶

Paul can insist that all men are sinners (Rom. 3:9, Gal. 3:22), and still say that the Jews are not (Gal. 2:15). He can admit, that he had lived under the domination of sin (Phil 3:12, Titus 3:3, Rom. 7), and yet claim to have lived blamelessly before the Law (Phil. 3:6). He considers his obedience to the Law as “dung” (Phil. 3:8), but calls Christ the fulfillment of the Law (Rom. 10:4).

Paul’s purpose here is to make unmistakably clear that there is a great difference between Gentiles and Jews, and that the Jews who obeyed the Law completely lived according to God’s will, not like Gentiles (or Jews) who continually disobeyed its commands.

(For the sake of comprehension, it would be helpful here to read Galatians 2:18-21 on the legalism of the Judaizers).

⁴⁶. Ibid., p. 36-37.

Galatians 3:1-29: The Covenant of the Promise to Abraham is superior to the Law, but does not cancel the Law's validity

Proposition: Paul refutes the heresy that obedience to the Law could achieve salvation in Galatians 3, as in Romans 4, with God's promise to Abraham. Even in the Old Testament, faith preceded obedience and the Law. Thus, the Law of Moses cannot nullify the promise to Abraham. On the other hand, the promise does not invalidate the Law, but gives it its proper place in the gracious divine covenant with his heirs.

Galatians 3:1-29: O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? *Is something so great happened to you in vain?* Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, [does He do it] by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? – just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Therefore know that [only] those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, [saying,] “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” So then those who [are] of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed [is] everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God [is] evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.” Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed [is] everyone who hangs on a tree”), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though [it is] only a man's covenant, yet [if it is] confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds”, as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed”, who is Christ. And this I say, [that] the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that

it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance [is] of the law, [it is] no longer of promise; but God gave [it] to Abraham by promise. What purpose then [does] the law [serve?] It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; [and it was] appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not [mediate] for one [only,] but God is one. [Is] the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under *a tutor* by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor [to bring us] to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you [are] Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 3:1-4 and 6 address the Judaists as well as the Pneumatics. Wilhelm Lütgert introduces this text with the following words: "The thought process by which Paul contrasts the Law and the Spirit achieves its aim in 4:6."⁴⁷

Galatians 3:1 addresses the Judaisers, while the congregation as a whole is addressed as "Galatians". Lütgert explains the thought process in Galatians 3:1-14 as following,

"There were two opposing parties in the church; free spirits, who rejected the Law; and legalistic people, who lose the Spirit ... Paul preached the liberty of the Spirit from the Law, but contradicted the supposed disagreement of the two. His position on the Spirit and the Law opposed both the Nomists and the Pneumatics."⁴⁸

Let us consider the concept of covenant in Galatians 3. God, because of His promise and His grace, has made a treaty with Man. This pact implies concrete obligations, which are defined by the Law. Based on their understanding of Galatians 3 and Hebrews 9, many Christians who confirm the significance of the Covenant in the Old Testament, question its role in the

⁴⁷. Ibid., p. 61.

⁴⁸. Ibid., p. 59-62.

New, which is, of course, a new covenant, as its gospel is called in the Old Testament as well as in the New.

According to Galatians 3:17, the Promise and God's gracious covenant preceded the Law: "...the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect." Many interpret this statement to mean that the Law has become null and void. Paul, however, does not say that, but confirms the validity of the Promise, and thus of the Covenant. Galatians 3:21 demonstrates this clearly, "Is the law against the promise of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could give life, truly righteousness would have been by the law." The Law cannot "give life", but was given "because of transgressions." (Gal. 3:19).

I have consciously chosen the word, 'covenant' rather than 'testament'. The Greek term, 'diatheke' is regularly used in the Septuagint for the Hebrew 'berith'-'covenant'. Paul's theme in Galatians 3:15-18 is the fact that a covenant cannot be nullified or revoked. The idea that God had made a testament in case that He might die is completely unbiblical and absurd. The statement, "Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed no one annuls or adds to it." simply emphasizes that a divine covenant cannot be nullified or revoked. Interpreting verse 17 to describe a covenant, Daniel C. Arichea and Eugene A. Nida suggest:

"Does this word mean 'will' ('testament') and involves only one man ...? Or does the word get its meaning from the Hebrew concept of 'covenant' ('contract') and accordingly involve two participants ...? The biblical usage of the term and the overall context favor the latter alternative."⁴⁹

The text describes a covenant made by God alone, but with obligations on both parties. Only thus can Paul equate the Covenant with the Promise here, and speak of the "covenant of promise" elsewhere (Eph. 2:12). The true heir, Paul demonstrates, is Christ (Col. 1:12-18), in whom all promises are fulfilled. "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, ... was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes." (II Cor. 1:19-20). This means, then, that Paul is interpreting the Old Testament chronologically, which makes the idea that Christ is antithesis of Old Testament revelation ridiculous.⁵⁰

⁴⁹. Daniel C. Arichea and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translators Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Galatians* (London: United Bible Society, 1976) p. 69.

⁵⁰. Compare Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Phillipsburg, N. J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1984) pp. 499, 503-507, 510-517.

‘Diatheke’ should be translated as ‘covenant’ in Hebrews 9:16-17.⁵¹ “For where there is a covenant, the one who had sealed the covenant must die. For a covenant is in force after death, for it does not become valid, as long as the one lives, who has made the covenant.” (Author’s translation) This does not mean that Christ had to die, because the testament could only come into effect after His death, but because, as a covenant, it could be confirmed only by blood, by the loss of life, just as in the Old Testament an animal was sacrificed to ratify a covenant (Gen. 15, Lev. 1). Just as the death of a human being not only makes his testament valid, but also sets it into action, so that the heir can now inherit, so Christ’s death confirmed God’s covenant rather than annulling it.

In Galatians 3:6-29, Paul demonstrates that the Promise to Abraham, to which the Jews so often referred, preceded the Law-giving on Sinai, and thus is an irrefutable proof that justification depends on the Promise and on Faith, not on the keeping of the Law. The essential factor which made Abraham the “Father of many nations” is neither a biological question of heredity, nor a legal one of obedience to the Law, but his unlimited trust in God’s Promise (Heb. 11:8-19).

The question, “Who are Abraham’s children?” is discussed not only in Galatians 3, but also in Romans 4⁵² and in many other scriptures. On the one hand, all Jews are designated as Abraham’s children according to their ancestry (Acts.13:26), but unbelieving Jews lose their claim, because only faith can make a man a son of Abraham. John 8:37-40 is a typical example of this dichotomy, “I know that you are Abraham’s descendants ... If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham ...” Another time, Jesus says that God can raise up children to Abraham from stones to replace the Pharisees and the Sadducees (Matt. 3:9, Luke 3:8), which refers not only to the sacrifice of Isaac, but also to the adoption of the Gentiles as children of Abraham because of their faith. The Gentiles will sit down with Abraham in the kingdom of heaven, according to Jesus, which will cause the Pharisees, who will be cast into outer darkness, to gnash their teeth (Matt. 8:11-12, Luke 13:28). Believing Jews are often called ‘daughters and sons of Abraham’ (Luke 13:16, 19:9). Referring to both Jews and Gentiles, Paul says, “those who are of faith are sons of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7, compare verses 8-9 and 14-18), for, “If you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3:29).

⁵¹. Ibid., pp. 504-505.

⁵². Compare Schirmacher, *Römerbrief* 1, p. 201-205.

Galatians 3:8-14: Does the Law contradict itself?

Galatians 3:8-14: “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, [saying,] ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’ So then those who [are] of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed [is] everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God [is] evident, for ‘the just shall live by faith.’ Yet the law is not of faith, but ‘the man who does them shall live by them.’ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed [is] everyone who hangs on a tree’), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

The third chapter of Galatians, particularly verse 12, demonstrates many parallels to Romans 10:4-5, according to Ragnar Bring⁵³. For this reason, let us examine Romans 10:4-5.

In Romans 10:4-8, Paul says, “For Christ is the *purpose* of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law (Lev. 18:5), ‘The man who does those things shall live by them.’ But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way (Deut. 30:12), ‘Do not say in your heart: Who’ will ascend into heaven?’ (That is, to bring Christ down from above) or, ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach):”

Why had the Israelites, in rejecting Christ, ignored righteousness and the Law (Rom. 10:2-3)? They had ignored Christ, the end of the Law. The Greek word, ‘telos’ has various meanings, and should be translated as ‘end’ or ‘purpose’. The translation depends on the translator’s belief about

⁵³. Ragnar Bring, “Die Gerechtigkeit Gottes und das alttestamentliche Gesetz: Eine Untersuchung von Röm 10,4”, *Christus und das Gesetz: Die Bedeutung des Gesetzes des Alten Testaments nach Paulus und sein Glaube an Christus*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), pp. 59-62. Ragnar Bring. *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, op. cit., pp. 101-166. After Bring, the best study of Galatians 3 known to me is an appendix to Greg L. Bahnsen. *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, op. cit., pp. 499-515, and in C. E. B. Cranfield. “St. Paul and the Law”, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 17, 1964, pp. 43-64, and in Wilhelm Lütgert. *Gesetz und Geist*.

the Mosaic Law. In my opinion, the translation, “Christ is the fulfillment (or purpose) of the Law” best reflects Paul’s description of the Law in Romans (3:20, 31, for example, or 7:7, 12-16, 22-24, 8:3-4, 13:8-10).⁵⁴ The whole Law finds its goal, its significance, its completion and its fulfillment in Christ.

“Christ is the goal, the aim, the intention, the real meaning and substance of the law – apart from Him it cannot be properly understood at all.”⁵⁵

“The context suggests the translation, ‘goal’, very strongly. It alone satisfactorily renders the image of the race.”⁵⁶

The sentence is therefore similar in intention to Romans 13:10, “Love is the fulfillment of the law”, and to Jesus’ statement in Mt. 5:17, although these two examples use a more obvious term for ‘fulfillment’. To interpret Romans 10:4 to mean that Christ is the end of the Law; that He had invalidated the Law, so that it could be disobeyed, would contradict everything Paul otherwise has to say about the moral life of the believer (Rom. 8:3-4 or 13:8-10, for example).

Some understand Romans 10:5 to describe Old Testament salvation by works (“The man who does these things shall live by them”), while verses 6ff describe New Testament salvation by faith. This interpretation ignores the fact that in both cases, Paul cites the Pentateuch! Is Paul refuting Moses with Moses (Lev. 18:5 = Rom. 10:5, Deut. 30:12-14 = Rom. 10:6-8)? Does he wish to annul Leviticus 18:5 by quoting Isaiah 28:16 (= Romans 10:11) or Joel 2:32 (= Romans 10:13)?

The context in Romans 9:30-32 makes this interpretation impossible. Felix Flückiger, in his excellent essay on Romans 10:4ff, says:

“The statement that the Jews who had pursued the Law of righteousness, had not achieved it, makes it impossible to designate Jewish salvation by works the right way to consider the righteousness according to the will of the Law.”⁵⁷

⁵⁴. See Schirrmacher. *Römerbrief*, op. cit., pp. 132-137 and Schirrmacher. *Ethik*, op. cit., pp. 17-22, for thorough argumentation.

⁵⁵. C. E. B. Cranfield. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Vol. 2, The International Critical Commentary 11, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), p. 519. See discussion on pages 515-519, and Cranfield’s “St. Paul and the Law”, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

⁵⁶. Felix Flückiger. “Christus, des Gesetzes telos”, *Theologische Zeitschrift*, 11, Basel, 1955, pp. 153-157.

⁵⁷. Ibid.

“The polemic sense of the statement does not contradict Moses – that can be seen by the fact that Paul quotes the Mosaic Law three times (Deut. 30:12-14). He is attacking the Jews, whose previously criticized, erroneous view of the Law is refuted by the Law itself.”⁵⁸

Why then does Paul cite Moses in 10:5? Felix Flückiger explains:

“Moses demands that the righteousness demanded by the Law must be performed if one is to live, but the demand need not be fulfilled by superhuman achievement .. but rather by the word in the heart and in the mouth – which, according to Romans 10:10, is faith ... The life promised in 10:5 belongs to the man who believes and confesses. The obedience of faith appears to be the actual fulfillment of the Law.”⁵⁹

Paul thus equates Old Testament Law, understood rightly, with Christ, its significance and its goal, and with faith in Him.⁶⁰ Paul makes this clear in Romans 10:7 by substituting Him for the Law in the citation of Deuteronomy 30:12-14.⁶¹

Walter C. Kaiser, who shares Flückiger’s view, points out⁶² that the ‘life’ given by the Law is not eternal life, but happiness and fulfillment on earth.⁶³ The Law promises a fulfilled and secure life on earth, but not eter-

⁵⁸. Ibid., p. 155.

⁵⁹. Ibid.

⁶⁰. This interpretation of Romans 10:5 is also supported by C. E. B. Cranfield in his *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 520-522, and in his “St. Paul and the Law”, op. cit., p. 48-53. See also Walter C. Kaiser, “The Weightier and Lighter Matters of the Law”, in Gerald F. Hawthorne (ed.), *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 176-192; Walter C. Kaiser, “Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: Do this and You Shall Live (Eternally?)”, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 14 (1971) pp. 19-28; Fuller, *Unity*, pp. 462-471. The Lutheran view is presented by Peter von Osten-Sacken, *Die Heiligkeit der Thora* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1989) pp. 33-43, and defended by Daniel P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1980) pp. 66-68; Ragnar Bring. “Die Gerechtigkeit Gottes und das Alttestamentliche Gesetz: Eine Untersuchung von Röm 10,4”, op. cit., Ragnar Bring. *Christus und das Gesetz*, op. cit, Ragnar Bring. *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, op. cit. Ragnar Bring. “Luthers Lehre von Gesetz und Evangelium als der Beitrag der lutherischen Theologie für die Ökumene”, in Ernst Kinder, Klaus Haendler (ed.), *Gesetz und Evangelium*, Wege der Forschung CXLII, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1986), pp. 76-123.

⁶¹. See argumentation in Schirmacher, *Ethik 2*, pp. 20-22.

⁶². Walter C. Kaiser, “Leviticus 18:4 and Paul”, op. cit.; Walter C. Kaiser, *Towards an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1978) pp. 110-115.

⁶³. Ibid., p. 115.

nal life or salvation. Kaiser hold this to be particularly true in reference to Leviticus 18:5, which Paul quotes in Romans 10:5, "If a man does (these things), he shall live by them."

Let us return to Galatians 3. As in Romans 10, Paul bases his criticism of legalism on the Old Testament and on the Law itself. Faith is not foreign to the Law, but is rooted in it. "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith ..." (Gal. 3:8).

Paul compares the Old Testament curse over justification by the Law with the Old Testament blessing on faith. "For as many as are of the works of the law (or: those who depend on works of the law) are under the curse, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." (Gal. 3:10-11).

"The expression 'those who depend on obeying the law' involves considerable semantic ellipse⁶⁴, since the purpose of the dependence has been omitted; in other words, these are people who depend on obeying the Law in order to be put right with God. ... Therefore, it may be necessary to translate this initial clause as 'those who think they will be received by God because they obey what the laws say.'⁶⁵

In warning against "the works (or doing) of the law",⁶⁶ (Gal. 2:16, 3:2, 10, Rom. 3:20, 28, Paul is not warning against doing what the Law prescribes. He praises Christian work, which he generally commends with positive expressions, such as 'works of faith' (1 Thess. 1:3, 2 Thess. 1:11). He uses the expression, 'works of the Law', to designate those done for a reward such as salvation. He distinguishes between works done out of self-righteousness, which are to be rejected, and works of faith, which he praises (Tit. 3:1, 5, 8, Eph. 2:8-10, for example). There is, therefore, a difference between (wrong) obedience in order to achieve salvation, on the one hand, and obedience which arises out of faith.⁶⁷

⁶⁴E. g. a restriction in meaning thought but not expressed.

⁶⁵. Daniel C. Arichea and Eugene A. Nida, op. cit., p. 62.

⁶⁶. See the excellent discussions of this expression in the book of Galatians in Daniel P. Fuller, "Paul and the 'Works of the Law'", *Westminster Theological Journal* 38, 1975-76, pp. 28-42; Fuller, *Unity*, p. 471-477, and Brice L. Martin, *Christ and the Law in Paul*, *Supplements to Novum Testamentum* 62, E J. Brill, (Leiden, 1989) pp. 24-25.

⁶⁷. On the expression, 'works', see Schirmacher, *Ethik* 2, pp. 5-10, and *Römerbrief* 1, pp. 206-210.

It would be completely wrong to interpret Galatians 3:10-11 as a curse on all who, for any reason whatever, wish to keep God's commands, as does Theodore H. Epp, who says, "Men are cursed when they try to keep the Law."⁶⁸ Ragnar Bring writes, "It is not the Law itself which, according to Paul, belongs to the powers of this world, but legalism."⁶⁹

Martin Luther, whose interpretation of the Epistle to the Galatians often differs from ours,⁷⁰ did find a common denominator in a sermon on Galatians 3:23-24, "For Christ has freed us from the curse of the Law, not from obedience to it."⁷¹

Thus, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us." Paul defends this principle on the basis of the Law itself: "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" (Gal. 3:13, see Deut. 21:23), so that "the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Gal. 3:14). Here again, Paul does not equate the Old Testament with the Law and the New with the Promise and the Gospel. Rather, he derives the Promise from the Old Testament, from the Pentateuch. that is, from the Law itself.

⁶⁸. Theodore H. Epp, *Galatians* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Back to the Bible Correspondence School, 1974) p. 34. Rückübersetzung

⁶⁹. Ragnar Bring, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, p. 177.

⁷⁰. See Luther's shorter interpretation of 1519 and 1523 in *Martin Luthers Sämtliche Schriften*, Vol. 8, Col 1352-1661 (ed Joh. Georg Walch) 23 Volumes (1910, repr. Groß Oesingen, Germany: Verlag der Lutherischen Buchhandlung H. Harms, 1986); the longer version of 1535 in the same edition, Vol. 9, Col.1-797; a sermon of 1532 on Gal. 3:23-24, *Ibid.*, Vol. 9, Col. 798-811.

⁷¹. *Ibid.*, Vol. 9, Col. 807.

Galatians 3:13-14: The Gentiles are also subject to condemnation under the Law

Proposition: As in Galatians 4:1-18, Galatians 3:13-14 assumes that Christ has not only redeemed the Jewish Christians from the curse of the Law, but also the Gentile believers. The Law is binding for all mankind, just as the liberation from its condemnation and its curse through the death of Jesus Christ is efficacious for Jews and Gentiles alike.

Galatians 3:13-14: Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed [is] everyone who hangs on a tree”), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

According to Galatians 3:13-14, the Gentiles have been freed from the Law, just as the Jews have been!

“The recognition of the God’s universal will to save both Jews and Gentiles by the sacrificial death of Christ, forces Paul to apply the same universality of the divine saving will backwards. The first administrative act of salvation, the Lawgiving, is valid for the universal administration of salvation for Gentiles as well as for Jews. As long as the Law existed, until Christ’s coming, its principle was valid for both (Gal. 3:10-12).”⁷²

Ragnar Bring writes, “The Galatians, predominantly Gentile believers, are included in the group of those who are under the Law.”⁷³ And Lütgert says:

“The Law is therefore not merely the religion of the Children of Israel, but the rule for all history. The world is governed and judged by it. This is its significance in the Pauline gospel. Not only Israel, but all nations are under the Law and are judged by it. Thus, even though they had not participated in Israel’s religion, salvation means liberation from the Law for the heathen as well, a principle particularly discussed in the Epistle to the Galatians.”⁷⁴

⁷². Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, p. 69.

⁷³. Ragnar Bring, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, p. 167.

⁷⁴. Wilhelm Lütgert, *Schöpfung und Offenbarung*, (Giessen, Germany: Brunnen Verlag: 1984), p. 279.

Galatians 3:22-28 demonstrates clearly that, whereas the Law had separated mankind into Jews and Gentiles, the fulfilled Promise reversed this.⁷⁵ Note that Paul's complete thought process can only be understood when one observes the fact that he believes the Gentiles to be, as they had always been, subject to the Law.⁷⁶ (We will return to this discussion in the chapter on Galatians 4:1-18).

⁷⁵. See Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*.

⁷⁶. See Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist* and Schirmmacher, *Ethik 2*, pp. 48-77.

Galatians 3:19-21: The Angels and the Law

Proposition: Christ is the true mediator of the Law. Its divine character is not diminished by the fact that angels had conveyed it.

Galatians 3:19-21: “What purpose then [does] the law [serve?] It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; [and it was] appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not [mediate] for one [only,] but God is one. [Is] the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.”

In Galatians 3:19, Paul discusses the significance of the Law. This question can only have originated with Gentile Christians.⁷⁷

By emphasizing in verse 20, that ‘one’ mediator is acting for a group, Paul explains that not the descendants of Abraham – the people of Israel in the plural – are the mediators, but that only Jesus, the Descendant in the singular, can fit this role.⁷⁸ Israel cannot be the mediator, for it needs one itself.

The reference to the angels who delivered the Law to man (Gal. 3:19), does not dispute the Law’s divine origin.⁷⁹ In Acts 7:53, Stephan derives his proof of its divine origin by referring to the angels’ participation.⁸⁰ The revelation of the Law by angels cannot mean that the Law is not divine and need not be taken seriously, but that the Gospel revealed directly in the Son of God, without the intervention of the angels, is even more glorious (See 2 Cor. 3:10-11).⁸¹ The fact that angels had delivered the Law of Moses does not rule out Jesus’ participation in the Lawgiving on Mt. Sinai. It is of great significance for ethics, that the New Testament assumes that Jesus Himself gave the Law to Moses. As Old Testament evidence, Herman Witsius cites Psalm 68:18. Ephesians 4:8 shows that this text alludes to Christ’s ascent into Heaven. The divine Person mentioned in verse 18 is, however, the same who led Israel in the wilderness, the God of Sinai (Ps.

⁷⁷. Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, p. 61-64.

⁷⁸. Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, p. 63-64.

⁷⁹. C. E. B. Cranfield, “St. Paul and the Law”, p. 61-62.

⁸⁰. The Septuagint understood the “ten thousands of saints” (Deut. 33:2) who attend the Law-giving on Sinai to be angels. See *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

⁸¹. Ragnar Bring, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, pp. 144-146.

68:8), Who revealed the Law to Moses there.⁸² In both cases, the psalm refers to Jesus Christ. Witsius further refers to Stephan's speech, which equates the Angel of the LORD, Who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush (Acts 7:35) and who along with the Church Fathers and the Reformers can be equated with Jesus⁸³, who also was the Angel Who saved Israel from slavery in Egypt, led them through the Red Sea and through the wilderness and gave Moses the Law (Acts 7:38).⁸⁴

⁸². Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants between God and Men: Comprehending A Complete Body of Divinity*, Vol. 2 (Escondido, Cal.: The den Dulk Christian Foundation) and (Phillipsburg, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1990) p. 163.

⁸³. Thomas Schirmacher, "Der trinitarische Gottesglaube und die monotheistischen Religionen", in Rolf Hille and Eberhard Troeger (ed.) *Die Einzigartigkeit Jesu Christi*, TVG (Wuppertal, Germany: Brockhaus Verlag, 1993) pp. 113-151, on the subjects of Christ and the Angel of the LORD in the Old Testament. See also Thomas Schirmacher, "Trinity in the Old Testament and Dialogue with the Jews and Muslims", *Calvinism Today* 1 (1991) reprinted in *Field Update: GR International*, April/May 1991, pp. 6-8 and June/July 1991, pp. 5-8.

⁸⁴. Hermann Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants between God and Men*: op. cit., Vol. 2, p.163; Carl F. Keil. *Genesis und Exodus* (Giessen, Germany: Brunnen Verlag, 1983) pp. 503-504. Note 2 cites Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg's "Christologie des Alten Testaments" with the statement that the Law was delivered by angels, but, in the final analysis, by God and by Christ.

Galatians 3:24: The Law as Tutor

Proposition: The value of the Law lies in its role in educating and preparing man for Christ. It is thus meaningless without Him. Our liberty in Christ changes our relationship to the Law, but not the validity of its content.

Galatians 3:24-26: “Therefore the law was our tutor [to bring us] to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

John Calvin has particularly emphasized that the Old Testament educates us in preparation for the New.⁸⁵ Herman Witsius, referring to Galatians 4:2 calls the Old Testament the “admonition of childhood”, for, “it was completely pedagogic and suited to children.”⁸⁶ The command, “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle” (Col. 2:21), with which Paul describes the Old Testament ritual law, is, in Witsius’ opinion, typical of the rules given to small children. Galatians describes the aspect of growth by which God’s people begin in a small way in the family history from Adam to Abraham, then develop through various covenants into Christ and His world-wide body. “Therefore the Law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:24-26).

Many interpret this text to mean that the tutor is no longer necessary, since we are God’s children. The text actually states that 1. the whole Law is directed toward Christ and justification by faith (“to Christ, that ...”) and that 2. the period of education under the slave has been ended by our direct relationship of child to the Heavenly Father. This does not affect the standards, merely the position. The contrast is not between validity of the Law and its abolishment, but, as Herman N. Ridderbos writes, between “the

⁸⁵. John Calvin, *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion: Institutio Religionis Christianae*, Vol. 2, (Neukirchen, Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1983), pp. 260-284 (2nd book, chapters 10 to 11); Heinrich Berger, *Calvins Geschichtsauffassung: Studien zur Dogmengeschichte und Systematischen Theologie* 6, (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1956), pp. 99-100.

⁸⁶. Hermann Witsius, op. cit., Vol. 2, pl 367.

immature life of slavery under a tutor” and the “life of sonship with all its privileges and rights.”⁸⁷

Even in the Old Testament, the Law served an educational purpose – the Hebrew word for the Law, ‘torah’, actually means ‘instruction’. God teaches mankind by His Word and by His Law. “Therefore the Law was our tutor (Greek- ‘paidagogos’) to bring us to Christ.” This function appears particularly in the raising of children. If Paul considers the Law to be an teacher and relates it to Christ, then he emphasizes the significance of its name, ‘torah’, the meaning which it had always had in the Old Testament.

For sinners and unbelievers, the Law remains the ‘tutor’, for only the Law leads to the conviction of sin, which is must precede the liberation from the curse of the Law. The Holy Spirit shows a man his sin through the Law. “And when He [= *the Holy Spirit*] has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment ...” (John 16:8, compare verse 16).

Reformation theology distinguishes three functions of Biblical moral law:⁸⁸

1. The *political function* (Lat.- ‘usus politicus’)⁸⁹ means that the Law is an “external means of enforcement to check brutal sins”⁹⁰ and crime.

2. The *educational or convicting function* (Lat.- ‘usus pedagogicus’ or ‘usus elencticus’⁹¹) means that the Law convicts the sinner of sin, condemns him and educates him” (as a tutor, Gr.- ‘paidagogos’) towards Christ. This function is essential for evangelization.

3. The *guiding function* (‘usus didacticus’) means that the Law gives the born-again believer rules to live by. He keeps the Law by the power of the Holy Spirit, not to gain salvation.

⁸⁷. Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1953) p. 146. Rückübersetzt

⁸⁸. Schirrmacher, *Ethik* 1, pp. 691-700; *Römerbrief* 2, pp. 26-50 and N. J. Lund, “Law, Threefold Use of the”, in R. K. Harrison (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Biblical and Christian Ethics*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), pp. 226-227-

⁸⁹. On the Latin terminology, see Horst Georg Pöhlmann, *Abriß der Dogmatik* (Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlagshaus: 1980) pp. 40-41.

⁹⁰. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁹¹. The function for the conscience.

Crucial to the subject matter of Galatians is the fact that the second function of the Law is still essential today in evangelization and church discipline, and does not annul its third function.

Galatians 4:1-20: The Gentiles also are freed from the elements of the world

Proposition: According to this Scripture, not only the Jews have been redeemed, but also the Gentiles, who were enslaved by worldly elements.

Galatians 4:1-20: “Now I say [that] the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how [is it that] you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain. Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I [became] like you. You have not injured me at all. You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, [even] as Christ Jesus. What then was the blessing you [enjoyed?] For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. 16 Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth? They zealously court you, [but] for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may *court them*. But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.”

There has been much discussion about the statement, “Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.” (Gal. 4:3). Galatians 4:8-11 continues, “But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be

in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.”

The “elements of the world” have been interpreted to be angels or demons, and the elements to be either heathen rites or the Old Testament ceremonial law. Any equation of the angels with elements of the world must be repudiated.⁹² To compare the elements with Jewish law is difficult, for the context seems to address Gentiles. Verse 8 clearly warns against the return to heathen religion, for it speaks of former idolaters. How can a return to Jewish law be a return to idolatry? Lütgert rightly holds the “elements of the world” for heathen abstinence customs.⁹³

“If participation in heathen ceremonies had found its way into the Galatian church as it had in Corinth,⁹⁴ Paul’s statement, “I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain” is understandable.

If, as Lütgert suggests, the “elements of the world” are heathen ceremonies and ascetic rules rather than Old Testament rules,⁹⁵ then the text must address Gentiles opposed to the Law rather than legalistic Jews.

Ragnar Bring similarly compares Galatians 4:10 with Colossians 2:14, which he relates to Old Testament ceremonial law as well as to idolatrous rites.

“He emphasizes aspects characteristic of both Galatian cults and Judaism.”⁹⁶

There are indeed similarities. The ceremonial law regulates behavior towards the elements of the world, external things and actions, for example, what one might not touch, eat or do at certain times. Whereas the Jews had received divine rules for humanity’s childhood, the Gentiles had none. Now that childhood training has come to an end, Jew and Gentile are alike liberated from the elements of the world. “The Law is the elementary education of mankind.”⁹⁷ The uncomplicated relationship which New Testament Christians can have to Nature and to external things, is due to the childhood training God has given them in the Old Testament and to Christ’s sacrificial death on the Cross, which ended childhood and made

⁹². C. E. B. Cranfield, “St. Paul and the Law”, op. cit., p. 63.

⁹³. Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, pp. 71-83.

⁹⁴. Ibid., p. 80.

⁹⁵. Ibid., pp. 71-83; similarly Ragnar Bring, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, op. cit., pp. 181-182.

⁹⁶. Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, p. 168.

⁹⁷. Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, p. 78.

them eligible to receive their inheritance. Georg Huntemann has rightly emphasized this strongly:

“Under the rulership of Christ – and only here – Creation is free. The Old Testament laws of purity remind us permanently and inexorably that it has been liberated, that the illegal occupants of Creation have been conquered in battle, but are not yet destroyed.”⁹⁸

Galatians 4: 12-20 must be discussed in this context, particularly the mention of Paul’s “infirmity” in verses 13 and 15,⁹⁹ which is usually believed to refer to an eye problem, but which may gain a somewhat different significance in the context of the conflict with the Pneumaticists.

“The whole section need not refer to a disease, but may concern the weakness of the flesh in contrast to the power of the Law ... The verses should be understood as Calvin did ... Paul conducted himself in Galatia just as he had in Corinth, making no great outward impression; he did not look or act like the bearer of divine revelation.”¹⁰⁰

John Calvin writes,

“With ‘infirmity of the flesh’, Paul meant anything that made him seem weak and contemptible, ‘Flesh’ describes the external appearance, so that ‘infirmity of the flesh’ indicates an unattractive appearance ...”¹⁰¹

The question in verse 21 (“Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?”) becomes understandable if Galatians 4:8-20 deals with Gentile enthusiasts.¹⁰² Paul then turns to the problem of the Judaists. He explains the difference between salvation by works and salvation by grace and the Promise, by using the typology of Hagar and Sarah (Gal. 4:22-31). Referring to the sons of Abraham, he returns to the discussion of the Promise which he had begun in Galatians 3:6-29.

(It would be recommendable to now read Galatians 4:21-31, which I will not discuss, on the legalism of the Judaists.)

⁹⁸. Georg Huntemann, *Der verlorene Maßstab: Gottes Gebot im Chaos dieser Zeit* (Bad Liebenzell, Germany: VLM, 1983) p. 33.

⁹⁹. See Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, pp. 83-88.

¹⁰⁰. Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁰¹. John Calvin, *Galaterbrief*, op cit., p. 69.

¹⁰². Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, p. 88.

Galatians 5:1 The Law of Liberty

Proposition: Rightly understood, the Law is a law of liberty (James 1:25, 2:12). Therefore, the Judaists may not restrict Christian liberty nor may the Pneumatics use liberty to contradict God’s commands.

Galatians 5:1: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”

In Galatians 5:13-14; Paul warns the Pneumatics against misusing their freedom in Christ; in verse 1, he warns the Judaists against limiting that freedom and turning it into a yoke. “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”

The Law gives life, indeed it creates the breathing space necessary to life. It is “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1:21; 2:12), does not hinder one’s steps (Prov. 4:12), it “enlarges the heart”. After Israel’s liberation from Egypt, “the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.” The fact that God had chosen Israel for His people under Abraham and then freed them from Egyptian slavery before giving them the Law on Mt. Sinai, is very significant in the Old Testament. The introduction to the Ten Commandments demonstrates this: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall ...” (Gen.20:2). Leviticus 11:44-45 justifies specific commandments not only with God’s holiness, but also by His redemptive activity. “For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy ... For I am the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” David Chilton writes, “The Exodus provided the Israelites both *liberty* and *law*.”¹⁰³ Georg Huntemann expressed this in the following way: “The commandment shows the slave the road to liberty.”¹⁰⁴

Whoever rejects the law, therefore, invokes not liberty, but slavery! even the Jewish theologian, Pinchas Lapide, writes in his prologue to the Ten Commandments,

¹⁰³. David Chilton, *Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt – Manipulators: A Biblical Response to Ronald J. Sider* (1985, rep. Tyler, Texas: ICE, 1986) p. 76. See pp. 69-76 on the Ten Commandments.

¹⁰⁴. Georg Huntemann, *Der verlorene Maßstab*, op. cit., p. 24.

“Without the liberating gospel of the Exodus – no Sinai of divine commandments. But without the Sinai with its Decalogue – no active life of faith.”¹⁰⁵

George Downname (1560-1634), Bishop of Derry and chaplain to the English King, wrote, “We confess that God has freed us from the curse and from the bondage of the Law, so that we may be able to obey him in the freedom of the Spirit ...”¹⁰⁶

(It would be recommendable to now read Galatians 5:2-5 on the legalism of the Judaists, which I will not discuss.)

¹⁰⁵. Pinchas Lapide, *Die Bergpredigt: Utopie oder Programm?* (Mainz, Germany: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1992) p. 22.

¹⁰⁶. George Downname, *The Christian's Freedom (The Doctrine of Christian Liberty)* (Oxford, 1935; rep. Pittsburg: Soli Deo Gloria Publ., 1994), p. 69. Rückübersetzung

Excursus: On the Difference between the Moral and the Ceremonial Law¹⁰⁷

In Galatians 5:6, Paul makes a strange statement about circumcision: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.” He expresses a similar idea in 1 Corinthians 7:19: “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.” Is he not opposing two identical ideas? Circumcision was one of God’s commandments, just like the Ten Commandments, wasn’t it?¹⁰⁸ Such texts as Galatians 5:6, 1 Corinthians 7:9 and many others demonstrate two points:

1) Even in the Old Testament, God had wanted more than a mere external fulfillment of His commandments. Many Christians believe that, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was expanding the ‘external’ law against adultery with an ‘internal’ law against lust (Mt. 5:27-32). The Ten Commandments, however, already included both the ‘external’ law against adultery and an ‘internal’ law, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife ...” (Ex. 20: 17).¹⁰⁹ The tenth commandment describes the inner aspects of the law against adultery (desiring another man’s wife) and the law against stealing (desiring another person’s possessions).

2) With due care, the Old Testament moral law, which the Ten Commandments describes in abbreviated form, can be distinguished from the ceremonial law, which includes regulations on sacrifices, purification and food, as well as circumcision.¹¹⁰ This does not degrade the ceremonial law in any way – Christ did not annul the whole Law, but fulfilled it (Mt. 5:17-20)!

¹⁰⁷. See Schirrmacher, *Ethik* 1, pp. 685-690 and 801-846, as well as Schirrmacher, *Römerbrief* 1, pp. 183-188 for detailed argumentation.

¹⁰⁸. In Gal. 5:6, faith acting in love replaces the commandment. Paul means the same thing, for the Biblical concept of ‘love’ never consists of only words or emotions, but is expressed in actions which agree with the law of love, the guiding principle of all commands and the complete Law.

¹⁰⁹. See Schirrmacher, *Ethik* 2, pp. 82-145 on the Sermon on the Mount.

¹¹⁰. Christoph Haufe, *Die sittliche Rechtfertigung des Paulus* (Halle, Germany: Max Niemeyer, 1957) pp. 20-30, discusses Paul’s Biblical justification. See also Walter C. Kaiser, “The Weightier and Lighter Matters of the Law”, op. cit.; and Brice L. Martin, ed., *Christ and the Law*, op. cit., 32-34.

The moral law is valid for all time and will be the law used to judge all men in the Last Judgment. The Holy Spirit fulfills it in Christians, for Christ achieved its fulfillment on the Cross (Rom. 8:3-4, 13:8-10).¹¹¹

The ceremonial law, however, concerned only Israel, and was fulfilled by Christ. As the Book of Hebrews demonstrates, Christ satisfied its requirements completely and finally, so that it no longer needs to be carried out. The ceremonial law remains the valid legal basis for all that happened on the Cross, for were it repealed, blood – shedding would be necessary again (Heb. 9:22-24, Lev. 17:11)!

Those who consider Old Testament law no longer obligatory for Christians think these distinctions artificial, since the Old Testament itself weaves them together. The term, ‘Law’, however, enumerates not only individual regulations, but often designates the whole Word of God (in Psalms 19 and 119, for example). The individual commandments are often closely bound to promises and historical events. Nor does prophecy exist in a ‘pure’ form in the Bible, but is usually combined with commandments and with historical reports.

I find the origin of the division of the Law into moral and ceremonial categories not so much in the writings of the Church Fathers or the Reformers, but primarily in the Old Testament itself (Psalm 40:6-10, Jer. 7:21-24) and in the New Testament (1 Cor. 7:19).¹¹²

Texts Which Distinguish Between Moral and Ceremonial Law

Proverbs 21:3; “To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.”

1 Corinthians 7:19; “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.”

Galatians 5:6; “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.”

Romans 2:25; “For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law, but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.”

Hebrews 7:16; Jesus’ priesthood did not originate in “*fleshly commandments*”, like the priesthood of the Old Testament. The ceremonial law is

¹¹¹. See Schirmacher, *Römerbrief 2*, p. 25ff and *Ethik 1*, pp. 677-684 and 191-192, as well as the pages cited above on the moral and ceremonial law.

¹¹². See Schirmacher, *Ethik 1* and 2, and Schirmacher, *Römerbrief 2* on moral and ceremonial law.

described as “*fleshly commandments*” and is distinguished from moral regulations.

The New Testament assumes that the sacrificial death of Christ on the Cross has fulfilled the ceremonial law entirely, so that none of its regulations need to be carried out any more. The Church Father Aurelius Augustinus (354-430 AD.) wrote:

“I believe that circumcision and the other regulations were given by God in the Old Testament in anticipation of future things which would be fulfilled only in Christ. Now that this has happened, Christians must read of them diligently, in order to understand their fulfillment, not, however, in order to practice them, as if they were necessity ... Although the Gentiles were not obligated to obey them, (these laws) could not be abolished, as if they were detestable or damnable ...”¹¹³

¹¹³. Aurelius Augustinus, ‘Brief an Hieronymus’ cited in: Alfons Heilmann, ed., *Texte der Kirchenväter*, Vol 2 (Munich: Kösel, 1963) p. 440. (translated from the German). Augustine assumed that the ceremonial law would die out gradually.

Galatians 5:6 and 6:15: The ceremonial law in the Epistle to the Galatians

Proposition: The warning that the circumcision of the Gentiles is legalistic confirms that Paul often uses the term ‘law’ in Galatians to designate not the moral law but the ceremonial laws, including circumcision. The Judaists wanted to force the ceremonial law on the Gentiles.

Galatians 5:6: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.”

Galatians 6:15: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.”

In Galatians 5:6, the term ‘circumcision’ indicates and censures the Judaist party, while the term ‘foreskin’ (usually translated ‘uncircumcision’) refers to and criticizes the Pneumaticists.¹¹⁴ This would seem to indicate that some members of the Galatian churches were proud of their circumcision, while others were proud of their uncircumcision. Paul emphasizes this at the end of his letter (Gal. 6:15).

As many commentators have pointed out,¹¹⁵ the apostle is criticizing legalism and the observation of the ceremonial law by Gentiles after Christ’s death and resurrection, but not their obedience of the moral law.

Christian Haufe confirms the distinction between the moral law and the ceremonial by pointing out that Paul considers the ‘law’ annulled and reproves those who attempt to keep it, for they then fall from grace. In the same letter, however, he assumes that the Law must be fulfilled (Gal. 5:13-14) and does not contradict those who crucify passions and the flesh by the power of the Spirit (Gal. 5:18, 22-24).¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴. Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, p. 34-35.

¹¹⁵. See: Fuller, *Unity*, pp. 459-480; William Hendriksen, *Galatians & Ephesians*, in *New Testament Commentary* (1969, repr. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990); H. H. Schmitz, *Paulus schreibt an die Galater* (Hamburg: Advent-Verlag, 1971, pp. 180-182 (from an Adventist viewpoint) and the Protestant and Jewish writers mentioned there.

¹¹⁶. See Merrill C. Tenney, *Galatians: the Charter of Christian Liberty* (1950, repr. Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1986) p. 155 for a good introduction to the use of the word, ‘law’ in Galatians. Tenney does not share my view of the Epistle to the Galatians.

“The difference between Gentile and Jew is abolished in Christ (Gal. 3:28, 1 Cor. 12:13, Rom. 10:12, Col. 3:11). This distinction cannot continue, since Gentiles as well as Jews will be judged by the moral law, which they have in common (Rom. 2). The law of ordinances, which Christ has abolished (Eph. 2:15), is the law which distinguished between the circumcised and the uncircumcised (Eph. 2:11), the Jewish ritual law.”

“Where Paul rejects the law in Galatians, he speaks of ‘circumcision’ of ‘purification’ or of ‘ritual festivals’.”¹¹⁷

C. E. B. Cranfield writes in the same vein:

“We deduce from this, that Paul does not mean the Law itself in Galatians 4:3,9, but the legalistic misconception and the misuse of the Law”¹¹⁸

Writing on Galatians 4:10-11, Christoph Haufe notes that Paul could never have written, “You observe the law against theft. I am concerned about you, that I have worked among you in vain!”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷. Christoph Haufe, *Die sittliche Rechtfertigung des Paulus*, op. cit., p. 20-30.

¹¹⁸. C. E. B. Cranfield, “St. Paul and the Law”, op. cit., pp. 63-64. Rückübersetzung

¹¹⁹. Christoph Haufe, *Die sittliche Rechtfertigung des Paulus*, op. cit., p. 22. I interpret this text somewhat differently, but that does not lessen the value of Haufe’s statement.

Galatians 5:7-12: The penetration of heathen lawlessness, to the extent of self-castration

Proposition: The bitterly ironic expression of verse 12, that some members of the church have possibly castrated themselves, does not refer to circumcision, but to a heathen custom common to several religions in Asia Minor, particularly the Cybele cult. Paul would never have ridiculed Jewish circumcision with such a savage play on words.

Galatians 5:7-12: “You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not [come] from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. I could wish that those who trouble you would even *castrate themselves!*”

Does this agree with the context? To whom is Paul’s warning in Galatians 5:9 directed (“a little leaven leavens the whole lump.”)? The verses remain difficult to understand, as long as they are applied to the Judaists, but not when applied to the Pneumaticists.¹²⁰

The Pneumaticists considered sin, the transgression against the moral law, to be harmless. Paul, however, holds it to be a deadly threat which grows in the church like yeast. The seducers oppose obedience to God’s eternal commandments.

Paul’s confident statement in verse 10, “I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind.” seems to contradict his general opinion of the Galatian Christians (Gal. 1:6, 4:16, 5:1, 6:12). The difficulty disappears, however, when we assume that Paul is describing the Pneumaticist temptation, which had not yet won as much ground in the church, as had the Judaist position, which had already gained much more influence,¹²¹ and which he considered hopeless.

The accusation of ‘castration’ (“to cut oneself off”) deserves particular attention. It is generally interpreted as ridicule of Jewish circumcision. Lütgert responds:

¹²⁰. Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, p. 27-34.

¹²¹. *Ibid.*, p. 30-31.

“Paul cannot have been ridiculing circumcision by comparing it with castration, for this would be a most sharp satire. In Philippians 3:5 he unashamedly confesses himself to be circumcised. Not once in the course of the bitter contention over the issue did he ever even think of questioning its character of a covenant sign appointed by God.”¹²²

If the text pertains to the Gentile-Christian Pneumaticists, then the term ‘castration’ most probably refers to the “self-mutilation of the Cybele cult”.¹²³ This was the last step and the ecstatic high point of the religion, which was wide spread in Asia Minor and in the Galatian area.

“In Asia Minor the mention of a religious aberration which could advance to the point of self-mutilation, the thought of the self-mutilation of the Cybele cult would automatically occur to the Gentile-Christian churches, for this was the castration practice most familiar to them. The body of Attis was believed to be kept in the immediate neighborhood of the churches in Pessinus, where priests served him and followed his example by castrating themselves. In Asia Minor, in the Galatian area, the Phrygian version predominated. The Romans also considered the cult’s practice of self-mutilation the most abominable. It was the climax of the frenzy sought by its members. When we hear of religious temptation in the Galatians churches, who act as if the first thing one might think of is castration, then the Cybele cult comes to mind immediately. Certainly it was not the priests of the religion but the mystic trances promoted by the cult which had penetrated the congregation, and had taken hold of the Pneumaticists. Now that it had advanced so far, that Paul could only say, “Only one thing is lacking—they must begin to mutilate themselves!” The extent of the heresies in the churches now includes mystic idolatry, which the apostle energetically opposes. It had taken hold of the Pneumaticist circles, inundating the churches in heathen impurity.”¹²⁴

(Albrecht Bengel and Wilhelm Lütgert link the words, “I could wish ...” to the preceding sentence, not to the idea of self-mutilation.¹²⁵ The verse then reads, “I wish it would! Then those who trouble you would cut themselves off [or castrate themselves].” The traditional sentence division also permits our interpretation of self-mutilation.¹²⁶

¹²². Ibid., p. 32.

¹²³. Ibid., p. 33.

¹²⁴. Ibid., p. 33.

¹²⁵. Ibid., p. 34.

¹²⁶. Since the Greek text has no punctuation, such considerations are not only possible, but also necessary.

Galatians 5:11; 6:12: The cause of the persecution

Proposition: The Judaists demanded that the Gentile believers not only keep the whole ceremonial law, but also be circumcised, in order to escape persecution by the Jews.

Galatians 5:11: “And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross *would have been destroyed.*”

Galatians 6:12: “As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these [would] compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.”

The meaning of Galatians 5:11 must be investigated in context with the interpretation of chapter 5 above. “And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution?”¹²⁷

Most interpretations teach that Paul is claiming to be persecuted because he no longer preaches circumcision. He is, however, saying something quite different, “If I still preach circumcision, why am I being persecuted?” “Not his persecution, but his message is being questioned.”¹²⁸ By referring to the persecution, Paul is refuting the accusation that he is preaching circumcision! “Our difficulty in understanding the historical background of the imputation gives us no right to deny the facts expressed in the exact words.”¹²⁹

Such a complaint could hardly have originated with the Judaists, while the Pneumaticists might well have made such accusations. Paul, they claim, is ‘still’ preaching a position long defeated. The fact that he permitted circumcision, even though it is not necessary to salvation, and had even circumcised Titus (Acts 16:3) ‘proved’ to them, that Paul had not yet distanced himself sufficiently from the Law. Lütgert writes, “... In reality, those who judged him in this way were his opponents, for whom he was not a New Man, but a Backward one.”¹³⁰

¹²⁷. Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, pp. 22-27.

¹²⁸. Ibid., p. 23.

¹²⁹. Ibid., p. 24

¹³⁰. Ibid., p. 27.

The historical reason for the dissension in the Galatian churches can be found in Galatians 5:11.¹³¹ “And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offence of the cross has ceased.”

“The persecution of the Christians mentioned here was initiated by the Jews. Naturally, Paul cannot mean the conflict with the Judaists, for they are themselves threatened, so that they attempt to avoid difficulties by preaching circumcision, as Galatians 4:29 indicates. Just as Ishmael had persecuted Isaac, those born according the flesh still persecute those born according to the Spirit.”¹³²

Galatians 6:12 demonstrates clearly that the uncircumcised were being persecuted,

“As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.’ ‘The Jews persecuted Christians, because they were uncircumcised ... Galatians 3:4 refers to this, as well. ‘You have suffered so much in vain’ is the proper translation.”¹³³

Paul recalls that he himself had been an enemy of the church (Gal. 1:13), which had praised God for his conversion (1:23-24). He now emphasizes that he is being persecuted himself, in order to refute the accusation that he is preaching circumcision in order to escape persecution.

The Judaists attempted to introduce the circumcision of the Gentile believers, in order to avoid difficulties with the Jews, who hated both the uncircumcised Gentile Christians and the Jewish believers who tolerated them. “Only this can explain the Judaists’ hope for success in attempting to persuade their Gentile brothers to be circumcised.”¹³⁴

For this reason, the Jewish Christians demanded only circumcision and not the keeping of any other part of the ceremonial law. Paul had to make it clear to them that circumcision alone is insufficient, but implies obedience to the whole ceremonial law, including sacrifices, washing, the calendar of holidays, as well as the laws on purification and on food.

¹³¹ . Ibid., p.96-106.

¹³² . Ibid., p. 97.

¹³³ . Ibid., p. 97.

¹³⁴ . Ibid., p. 98.

Galatians 5:13-26: The false liberty of the lawless

Proposition: Paul's conflict with the lawless Pneumaticists in the Galatian church is most clearly seen in Galatians 5:13-26. Here, he warns against misuse of Christian liberty and emphasizes that the Spirit of God produces only love, the substance of the Law, but never the wicked works of the flesh, which violate the Law.

Galatians 5:13-26: "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not [use] liberty as an *excuse* for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, [even] in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! 16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these *oppose* one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told [you] in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. *The law is not directed against such things.* And those [who are] Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

The existence of a second party in the Galatian church, that of the lawless Pneumaticists, is most apparent in Galatians 5:13-14. The wrongly understood freedom from the Law leads to sins against God's will. "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an *excuse* for the flesh, ..." (Gal.5:13).

The criticism in verse 13 (and possibly in verse 1) is directed towards the lawless Pneumaticists, who claim 'liberty' which they understood to mean not liberation from wickedness but liberation to it, to a permissive morality.

The Reformed Westminster Confession of 1647 summarizes the Biblical warning against immorality disguised as liberty in Article 20.3:

“They who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, do practice any sin, or cherish any lust, do thereby destroy the end of Christian liberty, which is, that, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.”¹³⁵

Verse 15 describes the dissension in the church. “But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” It is interesting to note that Paul’s ironic remark follows the statement that the whole Law is fulfilled by Love. “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ (Gal. 5:14). For the Judaists, this naturally meant that keeping the Law would lead to love. Here, Paul is attacking the false interpretation of liberty, which he had addressed in verse 13.

First, Paul wishes to remind the Judaists’ opponents, who reject the Law in favor of the Spirit, that God’s Spirit always produces love. The freedom of the Spirit cannot lead to a lack of love and unkindness, for His fruits reflect love in all its facets: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Gal. 5:22-23). Love demonstrates concretely patience, self-control and the other qualities. Because these forms of love cannot, by definition, violate the Law, Paul immediately adds, “Against such there is no law.” Since the love commandment is the heart of the Law, the love produced by the Spirit of God and expressed in His fruits, cannot contradict divine Law.

The fruits of the Spirit agree with God’s Law, as expressed in the Ten Commandments (Gal. 5:14. See also Rom. 13:8-10, Gal. 5:18,23). The works of the flesh, however, are transgressions against divine law and have already been mentioned in the Old Testament. “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries and the like; of which I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Gal. 5:19-21).

Lütgert, discussing Paul’s appeal to the love commandment’s position as center of the Law in order to refute the opposition to the Law, writes:

“Verse 14 refers to this, for it shows, that the fulfillment of the Law and freedom from the Law are brought into agreement through love, which is

¹³⁵. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications: n.y.). p. 87.

equally liberty and the fulfillment of the Law. This concerns both sides, the Judaists as well as the licentious Christians. Here, however, Paul is addressing those who used their liberty as an excuse to satisfy the flesh.”¹³⁶

When, after listing the fruits of the Spirit, Paul adds, “Against such there is no law.”, he can hardly be addressing the Judaists, for they would never have objected to them. “It is only understandable if directed against the opponents of the Law.”¹³⁷

“The only explanation can be that the church differentiated between the Law and the Spirit. We have here a parallel to Romans 7:7. Paul’s opponents are not free from the Law as he is, but are its enemies, Antinomians. They do not believe the Law to be holy, good and just, or spiritual, as Paul does, but fleshly and sinful. This cannot be, Paul says, for it does not oppose the fruits of the Spirit”¹³⁸

“The Flesh” (Gal. 5:13,15,17,19) opposes God always and everywhere, rebelling against His commandments and His Spirit, Who inspired the commandments and Who helps to realize them: “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.” (Rom. 8:7) Only by living in the Spirit can man overcome this rebellion and live in love, which is the true significance and content of the Law. “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled *in us* who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (Rom. 8:3-4). He who walks in the Spirit fulfills the requirements of the Law, but not with his own strength, but only through the power of the Spirit and through grace due to Christ’s sacrificial death on the Cross.

The whole section, Galatians 5:13-26, is directed against the Pneumatists, for they must be exhorted twice; not only to live by the Spirit, but also to walk in Him (Gal. 5:16,25). They must not only accept the gift of eternal life, but must also apply it in their daily lives. This cannot include the forbidden works of the flesh.¹³⁹

¹³⁶. Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, p. 17.

¹³⁷. Ibid., p. 18.

¹³⁸. Ibid., p. 19.

¹³⁹. Even if verse 23 applies to the Judaists, it does not necessarily refute the validity of the Law, as John Calvin’s interpretation shows. “The Law does not cease to do its duty of teaching and admonishing, but the Spirit of Sonship liberates from its yoke.” Johannes Calvin, *Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift in deutscher Übersetzung: Der Galaterbrief* (Neukirchen, Germany: Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, n.d.) p. 92.

“Paul preaches freedom from the Law in the Spirit, but disagreed with the thought of antithesis between the two. His position on the Law and the Spirit contradicted both sides, the Nomists as well as the Pneumaticists.”¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰. Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, p. 61.

Galatians 6:1-10: Paul exhorts the lawless to bear others' burdens and to do good

Proposition: In Galatians 6:1-10, Paul admonishes the lawless Pneumaticists to fulfill the Law of Christ by bearing others' burdens, by being humble, by examining themselves and by doing good, in order to inherit from the Spirit.

Galatians 6:1-10: "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who [are] spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load. Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."

In order to care for and to exhort each other, one must first exhort and care for oneself. The New Testament equally emphasizes the Christian's duty to accept responsibility for himself, to carry his own burden, and the duty to accept responsibility for others and to bear their burdens. Galatians 6:1-5 refers to both aspects of counseling. The necessity of bearing other's burdens, and the need to bear one's own do not exclude but imply each other.

Both aspects were foreign to the Pneumaticists. They did want to submit to the law of love by bearing others' burdens, for that would have restricted their own liberty, nor were they willing to scrutinize or reconsider their own lives, for that would force them to accept divine commandments as criterion for their actions, again abridging their so-called freedom.

The Gentile-Christian Pneumaticists are depicted as vain men, who considered themselves perfect (Gal. 6:1). Just as in Corinth, their egoism expressed itself in their failure to provide for their teachers (Gal. 6:6, 1 Cor.

9:11-14),¹⁴¹ so that Paul must admonish them, “Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches”.

Once more he warns them not to misuse the pretext of liberty to consider their carnal lives particularly spiritual. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” (Gal. 6:7-8. See also James 3:18, 2 Cor. 9:6, Heb. 6:7-8.) Instead, they should do good, which Paul twice emphasizes: “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore ... let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith”, which includes the members of the other party. Doing good will lead to spiritual harvest (Gal. 6:9-10).

¹⁴¹. Ibid, p. 20.

Galatians 6:2: The Law of Christ is also binding on the Lawless

Proposition: The “Law of Christ” is the moral law of God rightly interpreted in Christ.

In Galatians 6:2, Paul exhorts the lawless Pneumaticists to keep the “Law of Christ.” “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” In order to understand this statement we will examine similar expressions in the New Testament.

Gerhard Friedrich has ascertained that the expression, “the law of faith” in Romans 3:27 does not mean a ‘natural pattern’, but the rightly understood Law of the Old Testament in its widest sense as instruction and the Word of God.¹⁴² Galatians 6:2, Romans 8:2 and 1 Corinthians 9:21 would therefore also refer to the Law of God, interpreted correctly in Christ Jesus and fulfilled by Him.

In Romans 8:2 and in Romans 7:22-23, Paul contrasts two ‘laws’, the “law of sin and death” and the “law of the spirit of life.” To understand these terms to be comparable to the laws of nature, as patterns of cause and effect, does not do justice to their significance. Paul deliberately chose the same word for ‘law’ which he had used before to designate the written Word of God. Does Paul not mean the two following possibilities for responding to the Law: on the one hand, the attempt to keep it in one’s own strength, which leads to sin and death, and, on the other hand, being filled with the Spirit of God, who fulfills the Law of God in us, as Paul explains in Romans 8:4-5? The Word of God rightly understood, including the Moral Law, would then be the “*Law of the Spirit of Life*”.

The various texts which speak of the “Law of Christ” or of “His” or “My” (i.e. Jesus’) law, demonstrate clearly that the Law can only be understood in relationship to Jesus, and that it can only be fulfilled in Him, but also that we cannot have Christ without His Law? Clement of Alexandria (155 – 220 AD) could thus write, “Therefore, we will accept Christ as

¹⁴². Gerhard Friedrich, “Das Gesetz des Glaubens Röm 3:27”, *Theologische Zeitschrift* 10 (Basel; 1954) pp. 401-407; Hermann Cremer, Julius Kögel, *Biblisch-Theologisches Wörterbuch des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (1915, Stuttgart: F. A. Perthes, 1923) share this view, as do Peter von Osten-Sacken, *Die Heiligkeit der Thora*, op. cit., pp. 23-33; and C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans*, Vol. 1, op. cit., pp. 219-220.

Law.”¹⁴³ The “Law of Christ” is, I believe, the Moral Law of God fulfilled and given by Christ. For which specific law of Jesus could be meant, if not God’s commandments, as they appear otherwise in Scripture? Does not Jesus Himself appeal to the Law which God had already given, when He proclaims His commandments?

**“The Law of Christ” and “The Law of Faith”, etc. in the
New Testament¹⁴⁴**

“The Law of Christ” or “The Law of Faith” etc.

Romans 3:26-27; “... the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? (The law) Of works? No, but by the law of faith.”

Romans 8:2; “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.”

The Law of Christ

1 Corinthians 9:21; “... not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ.”

Galatians 6:2; “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

“My Commandments” and “His Commandments” (i.e. Jesus’ commandments)

John 14:15; “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

John 14:21-24; “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words, and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.”

John 15:9-10, 12; (following Jesus’ parable of the vine); “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love ... This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

1 John 5:2-3; “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments For this is the love of God, that we

¹⁴³. Clement of Alexandria, ‘Der Erzieher’, 1.9, quoted by Alfons Heilmann, Ed., *Texte der Kirchenväter*, Vol. 2 (Munich: Kösel, 1963) p. 149.

¹⁴⁴. Peter von Sacken, *Ibid.*, pp. 14-42, considers these expressions to be references to the rightly understood Torah, to the Law. Brice L. Martin, *Christ and the Law in Paul*, op. cit., pp. 26-32, discusses any other representatives of this position.

keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”

1 John 2: 3-5; “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him”

1 John 3:23-24; And this is His commandments: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him and He in him.”

“When Paul says, ‘I do not live without divine law, but in the law of Christ (1 Cor. 9:21), he invalidates the argument that there is no longer any law for Christians. Paul speaks of moral expectations and their validity more often than of forgiveness of sin”¹⁴⁵

One might counter, that the expression, “the Law of Christ” indicates the Law of Love. This law, however, does not contradict the Law, but is its very epitome,¹⁴⁶ as Paul emphasizes, “... through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this. “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Gal. 5:13-14).

Eckhard Schnabel summarized Paul’s conclusion well in his dissertation and considers the “Law of Christ” to be the ‘Torah’ (the Hebrew name for Old Testament law) rightly understood:

“For Paul, the Torah has lost all soteriological significance with the death and resurrection of Christ. Polemical statements against Judaizing opponents who denied the exclusive (!) soteriological role of Christ wanting to retain obedience to the Torah as crucial for salvation can lead Paul to negative affirmations regarding the Torah (in Galatians especially). Paul, however, never doubts the divine origin of the law nor, therefore, its continuous validity as revelation of God’s will. The Torah has come to its end, solely, as regards its condemning function and as regards its sarkic abuse as way to righteousness. Christ has taken upon himself the condemnation of the sin of the world and has brought righteousness to those who are linked with him. Therefore, Christ is the telos of the Torah. As such, the Torah is defined and qualified by Christ as ‘law of Christ’. Consequently, following the Crucifixion the law becomes the measure and standard of the Christian life, fulfillable in the realm of the Spirit who transforms the believer who is a new creation ‘in Christ’, and in the realm of faith. Christ is the hermeneutical location and the crucial centre

¹⁴⁵. Christoph Haufe, *Die sittliche Rechtfertigung des Paulus*, op. cit., p. 11.

¹⁴⁶. Schirmacher, *Römerbrief 2*, pp. 242-262 and *Ethik 1*, pp. 189-214.

of the Torah. Yet, Christ has no revelatory or ontological relationship with the Torah. The Torah is and remains the ‘Law of God’.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷. Eckard J. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul* (Tübingen, Germany: J. C. B. Mohr, 1985) p. 297 – Greek and Latin quotations have been translated. See also C. E. B. Cranfield, “St. Paul and the Law”, op. cit.

Galatians 6:11-18: The Inconsistency of the Legalistic

Proposition: At the end of his letter, Paul warns the legalistic Judaists once more against substituting circumcision for the Cross of Christ. He renews his accusation, that they are inconsistent, because they do not keep the whole of the ceremonial law, but only circumcision, which they have made into a obligation.

Galatians 6:11-18: See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these [would] compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy [be] upon them, and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with your spirit. Amen.

Paul continually represents the Judaists as inconsequent, “For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.” (Gal. 6:13). They deceive the church about the seriousness of the Law’s demands, for they do not obey it themselves (Gal. 6:13, 5:3)¹⁴⁸

We have already discussed Galatians 6:12, in which Paul describes the persecution and the Judaists’ escape from it by their insistence that the Gentile believers be circumcised.

¹⁴⁸. Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist*, p. 20.

Excursus: The Myth of Legalism¹⁴⁹

Proposition: Paul, in warning against legalism does not object to carrying out God's commandments in faith, but to misunderstanding them as a way to salvation, forcing Gentile believers into keeping the ceremonial law, or trying to keep the Law independently of Christ.

'Legalism' is rapidly becoming a slogan used to reproach anyone who appeals to Biblical Law. Is the term Biblical? Does the Scripture express such criticism? Since the word itself – a corresponding Greek or Hebrew word, that is – does not occur in the Bible, those who use it as a term of reproach ought to define its Biblical substance.

Although I myself would prefer to eliminate the expression from our vocabulary altogether, I could agree to limit it to the meaning given it by the Church Fathers, 'the endeavor to achieve justification by works of the law'. This is, however, neither what is usually meant, nor is it suitable.

Gordon H. Clark assumes that 'Legalism' in church history has always meant the expectation that Man could win salvation by keeping the Law.¹⁵⁰ The opposite would be justification by faith, which leads to the correct obedience to the Law. Clark continues,

"In the present century, the expression 'legalism' has taken on a new meaning. Situation ethics scorn rules and regulations. Anyone who consciously obeys God's laws is called legalistic. For this reason, Joseph Fletcher approves the breaking of any one of the Ten Commandments, and thus transfers the negative meaning of 'Legalism' to the historical ethic of Protestantism"¹⁵¹

It is sad that this is true not only of situation ethics, but also for Fundamentalists who believe the Law to have been abolished and who then declare any ethical system built on the Law legalistic. Legalism cannot, however, be overcome by lawlessness. Greg L. Bahnsen writes,

"The answer to legalism is not easy believism, evangelism without

What is Legalism?

¹⁴⁹. Thomas Schirmacher, "Der Mythos von der Gesetzlichkeit", *Fundamentum* (1993) 3, pp. 39-43.

¹⁵⁰. Gordon H. Clark, "Legalism", *Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics*. ed. Carl F. Henry (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1973) p. 385; reprinted in Gordon H. Clark, *Essays on Ethics and Politics* (Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, 1992) p. 150.

¹⁵¹. Ibid.

The New Testament describes five ways to misuse the Law

1. Keeping the Law in order to be justified and saved (See Rom. 3:21-4:25, Eph. 2:9-10)
2. Imposing the ceremonial law on others (Gal. 4:9-11, Col. 2:16-17, the Book of Hebrews)
3. Adding human rules and traditions to divine Law. (Mk. 7:1-15, Mt. 15:1-9)
4. Forgetting essentials in favor of lesser matters. (Mt 23:23)
5. Being only concerned with external obedience to God's Law (Mk. 7: 18-23, Mt. 15:15-20, Mt. 23:27-28)

What Legalism is not

The New Testament does not condemn the following:

1. Assuming that God's moral law is incomparably good, just, holy and spiritual. (Rom. 7:12, 14, 1 Tim. 1:8. Compare Psalm 19, 8-12, Psalm 119)
2. Wishing to keep God's moral commandments in a spirit of sonship (not a spirit of slavery) and in the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 8:2-4, 3:31)
3. Admonishing others on the basis of divine Law, when this is done with the right attitude (Eph. 6:1-4)
4. Appealing to the moral Law of God (James 2:6-12, Rom. 13:8-10)
5. Exercising church discipline (Gal. 5:18-23; 1 Tim. 1:5-11)

the need for repentance, the pursuit of a mystical second blessing in the Spirit, or a Christian life devoid of righteous instruction and guidance. Legalism is countered by Biblical understanding of true 'life in the Spirit'. In such living, God's Spirit is the gracious author of new life, who convicts us of our sin and of misery over against the violated law of God, who

unites us to Christ in salvation that we might share His holy life, who enables us to understand the guidance given by God's word, and who makes us to grow by God's grace into people who better the Lords commands."¹⁵²

Alfred de Quervain writes in a similar strain,

"It has been said that binding our actions to Scripture creates legalism, that man is only free of legalism when he gives himself the law. Actually, he who in his own pride uses the Law according to his own opinion, *acts legalistically*. That is the case whether he intends to keep the letter of the law or whether he abandons the written law and sets up his own."¹⁵³

The Scripture is never legalistic. No one who derives his values from the Word of God can be considered legalistic. Emil Brunner expressed this well, without, however, applying the principle in his own ethical system,¹⁵⁴

"Just as the Scripture without the Spirit is Orthodoxy, the Spirit without the Scripture is false Antinomianism and fanaticism."¹⁵⁵

Legalism should never be used as a slogan against those who refer to God's commandments, but must be defined according to the Bible and then rejected accordingly. Should one interpret legalism to mean the misuse of the Law, then one must clarify from Scripture what the misuse of the Law implies and how the Law is to be properly used. The following tables list five forms of legalism and five proper uses of the Law.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵². Greg L. Bahnsen, *By This Standard: The Authority of God's Law Today* (Tyler, Tex.: ICE, 1985) pp. 67-68.

¹⁵³. Alfred de Quervain, *Die Heiligung, Ethik*, Part 1 (Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1946) p. 259.

¹⁵⁴. Schirmacher, *Ethik*, Vol. 1, pp. 297-304 on Brunner (pp. 292-306); Thomas Schirmacher, *Das Mißverständnis des Emil Brunner: Emil Brunner's Bibliologie als Ursache für das Scheitern seiner Ekklesiologie*, *Theologische Untersuchungen zu Weltmission und Gemeindebau*, ed. Hans-Georg Wüch und Thomas Schirmacher (Lörrach, Germany: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Weltmission und Gemeindebau, 1982); Thomas Schirmacher, "Das Mißverständnis der Kirche und das Mißverständnis des Emil Brunner", *Bibel und Gemeinde* 89 (1989), pp. 279-311.

¹⁵⁵. Emil Brunner, *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1939) p. 79.

¹⁵⁶. See also Robertson McQuillkin, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publ., 1989); David Chilton, *Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt – Manipulators*, op. cit., pp. 22-25, lists four forms of legalism; 1. Justification by works; 2. Making the ceremonial law obligatory; 3. Making man-made laws obligatory; 4. The confusion of sin with crimes prosecuted by the State.

In this context, Eduard Böhl, the Viennese Professor of Dogmatics, emphasizes the significance of God's Law for Christians, for only the Law of God gives a guideline for identifying false laws and traditions:

“We cannot bann the Law from the relationship which exists in Christ between God and the believer: we may not seek new regulations for our actions or, indeed, raise our own caprice to the status of law. We have not been redeemed to live according to particular ethical rules or doctrines of perfection, but to fulfill God's Law (1 Cor. 7:19, Gal. 5:6, Rom. 8:4, 13:10). Scripture teaches clearly that the believer must be kept in the ways of sanctification by the Holy Spirit, but He uses the Word of God, particularly the Ten Commandments as the gauge and rule of our lives.”¹⁵⁷

Böhl also criticizes Pietism for its tendency to formulate new pious laws in place of the Biblical law it rejects:

“Pietism was caught in this fear when it made justification the requirement for sanctification; sanctification seemed therefore to be an continuation of justification, which was to prove itself in sanctification. This attestation of faith by good works led to a quite different set of expressions and tokens of one's faith than those of divine law. The genuineness of justification was tested by another standard than on the Law of God. Man created a sort of nova lex (new law), one for the true believer.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷. Eduard Böhl, *Dogmatik: Darstellung der christlichen Glaubenslehre auf reformiert – kirchlicher Grundlage* (Amsterdam: Scheffer, 1887), p. 515.

¹⁵⁸. *Ibid.*, note 1, p. 515.

Appendix: The Parallels to Romans

The Epistle to the Romans as a Covenant Process¹⁵⁹

Framework delineated by use of the expression "Certainly not!"

A. Transcendence (Romans 3:1-4)

"For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? *Certainly not!* Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written. ..." (3:3-4)

B. Hierarchy (Rom. 3:5-30)

"But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man) *Certainly not!* For then how will God judge the world?" (3:5-6)

C. Ethic (Rom. 3:31-5:21)

"Do we then make void the law through faith? *Certainly not!* On the contrary, we establish the law." (3:31)

D. Oath (Rom. 6:1-14)

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? *Certainly not!* How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (6:1-3)

E. Inheritance (Rom. 6:15-7:6)

"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? *Certainly not!* Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" (6:15-16)

The Pattern in Reverse Order

E'. Inheritance (Rom. 7:7-12)

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? *Certainly not!* On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." (7:7)

D'. Oath/Sanctions (Rom. 7:12-9:13)

¹⁵⁹. Taken from Schirmacher, *Römerbrief* 1, pp. 38-39 and Thomas Schirmacher, *Der Text des Römerbriefes für das Selbststudium gegliedert – mit Tabellen und Übersichten* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 1994), pp. 10-11.

“Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. Has then what is good become death to me? *Certainly not!* But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.” (7:12-14)

C'. Ethic (Rom. 9:14-10:21)

“What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? *Certainly not!* For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.” (9:14)

B'. Hierarchy (Rom. 11:1-10)

“I say then, has God cast away His people? *Certainly not!* For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew ...” (11:1-2)

A'. Inheritance/Transcendence (Rom. 11:11-16)

“I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? *Certainly not!* But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.” (11:11)

Proposition: The Letter to the Romans, just like the Letter to the Galatians, opposes both the Judaists, who sought justification by works, and the Gentile Christians, who renounced the moral law of God altogether and distanced themselves from Judaism completely.

Wilhelm Lütgert has frequently demonstrated that many New Testament writings are directed primarily against antinomianism and contradict those Christians who draw the false conclusion from the doctrine of salvation by grace, that God's moral standard had changed.¹⁶⁰ We have already seen his interpretation on Galatians. In another excellent study,¹⁶¹ he has shown that The Epistle to the Romans also addresses many misconceptions that the

¹⁶⁰. Besides his works on Galatians and Romans, see; Lütgert, *Freiheitspredigt und Schwarmgeister in Korinth*, Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie 12, Vol. 3 (1908) (Gütersloh, Germany: C. Bertelsmann, 1908) pp. 136-157 on Romans, Philippians and Galatians, and the whole book on the Corinthians; Wilhelm Lütgert, *Amt und Geist im Kampf, Studien zur Geschichte des Urchristentums*, Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie 15, Vol 4/5 (1911) (Gütersloh, Germany: C. Bertelsmann, 1911). See also, Wilhelm Lütgert, *Die Liebe im Neuen Testament* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1905, repr. Giessen, Germany: Brunnen Verlag, 1986).

¹⁶¹. Lütgert, *Römerbrief*.

Gentile believers had about the Old Testament and Israel.¹⁶² Otto Michel summarizes:

“According to W. Lütgert ... it is incorrect to interpret the Epistle to the Romans only in an anti-Jewish context. Many discourses (ex. Rom. 3:31, 8:4, 13:8-10) teach a positive evaluation of the Law and cannot be explained on an anti-Jewish basis. It is more probable, that Paul had to counter Gentile *Antinomianism*. Indeed, Paul seems to suffer under the suspicion of having furthered Antinomianism himself (Rom. 3:1-8). That Romans 6 is directed against libertine tendencies, is generally accepted. Romans 9-11 also become clearer, when understood in a historical context, and assumes that Paul’s audience was an Anti-Semitic Christianity which arrogantly scorned Israel.”¹⁶³

Lütgert summarizes his results:

“The Epistle to the Romans was intended to protect the primarily Gentile church in Rome against an Antinomianist Christianity, which combined scorn for Israel and Judaistic legalism, and at the same time nourished revolutionary tendencies in the church. This Christianity spread among the churches, referring to Paul as its authority, but already beginning to contradict him. He thus had reason to defend his Gospel against this dogma, to warn the Roman church against it and to insure the reception necessary to his work in the Roman church. As a result, he expressly takes a positive position on the Law, and presents his doctrine of Grace in the form of a doctrine of justification, for he thus combines his positive view of the Law with the doctrine of grace. ... Paul had to defend the Law and Jewish Christianity against the Gentile believers.”¹⁶⁴

The most powerful evidence for Lütgert’s conclusion, that Romans contradicts the scorn for the Law (Antinomianism¹⁶⁵) and the scorn for Israel (anti-Semitism¹⁶⁶), is Ray R. Sutton’s study of the outline of Romans 3-11.¹⁶⁷ Sutton compares Paul’s text with the Old Testament Covenant Pattern¹⁶⁸, which the apostle runs through twice, once in reverse order, which

¹⁶². Schirmacher, *Römerbrief* 1, pp. 32-44, *Römerbrief* 2, pp. 148-150 and the complete commentary to Romans.

¹⁶³. Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, Kritisch – exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament 414 (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), p. 40.

¹⁶⁴. Lütgert, *Römerbrief*, pp. 111-112.

¹⁶⁵. Ibid., p. 69-79.

¹⁶⁶. Ibid., p. 79-90.

¹⁶⁷. Ray R. Sutton, “Does Israel have a Future?”, *Covenant Renewal* 2 (Tyler, Texas: 1988) 12 (Dec.) 1-4.

¹⁶⁸. Ray R. Sutton, *That you may Prosper: Dominion by Covenant* (Tyler, Texas: ICE, 1987) pp. 246-252: Sutton suggests further, more complicated Covenant patterns in Romans. The Old Testament Covenant pattern, which is strikingly similar to Middle

can be seen in the repetition of the oath “Certainly not!”¹⁶⁹ (or “that is completely impossible!”, or literally, “may that not occur!”), which introduces Paul’s rhetorical questions. Israel is thus called to judgment, for the New Testament Gospel agrees with the Old Testament Law. At the same time, the Gentiles are forbidden to ignore the Old Testament and the Law. The expression, “Certainly not!” is an oath,¹⁷⁰ an element used to ratify Old Testament covenants, which confirms the covenant character of the Book of Romans and its emphasis on the continuing validity of the Old Testament moral law.

Eastern treaties, begins with the appeal to God and a description of Him (transcendence), describes the dependency (hierarchy), the terms of the covenant (ethic), the conclusion (oath) and determines to what extent the covenant binds further generations (inheritance). Schirmacher, *Ethik* 1, pp. 351-394 goes into more detail.

¹⁶⁹. Paul’s expression, ‘Certainly not’ corresponds to the Old Testament expression ‘Far be it!’ and other oaths, and is used primarily in Romans and in Galatians: Rom. 3:4,6,31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; 9:14; 11:1,11; 1 Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14 (here with the addition “from me”). The Septuaginta translates the Hebrew oath ‘far be it’ with ‘me genoito’ in Gen. 44:7,17; Jos. 22:29; and 1 Kings 21:3 (LXX 20:3) otherwise with ‘medamos’ or ‘not at all’. The Septuaginta translates ‘amen’ with ‘genoito, genoito’ in Ps. 72:19 (LXX 71,19). The Old Testament expression, ‘far be it’ is derived from the expression ‘to desecrate’ and means ‘may I be defiled before God, if ...’ (Georg Giesen, *Die Wurzel sb’, “schwören”*: Eine semasiologische Studie zu Eid im Alten Testament, Bonner Biblische Beiträge, Königstein: Peter Hanstein, 1981, p. 43). See Schirmacher, *Ethik* 2, pp. 129-133 and pp. 115-145.

¹⁷⁰. Greek, ‘me genoito’.

Books by Thomas Schirmmacher

As author:

Das Mißverständnis des Emil Brunner: Emil Brunners Bibliologie als Ursache für das Scheitern seiner Ekklesiologie. Theologische Untersuchungen zu Weltmission und Gemeindebau. ed. by Hans-Georg Wünc and Thomas Schirmmacher. Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Weltmission und Gemeindebau: Lörrach, 1982. 54 pp.

A study of Emil Brunner's ecclesiology and of the bibliology and hermeneutics of dialectical theology.

Mohammed: Prophet aus der Wüste. Schwengeler: Berneck (CH), 1984¹, 1986², 1990³. 120 pp. (with Christine Schirmmacher)

A short biography of the founder of Islam and an introduction into Islam.

Theodor Christlieb und seine Missionstheologie. Verlag der Evangelischen Gesellschaft für Deutschland: Wuppertal, 1985. 308 pp.

A study of the biography, theology and missiology of the leading German Pietist, professor of practical theology and international missions leader in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Marxismus: Opium für das Volk? Schwengeler: Berneck (CH), 1990. 150 pp.

Marxism is proven to be a religion and an opiate for the masses. Emphasizes the differences between Marxist and Biblical work ethics and between atheistic and Biblical Capitalism.

Zur marxistischen Sagen- und Märchenforschung und andere volkskundliche Beiträge. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1991. 227 pp.

10 essays and articles on the science of folklore and cultural anthropology in Germany. Includes a critique of the Marxist interpretation of tales and sagas, and studies on the history of marriage and family in Europe from the 6th century onward.

“Der göttliche Volkstumsbegriff” und der “Glaube an Deutschlands Größe und heilige Sendung”: Hans Naumann als Volkskundler und Germanist unter dem Nationalsozialismus. 2 volumes. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1992. 606 pp.

Discusses the history of German cultural anthropology and folklore under Hitler, especially the leading figure Naumann, professor of German language, whose scientific theory is showed to be very religious in tone.

War Paulus wirklich auf Malta? Hänssler: Neuhausen, 1992 (together with Heinz Warnecke). 254 pp.

The book shows that Paul was not shipwrecked on Malta but on another island, Kephalaria, and that the report in Acts is very accurate. The Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is defended with theological and linguistic arguments against higher criticism.

Psychotherapie – der fatale Irrtum. Schwengeler: Berneck (CH), 1993 (together with Rudolf Antholzer). 150 pp.

A critique of secular psychotherapy, showing that psychotherapy is a religion. and that most psychotherapists call every school of psychotherapy except their own nonsense and unscientific.

Paulus im Kampf gegen den Schleier: Eine alternative Sicht von 1. Korinther 11,2-16. Biblia et symbiotica 4. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1993. 168 pp.

Exegetical examination of 1. Corinthians 11,2-16, following a alternative view of John Lightfoot, member of the Westminster assembly in the 16th century.

“Schirmmacher argues that from the biblical teaching that man is the head of woman (1 Cor 11:3) the Corinthians had drawn the false conclusions that in prayer a woman must be veiled (11:4-6) and a man is forbidden to be veiled (11:7), and that the wife exists for the husband but not the husband for the wife (11:8-9). Paul, however, rejected these conclusions and showed in 11:10-16 why the veiling of women did not belong to God’s commandments binding upon all the Christian communities. After stating the thesis and presenting his alternative translation and exposition of 1 Cor 11:2-16, he considers the difficulties in the text, presents his alternative exposition in detail (in the form of thirteen theses), discusses quotations and irony in 1 Corinthians, and deals with other NT texts about women’s clothing and prayer and about the subordination of wives. H.-G. Wüch has provided a three-page foreword.” (New Testament Abstracts vol. 39 (1995) 1, p. 154).

Der Römerbrief. Neuhausen: Hänssler, 1994. 2 volumes. 331 + 323 pp.

Commentary on Romans in form of major topics of Systematic Theology starting from the text of Romans, but then going on to the whole Bible.

Der Text des Römerbriefes: Für das Selbststudium gegliedert. *Biblia et symbiotica* 7. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1994. 68 pp.

The text of Romans newly translated and structured for self study.

Ethik. Neuhausen: Hänssler, 1994. 2 volumes. 883 & 889 pp.

Major Evangelical ethics in German.

Galilei-Legenden und andere Beiträge zu Schöpfungsforschung, Evolutionskritik und Chronologie der Kulturgeschichte 1979-1994. *Biblia et symbiotica* 12. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1996. 331 pp.

Title: Legends of Galileo and other Contributions to Creation Science, Criticism of Evolution and Chronology of the History of Culture 1979-1994. A collection of creationist articles written within 15 years of the author's battle against evolution. The chapter on Galilei has been published in English in the Festschrift for Rousas John Rushdoony (1996).

Völker – Drogen – Kannibalismus: Ethnologische und länderkundliche Beiträge 1984 – 1994. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1997. 218 pp.

A collection of articles on cultural anthropology, especially on Indians in South America, cannibalism and the religious use of drugs.

Die Vielfalt biblischer Sprache: Über 100 alt- und neutestamentliche Stilarten, Ausdrucksweisen, Redeweisen und Gliederungsformen. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1997. 130 pp.

A hermeneutical study, listing more than 100 specific language techniques in the Bible with several proof texts for each of them.

Gottesdienst ist mehr: Plädoyer für einen liturgischen Gottesdienst. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1998. 130 pp.

An investigation into biblical proof texts for liturgical elements in Christian Sunday service.

Gesetz und Geist: Eine alternative Sicht des Galaterbriefes. Reformatorische Paperbacks. Reformatorischer Verlag: Hamburg, 1999. 160 pp.

Law and Spirit: An Alternative View of Galatians. RVB International: Hamburg, 2001. 160 pp.

This commentary emphasizing the ethical aspects of Galatians wants to prove that Galatians is not only fighting legalists but also a second party of Paul's opponents, who were totally opposed to the Old Testament and the Law, and lived immorally in the name of Christian freedom, a view especially endorsed by Wilhelm Lütgert's commentary of 1919. Paul is fighting

against the abrogation of the Old Testament Law as well as against using this Law as way of salvation instead of God's grace.

God Wants You to Learn, Labour and Love. Reformation Books: Hamburg, 1999. 120 pp.

Four essays for Third World Christian Leaders on Learning with Jesus, Work Ethic, Love and Law and Social Engagement.

37 Gründe, warum Christen sich für eine Erneuerung unserer Gesellschaft auf christlicher Grundlage einsetzen sollten. Die Wende, 1999. 40 pp.

37 reasons for Christian involvement in society and politics.

Christenverfolgung geht uns alle an: Auf dem Weg zu einer Theologie des Martyriums. Idea-Dokumentation 15/99. Idea: Wetzlar, 1999. 64 S.

70 thesis on persecution and martyrdom, written for the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church on behalf of the German and European Evangelical Alliance

World Mission – Heart of Christianity. RVB International: Hamburg, 1999. 120 S.

Articles on the biblical basis of World Missions.

Eugen Drewermann und der Buddhismus. Verlag für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft: Nürnberg, 1999. 132 S.

Deals with the German Catholic Author Drewermann and his propagating Buddhist thinking. Includes chapter on a Christian Ethics of Environment.

Galilei-Legends. RVB International: Hamburg, 2001. 150 pp.

Shorter version of the German book 'Galilei-Legenden' mentioned above.

Human Rights Threatened in Europe: Euthanasia – Abortion – Bioethic-convention. RVB International: Hamburg, 2001. 130 pp.

Updated Lectures at the 1st European Right to Life Forum Berlin, 1998, and articles on abortion.

Ausverkaufte Würde? Der Pornographie-Boom und seine psychischen Folgen. Hänssler: Holzgerlingen, 2000. (mit Christa Meves). 130 pp.

The psychological results of pornography.

Eine Sekte wird evangelisch – Die Reformation der Weltweiten Kirche Gottes. Idea-Dokumentation 11/2000. Idea: Wetzlar, 2000. 56 pp.

Detailed report on the reformation of the Worldwide Church of God (Armstrong) from a sect to an evangelical church.

As editor (always with own contributions):

Patrick Johnstone. Handbuch für Weltmission: Gebet für die Welt. Hänssler: Neuhausen, 1987², newest edition 1993⁶ (together with Christine Schirmmacher). 811 pp.

Adapted German version of 'Operation World', a handbook and lexicon on the situation of Christianity and missions in every country of the world.

Gospel Recordings Language List: Liste der Sprachaufnahmen in 4.273 Sprachen. Missiologica Evangelica 4. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1992. 120 pp.

Lists 4273 languages in the world, in which evangelistic cassettes are available.

"Die Zeit für die Bekehrung der Welt ist reif": Rufus Anderson und die Selbständigkeit der Kirche als Ziel der Mission. Edition afem: mission scripts 3. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1993. 134 pp.

Articles by Schirmmacher and by theologians from the 19th century about Rufus Anderson, leading American missionary statesman, Reformed professor of missions and postmillennial theologian – together with the first translation of texts of Anderson into German.

William Carey. Eine Untersuchung über die Verpflichtung der Christen [1792]. Edition afem: mission classics 1. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1993 (together with Klaus Fiedler). 100 pp.

First German translation of the book by the Calvinist Baptist William Carey of 1792, with which the age of modern Protestant world missions started.

Bibeltreue in der Offensive: Die drei Chicagoerklärungen zur biblischen Unfehlbarkeit, Hermeneutik und Anwendung. Biblia et symbiotica 2. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1993. 90 pp.

German translation of the three Chicago-Declarations on biblical inerrancy, hermeneutics and application.

Im Kampf um die Bibel – 100 Jahre Bibelbund. Biblia et symbiotica 6. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1994 (together with Stephan Holthaus). 168 pp.

'Festschrift' for 100 years of "Bibelbund". Articles on biblical inerrancy and on the history of the major German organization fighting higher criticism, the "Bibelbund" (Bible League), and its theological journal "Bibel und Gemeinde", edited by Schirmacher since 1988.

Eduard Böhl. Dogmatik. Hänssler Theologie. Hänssler: Neuhausen, 1995

A Reformed Systematic Theology from the last century edited by Thomas Schirmacher; with an lengthy introduction on Böhl's life and work.

Der evangelische Glaube kompakt: Ein Arbeitsbuch (1998). Hänssler: Neuhausen, 1998. 180 pp.

German translation of the Westminster Confession of Faith, adapted and with commentary and changes in Presbyterian, Congregationalist and Baptist versions.

Werden alle gerettet? Referate der Jahrestagung 1998 des AfeM (mit Klaus W. Müller). Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1998. 160 pp.

The proceedings of a missiological consultation on the relationship between Christianity's mission and other religions.

The Right to Life for Every Person / Lebensrecht für jeden Menschen. Abortion – Euthanasia – Gen Technology: Proceedings of the 1st European Right to Life Forum Berlin, 1998. Abtreibung – Euthanasie – Gentechnik: Beiträge des 1. Europäischen Forums Lebensrecht Berlin, 1999 (with Walter Schrader, Hartmut Steeb). Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1999. 310 pp.

Kein anderer Name: Die Einzigartigkeit Jesu Christi und das Gespräch mit nichtchristlichen Religionen. Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Peter Beyerhaus. Verlag für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft: Nürnberg, 1999. 470 pp.

Festschrift of Prof. Peter Beyerhaus, the leading evangelical missiologist and evangelical elder statesmen. Covers all aspects of the relationship of Christian faith to other religions.

Missionswissenschaft im Zeichen der Erneuerung: Ehrengabe zum 70. Geburtstag von Peter Beyerhaus. Sonderausgabe = Evangelikale Missiologie 15 (1999) Heft 2 (together with Klaus W. Müller und Christof Sauer) (1999) afem

Shorter version of the former Festschrift for mass distribution

Ausbildung als missionarischer Auftrag: Referate der Jahrestagung 1999 des AfeM (mit Klaus W. Müller). Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 2000. 210 pp.

Lectures on the relation of missions and theological education by leading representatives of schools, alternative programs, missions and third world churches.

A Life of Transformation: Festschrift for Colonel V. Doner. RVB International: Hamburg, 2001. 350 S.

Mission in der Spannung zwischen Hoffnung, Resignation und Endzeit-enthusiasmus: Referate der Jahrestagung 2000 des AfeM (together with Klaus W. Müller). Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 2001. 240 pp.

Lectures on the importance of eschatology for missions in history and present reality.

Three major Books in German

Three major works by the author and his wife are reviewed on the following pages.

Thomas Schirmmacher. Ethik. 2 vol. Hänssler: Neuhausen, 1994. 883 + 889 pp. reviewed by Carsten Hobohm (second updated edition in three volumes to be published in 2001)

Schirmmacher's two volume 'Ethics', the first Evangelical ethic in German for decades, and published by the leading Evangelical publisher in Germany, is something like Rushdoony's 'Institutes of Biblical Law' in German, even though much different in style. Schirmmacher argues less philosophically and more exegetically. Schirmmacher writes from a strong Reformed and semi-Theonomic viewpoint, but very often presents positions different from those discussed in modern Reformed and Theonomic writings as he heavily uses older German and European exegetes. So for example, he follows the exegesis of Wilhelm Lütgert's commentary of 1919, proving that Galatians is not only fighting legalists but also a second party of Paul's opponents, who were totally opposed to the Old Testament and the Law, and lived immorally in the name of Christian freedom. (A book by Schirmmacher on the same topic is forthcoming in German and English under the title 'Law or Spirit?') In Romans 2,14-15, to take another example, Schirmmacher does not find natural law, but together with Augustine and many European exegetes who believe that Paul is speaking

about heathen Christians, who originally (“from nature”) did not know the Law, but now as Christians live according to it, and thus are an example to the Jews.

Most of Schirmacher’s 50 chapters start with a typical question, like ‘Is the Sermon on the Mount still valid?’, ‘Is oath taking allowed’, ‘Is a Christian State possible?’, or they discuss specific problems like abortion or the death penalty, so that it is easier for Evangelical readers to understand why ethics are necessary. As every chapter can be read separately, many people, who normally won’t study such a work of Systematic Theology, will read parts of the books. Schirmacher also has in mind that most Evangelical and Christian readers do not actually know the Bible. Therefore he prints most of the Bible texts he is discussing or using as prooftexts. Often he will quote those texts in full in a box after he has stated his case.

Schirmacher is not only professor of ethics on the chair of his somewhat more Barthian teacher Georg Huntemann, but is professor of missiology and an active pastor also. He therefore seems to be very missions minded and more interested in reaching readers in general than impressing other theologians (not to talk about liberal theologians). It is a pity that Schirmacher will receive few theological reactions, which could start a fruitful discussion, as there are very few Reformed theologians in the German-speaking world, and virtually none who can discuss ethical problems at large. (At the same time the English-speaking world probably won’t read the volumes because of the language barrier. And an English translation is not in view, because normally only liberal works are translated from German into English ...)

Thomas Schirmacher. *Der Römerbrief*. 2 vol. Hänssler: Neuhausen, 1994. 331 + 323 pp. reviewed by Carsten Hobohm (second edition to be published in 2001)

This unusual commentary on Romans is at the same time an introduction to Reformed dogmatics and ethics. Schirmacher always starts with half a chapter and its exegesis, then summarizes what this texts means for dogmatics and ethics, and then discusses the same topic throughout the whole Bible or specific other texts. Thus the reader learns to start his systematic thinking with the Bible itself and also to proceed to the central topics of theology. The book is used as theological textbook and as a course in the German Theological Education by Extension Seminary, and is thus structured according to pedagogical purposes.

Schirrmacher is a Reformed professor of missiology, who at the same time holds a chair in ethics. He sees Romans as a great systematic letter to prove world mission to be valid and necessary. The best in biblical theology argues for world mission, he states again and again. For him Systematic and Practical Theology are just two sides of the same coin. Therefore he never stops with exegesis, even though he often offers 'heavy' exegesis and thoroughly discusses different views on various texts. To take just one example: In Romans 2,14-15, Schirrmacher discusses the three main positions on the text, but for himself does not find natural law here. Together with Augustine and a lot of European exegetes, he believes that Paul is speaking about heathen Christians, who originally ("from nature") did not know the Law, but now live according to it, and thus are an example to the Jews. Romans 7 speaks about Paul as a Christian, because for Schirrmacher, Paul leaves the question of how to become a Christian after Romans 5,1 and takes for granted that the works of the Law do not save. According to Schirrmacher, Romans 7 teaches that even a Christian cannot live according to the Law of God, and that only Christ can fulfill his Law through his Spirit in us (Romans 8,3-4). This presupposes that the moral Law is still valid and the measure of spirituality, but cannot be separated from Christ and the Holy Spirit. This is an important message to Charismatic readers.

Of special interest is the extra chapter on six major views on eschatology after the comments on Romans 11. In several tables, Schirrmacher compares Dispensational premillennialism, historic premillennialism, historic amillennialism, historic postmillennialism, preterist amillennialism, and finally preterist postmillennialism, which seems to be his own position. Compared to the rest of the commentary, he states his case quite 'softly' when it comes to eschatology (and to baptism), even though everybody can perceive his position. The reason, probably, is that the book is published by the leading Evangelical publisher in Germany and is used by a wide range of Evangelical institutions of theological learning.

Christine Schirrmacher. *Der Islam: Geschichte, Lehre, Unterschiede zum Christentum*. 2 vols. Hänssler Verlag: Neuhausen, 1994. 352 + 382 pp. reviewed by Barbara Hobohm

Finally, a detailed study of Islam from an Evangelical author has appeared in the market. Graduated Islamicist (Ph.D.) and visiting professor at Philadelphia Theological Seminary and STH Basel, Christine Schirrmacher seeks to answer those questions especially Christians may have concerning

Islam: ‘Do Muslims and Christians believe in the same god?’ ‘Does the Qur’an teach fatalism?’ ‘Is Allah a personal god?’ ‘How do we have to understand Salman Rushdie’s sentence of death and at the same time listen to the ‘Declaration of Human Rights’ proclaimed by most of the Islamic countries?’ ‘What are the differences between Sunni and Shi’ite Muslims?’

Contemporary Islam can only be understood with the help of Islamic history and theology. Therefore Schirmacher illustrates the circumstances of the emergence of Islam with a biography of the prophet Muhammad and an extensive explanation of the main dogmas of the Qur’an. Additional to that, several chapters deal with themes like Islamic mysticism, folk Islam, women in Islam, or Islamic fundamentalism.

As the introduction states, the main emphasis of the book lies on a comparison of Islam and Christianity. The fundamental teachings of the Qur’an and the writings of influential Muslim theologians are compared to the teachings of the Bible. What does the Qur’an teach concerning Original Sin, the Abrahamic covenant, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, Christ’s Sonship, and the Trinity? It is noteworthy that Schirmacher not only quotes the Qur’an extensively, but also gives her readers insight into many Arabic works written by Muslim theologians. What are the most important reproaches of Islam concerning Christianity? What are the reasons Muslims mention in favor of their conviction that the Old and New Testament are abrogated and falsified? This is important to know for each Christian living in the Muslim world, since sooner or later he will be confronted with the distorted picture of Christianity as it is seen from the Muslim standpoint.

The book ends with an review of famous encounters and controversies between Muslims and Christians from the Middle Ages until the present time. Included in this part is, for example, a description of Martin Luther’s view of Islam. The book has been written for Christians who really want to understand Islam from its very foundations, but former Muslims who look for a presentation of the differences between Islam and Christianity will also find the book a valuable source of information.

About the Author

Thomas Schirmacher holds a chair in theology (ethics, missions, world religions), is rector of Martin Bucer Theological Seminary (Bonn, Hamburg, Berlin, Zurich, Innsbruck, Prague, Zlin, Istanbul), director of the International Institute for Religious Freedom (Bonn, Cape Town, Colombo) of the World Evangelical Alliance and president of Gebende Hände gGmbH (Giving Hands), an internationally active relief organisation, as well as owner of a publishing house and co-owner of a consulting company.

Born in 1960, Schirmacher studied theology from 1978 to 1982 at STH Basel and since 1983 Cultural Anthropology and Comparative Religions at Bonn State University. He earned a Drs. theol. in Missiology and Ecumenics at Theological University (Kampen/Netherlands) in 1984, and a Dr. theol. in Missiology and Ecumenics at Johannes Calvin Foundation (Kampen/Netherlands) in 1985, a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology at Pacific Western University in Los Angeles (CA) in 1989, a Th.D. in Ethics at Whitefield Theological Seminary in Lakeland (FL) in 1996, and a Dr. phil. in Comparative Religions / Sociology of Religion at State University of Bonn in 2007. In 1997 he got honorary doctorates (D.D.) from Cranmer Theological House, in 2006 from Acts University in Bangalore.

He was pastor of the 'Protestant Society of Germany' in Bonn and Erftstadt, 1982 to 1986, co-theologian of the 'Evangelical Free Church' in Bonn 1992-1998, and 1998-2000 pastor of the Free Reformed Church in Bonn. Nowadays he is active in the 'Church on the Rhine' in Bonn.

Schirmacher taught Missions, World Religions and Cultural Anthropology at FTA Giessen (Germany) from 1983-1989 and from 1990-1996 ethics, missiology, comparative religions and cultural anthropology at 'Independent Theological Seminary' in Basel ('Staatsunabhängige Theologische Hochschule Basel' – STH Basel). He held and holds different chairs, e.g. 1994-1999 'Philadelphia Theological Seminary' (PA, USA) (professor of missions), 1995-2000 at Cranmer Theological House (Shreveport, LA) (professor of missions and ethics), since 1996 at Whitefield Theological Seminary (Lakeland, FL) (professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics), since 2000 at William Carey University (Bangalore, India) (professor of International Development), and since 2006 at State University of Oradea, Romania.

He is internationally active pro family and against abortion (as director of the Institute for Life and Family) and against persecution of Christians

(as director of the Institute of Religious Freedom of the World Evangelical Alliance and as director of the Commission for Religious Freedom of the German and the Austrian Evangelical Alliance and member of the same commission of the World Evangelical Alliance).

He also is involved in all kinds of publishing activities. He has been editor of 'Bibel und Gemeinde' and editor of 'Evangelikale Missiologie', co-editor of 'Contra Mundum: A Reformed Cultural Review', and of 'Reflection: An International Reformed Review of Missiology'. Since 1986 he owns the publishing house 'Culture and Science Publ.' ('Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft'), which publishes scientific books on language, culture, religion and missions, and co-owns Consulting Schirmmacher GbR, a business and educational business company.

He has written or edited 74 books on ethics, missiology and cultural anthropology, which were translated into 14 languages. In 2002 he was named 'Man of Achievement' by the International Biographical Center Oxford for his achievements in the area of the ethics of international development.

He is listed in Marquis' Who's Who in the World, Dictionary of International Biography, International Who is Who of Professionals, EU-Who is Who, Who is Who in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 2000 Outstanding People of the 21st Century, 2000 Outstanding Intellectuals of the 21st Century, International Who's Who in Distance Learning, and other biographical yearbooks.

He is married to Dr. Christine Schirmmacher, professor of Islamic Studies and director of the Islam Institute of the German Evangelical Alliance, and author of a two-volume standard introduction to Islam. The couple has two children.