The supposed conflict between “doing” as such and “faith” as such is simply not present in Galatians. What was at stake was not a way of life summarized by the word “trust” versus a mode of life summarized by “requirements,” but whether or not the requirement for membership in to the Israel of God would result in there being “neither Jew nor Greek.” (E. P. Sanders)\(^1\)

One of the crucial passages in Paul for determining (or rather constructing) his posture vis-à-vis the Jewish religion—the Law—is Galatians 3:10–4:7. Many interpreters, particularly of the “Lutheran” school, have read this passage as if the “curse of the Law” consists of the inability of human beings to ever meet its demands fully and therefore the irreparable curse that it places on all. The whole purpose of the Law, on this account, is to increase sin in the world, so that the saving grace of the Cross will be even more abundant. As can be imagined, such an interpretation of Paul leads easily to charges that he was rabidly anti-Jewish. Moreover, if such views are asserted as a theologically correct view of Judaism and its historical role, then the theology is anti-Judaic (and later anti-Semitic). While there are, of course, passages that can be read in support of such a perverse notion of God—else it would not have achieved such widespread acceptance—,

I would like to show (as have several other commentators by now) that certainly in Galatians this is by no means a necessary construction of the text. Much more plausible a priori, in my view, would be a conception (closest to Dunn’s) that the ultimate inadequacy of the Law stems from its ethnic exclusiveness, from the fact that it represents the practices of the Tribe of Israel, and therefore is unsuitable as a way of life and of salvation
for the Universal Humanity which Paul seeks to institute. E. P. Sanders's insight here is also very important, namely that this section consists not so much of Paul's critique of the Law but of his explanation of God's purpose in giving the Law, given its inefficacy for salvation.3

In the following section I will attempt to show that Paul produces a sort of radical, "heretical" midrash—but midrash nevertheless—in support of his new understandings of Judaism. The very fact, however, that he supports his view with midrash indicates his conviction that he stands in continuity with the Torah and not against it. To be sure, from a "Jewish" point of view, this "continuity" itself constitutes rejection of the Law. The form of Paul's argument itself provides then an elegant analogue for his character; in both we find an entity both inside and outside of Judaism at the same time.

[1.1] Those who are men of works of Law are under a curse

"By contrast, those who are men of works of Law are under a curse. For it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not uphold everything that is written in the book of the Law, by doing it' (Deut 27:26) It is, then, obvious that nobody is justified before God by Law, because 'The righteous shall live by faith' (Hab 2:4). The Law is not by faith, but 'He who does them shall live by them' " (Lev 18:5).

A proper understanding of these verses of Paul is crucial for any evaluation of his ideology vis-à-vis the Jews, the Torah and Judaism, as many currently held readings end up claiming that Paul significantly distorts Jewish doctrine here. Hans Joachim Schoeps largely based his claim that Paul misunderstood misrepresented Judaism on this very passage.4 A reinterpretation of the passage that will not lead to such conclusions is therefore highly important for our general evaluation of Paul on Judaism. In establishing the identity of Paul as a Jewish cultural critic, it is important to demonstrate that he writes as a Jew.5 Showing the thoroughly midrashic character of the main arguments of the Letter is then directly relevant to the descriptive project as a whole. Paul's argument is almost prototypical midrash.

Most interpreters have quite missed the point here in my view. Their interpretations are dependent on theological presuppositions about Paul's relation to the Law as generating sin, a proposition which seems a priori implausible for Paul to have held. Dunn has produced the best arguments against this notion:
Betz's own reconstruction of Paul's reasoning (the law was given in order to be broken and to generate sin) is hardly obvious from the text (even allowing for 3.19). It would hardly cut much ice with his readers, and on this point Paul could hardly simply assume that his readers shared his presuppositions. . . . Moreover, as Hübner points out, such a theology attributes a very perverse motive on the part of God in giving the law (Gesetze 27); it is hard to think that Paul would be unaware of such a corollary or would willingly embrace it.6

Alternatively, interpretations are based on the notion that one who transgresses even one precept of the Torah is irredeemably cursed—a notion which has no support in Jewish texts of either the first or later centuries. As Sanders has written, "This sequence of views cannot be found in contemporary Jewish literature. The sequence of thought sounds plausible, but it does not appear to be Paul's, nor that of any form of contemporary Judaism."7 And in another place he remarks: "All the rabbis whose views are known to us took the position that all the law must be accepted. . . . No rabbi took the position that obedience must be perfect. Pharisees and rabbis of all schools and all periods strongly believed in repentance and other means of atonement in the case of transgression."8

The only exception is perhaps IV Ezra.9 Krister Stendahl pointed out that this interpretation is implausible on inner Pauline grounds, because Paul himself in Philippians claims to have been "blameless as to the Law" (3:6). Sanders has further discredited on exegetical grounds the interpretation that Paul's claim is based on the word "everything" in the verse and means that one who does not keep all of the Law is accursed:

These three considerations—the character of the terminological argument in favor of Gentiles being righteoused by faith, which is based on prooftexts; the fact that Paul states in his own words what he takes the prooftexts to mean; and the subordination of vv. 10-13 to v. 8—seem to me to be decisive against the view that the thrust and point of the argument are directed toward the conclusion that the law should not be accepted because no one can fulfill all of it. The argument seems to be clearly wrong that Paul, in Galatians 3, holds the view that since the law cannot be entirely fulfilled, therefore righteousness is by faith.10

Sanders's arguments against the standard reading seem impeccable to me. His own interpretation, however, leaves something to be desired in that it makes Paul depend on a purely associative connection between "the words nomos and cursed."11 Heinrich Schlier, on the other hand, interprets Paul's intention to mean that those who do the Torah are not fulfilling the Torah and are therefore accursed.11 However, since he misses the point of the midrashic form, his interpretation has not had the impact it ought to
have had on the commentatorial tradition. Dunn, also, I think correctly understands the import of the verse, but does not even attempt to interpret the midrash. As Dunn understands:

Most Jews of Paul’s day would simply assume that to be διὰ τῆς νόμου νόμου is to remain within all that the Torah lays down, is to do what the law requires. But Paul denies that equation. To be of the works of the law is not the same as fulfilling the law, is less than what the law requires, and so falls under the law’s own curse. Why so? The answer is given by our previous exposition of ‘works of the law’ Those who are διὰ τῆς νόμου νόμου are those who have understood the scope of God’s covenant people as Israel per se, as that people who are defined by the law and marked out by its distinctive requirements. Such an understanding of the covenant and of the law inevitably puts too much weight on physical and national factors, on outward and visible enactments, and gives too little weight to the Spirit, to faith and love from the heart.

So far, so good. But Dunn also does not answer the question of how this can be learned from Deut 27:26.

The answer is quite simple when looked at from a midrashic point of view. The verse reads "Cursed is everyone who does not uphold everything that is written in the book of the Law, by doing it." The words, “by doing it” at the end of the verse are syntactically and semantically superfluous—to check that, just remove them, and you will see that the sense is not harmed. Paul, then, following a very standard midrashic move rereads the verse (or indeed rewrites it syntaxically), so that all of its elements will add to the meaning. He does so, in fact, by taking the “by doing it” as modifying the entire phrase “everyone who does not uphold everything that is written in the book of the Law.” We could rewrite the verse then as: “Everyone, who [precisely] by doing it does not uphold all that is written in the book of the Law, is under a curse” i.e. by doing it, by physical performance, works of the Law, one is not upholding all that which is written in the book of the Law, and that is the curse, because “all that is written” implies much more than mere doing! The hermeneutical move that Paul makes here is quite similar (although not identical) to that of the Rabbis in the Talmud on Exod 23:2, who interpreted “After the majority you must not incline to do evil, and you shall not bear witness in a suit to incline after the majority,” as meaning, that one must follow the majority.

As Stephen Westerholm has concluded in general, “What is crucial to note is that Paul consistently distinguishes between the ‘doing’ of the law’s commands required of those subject to it and the ‘fulfilling’ of the law by Christians.” The end of Galatians provides an important parallel: “For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, ‘You shall love your neighbor
as yourself’” (5:14). In this verse, Paul speaks of ‘fulfilling’ the Law, not of ‘doing’ it. John Barclay has made the very telling point that πληροῦν and its Hebrew equivalent ימיר are never used in Jewish sources in either Hebrew or Greek with reference to the Law. Further, when Paul refers to Jewish observance of the Law he uses φυλάσσω (=keep), ποιέω (=do), and πράσσω (=practice) but not πληροῦν (fulfill). Jews do the Law, but Christians fulfill the Law and even more to the point of this essay, the very notion of fulfillment is a Hellenistically-inspired Pauline innovation in theology, although obviously one for which the way was prepared by the prophetic diatribes against the hypocrisy of bringing sacrifices while ignoring homeless people. It replaces the difference of the doing of many material practices with the logos of one ideal fulfillment, just as the difference of Jew and Greek or male and female is also to be replaced by the Ideal One, spiritualized phallus which cannot be circumcised physically but with a “circumcision not made with hands.” Thus precisely by dying to the Law according to the flesh, the Christian believer can fulfill the Law of Christ. By crucifying the flesh, together with its passions and desires and its fleshly practices, circumcision, the Christian becomes able to walk in the spirit and fulfill the Law of faith working through love. This is the true circumcision which defines the true Jew (Rom 2:25–29).

This distinction is the clue to understanding the key verse, Gal 3:10, where according to my interpretation Paul argues that those who “do” the Law are not “fulfilling” the Law. I assume that the ἐκμακρύνω (upholding) of the Deuteronomy quotation is semantically (or perhaps theologically) roughly equivalent to e.g. πεπληροῦσα (fulfilled) in Galatians 5:14. The Hebrew שָׁבֵץ of the verse certainly means “to fulfill the requirement of” as well as “to preserve.” So men of works of the Law; those who hold that works justify and practice accordingly are accursed by the Law itself, because of their misunderstanding of the true import of the Law. It is these to whom Paul will later refer in Romans as, “you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.” This interpretation is supported as well by Paul’s own usage in other places, for instance Rom 3:27, where he explicitly contrasts “doing” which equals “the Law of works,” with “The Law of faith.”

The next verse is also quite simply understood as a midrashic argument, although from the rabbinic point of view surely a “midrash of lies.” Paul wishes to prove that “nobody is justified before God by Law.” He first cites the verse of Habakkuk which reads that the “righteous live by faith.” It follows from this that those who live by faith are the righteous, i.e. the justified. He then argues that those who live by the Law do not live by
faith, since the verse in Leviticus explicitly reads “He who does them lives by them,” i.e. one who does the commandments lives by them and not by faith. Since, then, we know from Habbakuk that the righteous live by faith, he who lives by them and not by faith (and, thereby, does not fulfill the Law) is not righteous—is not justified. Paul has then a perfect proof that “nobody is justified before God by Law.”

21 This interpretation obviates Sanders’s claim that Paul is here denying the truth of a verse of the Torah. 22 Far from contradicting the Leviticus verse, Paul is confirming its literal truth: One who does them, lives by them. Paul is using methods of interpretation that would not surprise any Pharisee (I suspect) or rabbi, although the results he arrives at would, of course, shock them to their depths. 23 The phrase “does them” in the Leviticus verse is precisely the same as “to do them” in the verse of Deuteronomy, so this argument is a direct sequel to the previous one. 24 Finally, it is highly significant that in the Leviticus context, the Law which one does is specifically marked as that which marks Jews off from Gentiles:

You shall not act according to the way of life of Egypt in which you lived. And you shall not act according to the way of life of Canaan, into which I will cause you to go, and you shall not live by their laws. You shall do my statutes [מַעֲשֵׂיָי] and keep my laws and live by them. I am the Lord your God. And you shall keep all my laws and all my statutes and do them, which if a man does he will live by them.

Given the whole vector of Paul’s argument in Galatians, it is hardly surprising that he would choose this set of verses as his negative example. The word מַעֲשֵׂיָי, “statutes,” is a highly marked term for Jewish privilege in having been given the Law, because of its use in the psalm verse: “He has spoken his words to Jacob, his laws and statutes to Israel. He has not done so for any other nation, and statutes, they do not know” [Ps 147:16-17]. Therefore, Paul argues, those who do them, and thereby mark themselves off from the Egyptians and the Canaanites, live by them and not by faith, but those who live by faith, which is for all, are righteous. Ergo those who do them are not righteous.

It is not insignificant, moreover, that this verse of Leviticus which Paul has just treated so negatively appears in the context of justification of the laws against incest which appear immediately following it, and it is precisely these which are identified as the “way of life of Egypt and Canaan.” This provides, I think, a very elegant account of Paul’s sudden panic about libertinism in chapters five and six of Galatians, a much more plausible one than the assumption of a proto-gnostic sect in Galatia. If this was the nature and content of Paul’s preaching on his first visit to Corinth as well,
it is not entirely surprising that some of the Corinthian Christians “misunderstood” and concluded that Christian freedom consisted of abrogation of the laws against incest as well.

[1.2] Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree?’” (3:13)

“In the context of the letter, he certainly assumes that the Law becomes a curse for those who seek justification before God ‘by works of the Law,’ because by doing so they deprive themselves of the blessing of Abraham given to ‘men of faith.’” Humanity has been enslaved by the “elements of this world,” including for Jews, the Law (for the positive role of the law as παντελόγος see my discussion of 3:24). Christ through his double sacrifice of being born a human, coming under the Law and being crucified has freed Jews from the slavery of the Law and Gentiles from the slavery of the elements of the world. All of this will be developed further in chapter four of the Letter and is prefigured in the present verse.

Once again, the crucial question is how to understand the prooftext that Paul cites, and once again midrashic method provides a possible and, to my mind, very attractive answer. The way to understand this midrash was pointed out by Klein nearly eighty years ago and repeated by Schoeps but needs refining. The important point is that the exegesis is based on a pun, on a double meaning of the Hebrew verbal adjective “taluy” (נֵלֶעַ=hung). In the older version of this interpretation, the pun was that “hung” also means “elevated,” so the reference is to the fact that through the crucifixion Jesus was elevated. While this understanding is certain in my opinion on the right methodological track, it does not solve the problem of explaining how Paul learns from this verse that “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law” and that is, of course, the crux of the matter? In rabbinic Hebrew, however, the root of נֵלֶעַ has another sense as well, namely “to suspend,” and this usage is attested in the Mishna precisely with a “curse” as its complement. Thus, we find in Mishna Sota 3:4, a statement that the wife who drinks the bitter waters is cursed if she had been guilty of adultery, but “If she had merit, the merit נֵלֶעַ (suspends) [the curse] for her.” My suggestion is then that Paul, following accepted midrashic practice, for which the parallels cited in Schoeps are valid, does read the verse as a pun, almost as a visual pun or rhabus on the crucifixion. Jesus, by being suspended on the cross has suspended
the curse, for “He who is hung is a curse of God, and the curse of God is suspended.”29 The entire propositional content of Paul’s statement is now supported by the midrashic reading.30

[1.3] The promise of the Spirit through faith

“That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, and that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (3:14)

Paul here, as elsewhere, spiritualizes and allegorizes the notion of kinship. If, for rabbincic Jews the crucial signifier is actual, physical descent from Abraham, for Paul, it is entry into the faith community of Christ which constitutes descent from Abraham, according to the Spirit. He equates the promise made to Abraham—that Sarah would bear Isaac—to Abraham’s spiritual paternity of Jesus, “the seed” to whom the promise was made, and through Jesus of all who believe. Thus the exegetical notion that the blessing is for the descendants of Abraham by the “promise” and not to those who are his descendants “by the flesh” is fulfilled in time by God, through the sending of the Messianic seed through which the promise was made. The fulfillment of the promise is, however, through the participation of the people in the spirit which has been offered them by Christ’s crucifixion. The people enter into the spirit by participating in the experience and commitment of the crucifixion and resurrection. Such participation constitutes acceptance of the gift; they thus enter into the descent by the promise, the type of which was the birth of Isaac through the promise and not natural carnal means.31 Indeed, it is not so much Abraham who is the type of Christ but Isaac. God offers adoption as spiritual children through the sacrifice of his son, but people either accept or reject it. They accept it by allowing the gifts of the spirit into their hearts. If they reject it by going back to the works of the Law, implying thereby that only physical descent or physical adoption into the Jewish family saves, then Christ died on the Cross in vain. As Ferdinand Christian Baur put it so precisely already at the end of the nineteenth century, “According to the Jerusalem apostles, it is in vain to be a Christian without being a Jew also. According to [Paul], it is in vain to be a Christian if, as a Christian, one chooses to be a Jew as well.”32

In Galatians Paul supports the connection between the allegorical theory of the Law and christology. The two midrashim together provide the argument. Already the Law itself has informed us of its own dual nature
by telling us that anyone who remains with the physical level of "doing the Law" has not fulfilled the Law. This is then followed by the midrashic argument that anyone who does the Law is not living by faith, which alone justifies, and finally, that Christ through his crucifixion has revealed the true meaning of the Law, namely that its material signifier is to be replaced by its spiritual signified. In the next section Paul will turn to the third aspect of the triad, the question of physical descent and genealogy, which he will also read in accord with the allegorical structure.

[1.4] Brothers, I draw an example from common human life

"Brothers, I draw an example from common human life: likewise, nobody annuls or adds a codicil to a covenant of a man, once it has been ratified. Now the promises were spoken to Abraham 'and to his seed.' It does not say 'and to his seeds,' as about many but about one: 'and to your seed'—which is Christ. But this is what I mean: the Law which came 430 years later does not make void a covenant previously ratified by God, in order to nullify the promise. Hence, if the inheritance comes through Law, it no longer comes through the promise. However, by promise God has granted it to Abraham as a gift of grace." (3:15–18)

In these verses, Paul sets up his opposition between physical descent and genealogy, which are equal to the literal, to Israel according to the flesh, which corresponds as well to the historical Jesus, versus descent according to the promise, Israel according to the spirit, which corresponds to the risen Christ. N. T. Wright has recently contributed what I take to be a new and correct interpretation of this passage. "Seed" here does not mean Christ per se but rather "family," as its Hebrew original often does as well. In order for the traditional Jewish theological conviction that in the end all will be saved through the covenant to be true, the promise must devolve on all in the end. Now it does not say "seeds," i.e. families but "seed"—family, so it follows that in order for the covenantal promise to come true, all of humanity must be constituted through Christ into a single seed. The Law, which came later and serves a temporary function could not be the means by which this will come about, since it divides humanity into families and does not join them into one seed. In any case, God's promise is a "gift of Grace," a term which certainly echoes the Hebrew מִסְרָת גְּרָא, where the Hebrew root for grace is used adverbially to mean a free, unconditional gift.
[1.5] Why then the law?

"Why then the law? It was added because of transgression, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained by angels through an intermediary. Now an intermediary is from more than one, but God is one." (3:19-20)

Proper clarification of this and the following passage is crucial to any construal of Paul's theology of Judaism. There seems to me to be not the slightest reason in this text to understand the word χάριν as telic, namely that Paul wishes to say that the Law was given in order to produce transgression, as Betz, following many modern commentators argues.24 The simplest explanation of the verse is that the Law was given as a temporary and secondary measure, because of the existence of sin in the present age, in order to restrain people from transgressing until the coming of Jesus who is the seed.25 Thielman has proposed another interpretation which seems to me also to be a distinct possibility. He reads τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσέπθη (added because of transgression) as having causal force, not, however, in the sense of preventing transgression, but in the sense of providing an answer to transgression, namely punishment. This helps to make good sense of the συνεκλεισαν ή γραφή (Scripture consigned or confined under sin) of verse 22 below as well.26

After hundreds of years and hundreds of interpretations, I believe that Wright has solved the problem of these verses.27 The "seed" to whom the promise was made is the new one human family of Christ, and it was ordained by angels through an intermediary, Moses. It is the next verse which Wright's reading decisively clarifies. The translation given above follows standard interpretations, none of them successful, which in one way or another find here a logical argument that the Law must have been given by angels and not by God. Wright translates rather, "Now [the mediator] is not a mediator of one, but God is one." Having established above that "one" here means the new unified single family of humanity in Christ, we understand the verse to mean that Moses was not the mediator for this one family of humanity but for only a part of it, for a difference within the sameness, so this cannot be the fulfillment that God looks for, because God is one. The verse becomes on this reading an exact parallel to Paul's argument in Romans 3:20: "Is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also." As Wright sums up his interpretation:

The problem of v. 20b can be solved quite easily once 20a is read in this way. Moses is not the mediator of the 'one family' but God is one, and therefore
desires one family, as he promised to Abraham. The presupposition of Paul's argument is that, if there is one God—the foundation of all Jewish belief—there must be one people of God. Were there to be two or more 'peoples,' the whole theological scheme would lapse back into some sort of paganism, with each tribe or race possessing its own national deities.\(^{38}\)

The rabbis, however, did not see it that way, allowing that others could worship God and be saved without joining into one People of God. Once more, I think the passion for unity must be ascribed to Paul's Hellenistic Jewish Weltanschauung.

The Law is thus demoted in importance vis-à-vis the promise, but whether it was given to prevent or to punish transgression, there is no suggestion here that it has a demonic function nor that these angels are to be understood demonically. It is easy to see, however, how gnostics could find such a meaning here. In any case, the important point is that there is no warrant here to understand that the function of the Law was to produce transgression, in order to increase the scope of the working of God's grace—rather like a doctor making the patient sicker in order to increase the scope of her healing power. Nor do the next verses argue for such an interpretation either.

[1.6] _Is the law then against the promises of God?_

"Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not. For if a law had been given which could make alive, then justification would indeed be by the law. But the scripture consigned everything under sin, in order that the promise, by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Before the faith came, we were kept in custody under the Law, confined until the coming faith was to be revealed. Therefore, the Law has been our guardian until Christ, in order that we might be justified by faith. But since the faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian." (3.21-25)

Paul begins this argument with another logical proof. If the Law, as he has just said, is given for the purpose of preventing sin, does it not annul the promise, i.e. does it not substitute itself for the promise and obviate the promise?\(^{39}\) This seems to me a strong argument against the interpretation of the previous verses that the Law was given to increase sin, in order that the grace of the promise would be necessary, for if that were the case then the question of the Law being against the promise would not arise! Only if the Law is accorded the positive role of confining sin would it be even possible to imagine that it somehow cancels the promise of a "free gift of grace."
Verse 23 “But the scripture” seems difficult for my interpretation, however. It seems to promote a reading that the Law itself produces and thus confines everyone under sin. However, this problem is illusory. Note that Paul switches here from “The Law” to “Scripture” as the subject of the sentence, and this shift must be significant. He is not speaking here of “The Law” at all, but of the text. The action of the text is linguistic, so “consigns/confines everyone under sin,” must be understood as: “predicates of all humanity that they are sinful.” To understand this point, the following linguistic parallel may be helpful. In his book on Paul, Barclay has written the following sentence: “The peculiar pessimism about ‘mankind’ and ‘flesh’ in the Dead Sea Scrolls arises from an apocalyptic and sectarian perspective which consigns everyone to doom unless they experience the grace of God within the elect community.”

Now just as Barclay does not mean to say here that the sectarian perspective caused (performative) everyone to be doomed but only that it declared (constative) everyone doomed, so also could we understand Paul’s Scripture “confining” everyone under sin, i.e. that it declares that all are sinful. This interpretation obviates also the difficult conclusion that Paul is equating “under sin” in this verse with “under the Law” in the next and therefore the Law (=sin). For ὑπὸ ἀμαρτίαν in the sense of “sinful,” see Romans 3:9. It may be that Paul holds, as indeed he seems to, that the Law cannot redeem from sin (Rom 6:14), but this still does not mean that he holds that the Law produces, increases or causes sin. An attractive alternative interpretation is given by Thielman who understands the verse to mean that Scripture (which he takes as equal to the Law here) confines everyone who is sinful and does not allow them to escape the consequences of their sin.

In either case, however, the function of the Law is not to give life. The answer to the question about the Law being against the promises, then, is of course: No it is not. Now comes Paul’s proof: If there were a law which could make alive (=justify), then indeed justification would come from the Law and the promise would be nullified. The function of the Law, however, is not to give life. All it does is confine all under sin, or by reason of sin, so that they may continue until the promise is given to those who believe. Therefore, the original premise is proven wrong: The Law does not annul the promise. Paul then explains the positive function of the Law as a pedagogue who makes it possible for people to be justified by faith, and now that his function has been fulfilled, is no longer required.

Accordingly, we need not see the παιδεύωςς in a negative light as Betz implies (177) in order to follow Paul’s argument. If the pedagogue is a guide and baby-sitter appropriate for the small child, then we understand Paul’s
mashal perfectly. In the infancy of humanity the pedagogue was necessary because of sin (not to produce sin, a bizarre and near Marcionite notion, which Lutheran theologians refer to as “God’s strange work!”44), but now with the maturity of the coming the Christ the pedagogue is no longer necessary. If we do not accept the essentially Lutheranizing interpretation of Paul’s Law doctrine to the effect that it has never been a way of achieving virtue, then we do not need to render Paul’s notion of the Law as a pedagogue so discontinuous with the topos of Law as educator, which, as Betz remarks, was common from Plato on. On the other hand, there may be no doubt that Betz is correct that it is wrong to see here an argument that the Law prepared for the coming of Christ by educating people in that direction.45 The mashal in the beginning of chapter 4 completely disables such an interpretation. The pedagogue is not a teacher in the sense of one who prepares the child for adulthood but a guardian in the sense of one who keeps him or her out of trouble while waiting for adulthood. This does not, however, translate into such terms as “ugly” or “demonic” that Betz uses, nor to a notion that the pedagogue was sent to increase transgression!

[1:7] And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’

“I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no better than a slave, though he is the owner of all the estate; but he is under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. So with us; when we were children, we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe. But when the time had fully come, God set forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.” (4:1-7)

Paul develops and interweaves here two themes that he has set forth, the metaphor of the pedagogue and the Galatians’ memory of their baptism. He conjoins them through the slave-freeman antinomy of the baptismal formula by insisting that the child is alike in status to the slave. Further, the childhood image which has until now only been used to explain the status of the Law, given 430 years after the promise and only temporary, is now used analogously to explain the situation of the Galatians under Paganism. We, all of us, that is I as a Jew and you as Pagans, we were all under the elemental spirits of the universe: You the pagan gods
and I the Law. I wonder if Paul is thinking here of Deut 4:19 which seemingly ordains the stars as the proper worship of "The Nations." Thielman has, once more, made an attractive and simple alternative suggestion. He argues philologically that τα στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (the elements of the world) simply means the world itself, and the reason that Paul uses this "round-about" term is owing to the fact that στοιχεῖα is also used metaphorically for the "elements" as that which a child learns first in school, thus effectively continuing Paul's figure of a child's education and maturity. But when we had grown up, then God the Father sent forth his son to redeem us born under the Law that we might receive adoption as sons and also you as well. Because you are also sons, at the baptismal ceremony God sent his spirit into our hearts, and we all cried out "Abba! Father."

The explicit citation of the Aramaic alludes, I think, to two things: Jesus's own crying out of "Abba" to God and the traditionary pre-Pauline liturgy of the baptism. Therefore, through God, you (and we) have been recognized as a son, by entering into the spiritual body of the Son, and therefore no longer a slave but an heir. Paul's figure for the condition of Israel under the Law demonstrates, I think, beyond doubt that he does not hold the Law to be demonic or evil, or the commitment to keeping the Law to be contemnable in the way that the variations of the "Lutheran" interpretation of Paul would have it. This "slavery" is the benevolent and beneficial slavery of the child. It is for his own good. Only a fool, however—You foolish Galatians—would prefer to remain in such a state and not grow up into the status of heir. In an unpublished paper, David Henkin has analyzed this text brilliantly. He writes:

Significantly, the elevation of the Christian to the status of son is not an adoption in the ordinary sense of a superimposition of a natural title on someone who has no natural claim to the title. As the metaphor of the custodian (the ψάλτης) in the preceding verses implies, the apocalyptic moment is one in which sons (who were always by nature sons, though their contingent historical position obscured this fact) are recognized and redeemed by their rightful father. The reshuffling of the lines of genealogy is presented here as an act of restoration. The historical signifiers that Jewish law prescribed to represent a kind of paternal bond with God are peeled away and sons are recognized by their father by virtue of their faith, which is to say by virtue of the capacity to recognize him as their father.

This, I think then, provides the perfect summation of Paul's theology of Judaism and the Jews. They and their Law had literal value at a certain point in human history, in the childhood of humanity. Now, however, that maturity has come in the guise of the coming of Christ, his crucifixion and
rising from the dead, the value of the signifier has been superseded. There is no more role for Israel as such in its concrete sense—except always for the promise of Romans 9–11 that in the end it will not be abandoned but redeemed by coming to faith in Christ. At stake is not Paul’s love for Jews. I take very seriously his anguish in the beginning of Romans 9 over his brothers in the flesh. This very anguish, however, is precisely that which signifies that as Jews—that is as the historically understood concrete community of the flesh—Israel has no more role to play in history.

A true parable may help make the point clearer. A Jewish friend of my family’s was in the business of importing equipment for chicken farmers. As such, among his major customers, were Anabaptists in Pennsylvania, with whom he became very friendly over a number of years. At one point, at a meal, the wife of his customer became distraught and began to cry. When asked why she was crying, she answered: Because Sidney is such a lovely person, and he is going to go to hell. I have no doubt that her love for Sidney was real—and specific, not merely abstract love for all human beings—, just as was Paul’s for his Jewish relatives. Nevertheless, it would be hard to claim that this woman valued Sidney, as a Jew, and this is my point about Paul. If the only value and promise afforded the Jews, even in Romans 11, is that in the end they will see the error of their ways, one cannot claim that there is a role for Jewish existence in Paul. It has been transcended by that which was its spiritual, allegorical referent always and forever: faith in Jesus Christ and the community of the faithful in which there is no Jew or Greek.

On my reading, then, it is totally inappropriate to think of Paul’s thought as anti-Semitic, or even as anti-Judaic (except for perhaps the occasional outbursts of temper and frustration in 1 Thess 2:14 [if genuine] and Philippians 3). Paul loves his relatives according to the flesh, anguishes over them, and is convinced that in the end they will be saved. This salvation, however, is precisely for those Jews a bitter gospel not a sweet one, because it is conditional precisely on abandoning that to which we hold so dearly, our separate cultural, religious identity, our own fleshy and historical practice, our existence according to the flesh, our Law, our difference. Paul has simply allegorized our difference quite out of existence.

[1.8] “Now Hagar is Mt. Sinai in Arabia”

It is in the famous allegory of the two wives of Abraham (Gal 4:21–31) that Paul explicitly develops the theoretical moment of his theological/
political program, for it is here that he first (and solely) uses the actual term "allegory," which I read as the key to his discourse. This is the climax of the entire argument and preaching of the letter, in which all of its themes are brought together and shown to cohere. Those interpreters who regard this passage as out of place or an afterthought are, I think, quite missing the point of Paul's discourse. Paul has just in the previous section once again railed against his Jewish Christian opponents for insisting that the Galatians must become Jews in order to be Christians. He has used the language of inclusion and exclusion. Now there is nothing more inherently exclusionary and no text which more explicitly refers to both circumcision and to conversion than the text of Abraham, his wives Sarah and Hagar and their respective children, the one included and the one excluded. In order for Paul's theology to work he must reverse the terms of that constitutive biblical text and uproot the genealogical significance of the Promise. He must contrast, indeed, the Promise to the genealogy. Allegory is the perfect hermeneutic vehicle for this transformation, because it figures both the status of language as well as the status of the body itself. Just as the language of the text is translated by an allegorical reading into a spiritual meaning, so the body of the believer is translated out of its ethnic status and into a spiritual body—again the very notion that verse 19 has insisted upon, for it is Paul who is going to give birth to the Christians; he is pregnant and in travail with them until "Christ is formed in them."

Paul here brilliantly sets up the terms of his onto-theology. Isaac's very birth was not by natural means but through an angelic promise to his mother. This "promise" corresponds to the promise that was made to Abraham that "his seed will inherit" and that through him all of the peoples will be blessed, as well as the promise to Sarah that she would bear a son. On the other hand, Ishmael, the child born to Hagar was born by natural means. Isaac, accordingly signifies "the spirit" and Ishmael, "the flesh." "The spirit" can thus be replaced here by "the promise," and "according to the promise" becomes a hermeneutical term, a way of understanding Scripture. In a recent paper, Barry Sang has elegantly described the exact methodology of Paul's allegory here. His argument runs as follows. Paul gives us a vital clue to his hermeneutic system, not only by using the term ἀλληγορέω (allegory), but also συναγωγή (analogical ratios), which is related etymologically to the Aristotelian noun συναγωγή, which refers to the Pythagorean practice. As Gaston had already shown, Paul's method involves the Pythagorean practice of establishing parallel columns of corresponding dichotomies.
Among the sets of oppositions which can be gleaned from various places in his writings are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>flesh</th>
<th>spirit</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>body</td>
<td>soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>humans</td>
<td>God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus (before Easter)</td>
<td>Risen Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>literal</td>
<td>figurative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>works</td>
<td>faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>circumcision</td>
<td>baptism</td>
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<tr>
<td>traditional teaching</td>
<td>revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>earthly Jerusalem</td>
<td>heavenly Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Jewish church)</td>
<td>(Gentile church)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>genealogy</td>
<td>“Promise”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Barry Sang improves considerably on Gaston by demonstrating that it is precisely this method of drawing up pairs of coordinate columns which enables Paul's allegory. The two columns are set as opposites to each other, and accordingly the members of any one of the columns stand in an analogical (=equality of ratios) relationship with any other member of the same column. Consequently “according to the promise” is equivalent to “according to the spirit.” Since “according to the spirit,” is equivalent to the allegorical meaning of the physical sign, it follows that being born according to the spirit is the true meaning of descent from Abraham, of which being born according to the flesh is only the signifier. This last fillip brings Paul's hermeneutical method here even closer, I think, to Philo's than Sang would have it.

As the commentators sense, this allegorical formation is also supported by the distinction between slave and free which Paul has developed at length in the previous chapter as marking the distinction between Christian freedom and Jewish and pagan slavery to the “elements of the world.” It is the very concatenation of these several details that provides the extraordinary richness of the Pauline text here which can be compared to an ornate tapestry for both its surface detail and depth:

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one from the slave woman and one from the free woman. The one from the slave woman was born “according to the flesh,” however, while the one from the free woman “through the promise.” These things have an allegorical meaning. For they are two
covenants: one from Mt. Sinai, giving birth into slavery — this is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mt. Sinai in Arabia, but it also corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she lives in slavery together with her children. By contrast, the Jerusalem above is free — this is our mother. For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear: break forth and shout, you who are not in travail, for the children of the desolate one are more than the children of the one who has a husband." But you, my brothers, are children of promise, like Isaac. And just as in those days the one born "according to [the] flesh" persecuted the one "according to [the] spirit," so it is today.35

We thus see here the political and theological themes of the entire Pauline enterprise in this letter coming together here in one brilliant stroke. All of the antitheses that he has set up until now work together to convince the Galatians that they have but one choice, to remain in the spirit and not recommit themselves to the flesh, to remain in the covenant that was made according to the promise to the one seed of Abraham, the [spiritual] body of the risen Christ and not return to the slavery of the covenant with Sinai, which is the present Jerusalem — that is both the symbolic present Jerusalem as well as the church in Jerusalem by undertaking to fall back into the fleshly hermeneutic of literal interpretation of circumcision. Furthermore, at least in this passage we see how illusory is the contrast between allegory and typology.36 Because the present Christian situation is to be interpreted spiritually, therefore allegory is the appropriate mode for understanding it. To be sure, it is the historical event of the coming of the Christ, his crucifixion and resurrection which has precipitated the reading, but that very historical event is itself not history but an event that signifies the end — telos, both the finish and the revelation of the meaning — of history.37

As a mode of reading events, apocalyptic is, accordingly, structurally homologous to allegory. Allegory, typology, and apocalyptic all equally figure an "end to history." Jesus's birth as a Jew and his transformation in the crucifixion both signifies and effects the transformation/transition from the historical moment to the allegorical one, from the moment of ethnicity to the moment of the universal (spiritual) subject, from natural birth to spiritual rebirth in the promise.38 That is, it signifies insofar as the allegorical meaning was always already there, and it effects insofar as only at the apocalypse is that meaning revealed in the world. This interpretation, i.e. that the true meaning always existed and only waited for the Christ event in order to be revealed, is strongly supported by Galatians 3:8: "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand [προενηκτείλατο] to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all nations be blessed,'" but "Now before faith came, we were
confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed” (3:23). The Christ event is thus precisely apocalyptic, in the strictest sense of that term—revelation--; it has revealed the universally true meaning, faith, that always subsisted within and above history, works of the Law.

For Paul allegory is indeed the speaking of the other; it reveals that the particular signifies the universal.59 We must realize the depth of Paul’s understanding of allegory not as a rhetorical device of language but as a revelation of the structure of reality (including historical reality) itself in order to have an appreciation for this passage and his thought in general. It is not that allegory and typology have been mixed here,60 but history itself is transformed through this typology into allegory, and Paul’s apocalypse is fully realized. Accordingly, interpretations of Paul which focus on his apocalypticism, understanding it as only a version of the general Palestinian Jewish apocalyptic, have also seriously mistaken the thrust of his Gospel in my opinion. It is not only the case that the fulfillment of time has come but more to the point that Paul understands it in a certain, specific way, as the revelation of the inner meaning of outward signs, an inner meaning which is always already there, whether the outward signs are the flesh, the Jews, the Law or the historical Jesus. It seems to me to be a serious hermeneutic error to make one’s interpretation of Paul depend on the apocalyptic expectation, which is after all not even mentioned once in Galatians, rather than the apocalyptic fulfillment which has already been realized in the vision of the crucified Christ according to the Spirit, Christ’s spirit, Paul’s and that of the Galatians.61 Even J. Christiaan Beker, the most trenchant defender of Paul as apocalypticist, admits that “Galatians threatens to undo what I have posited as the coherent core of Pauline thought, the apocalyptic co-ordinates of the Christ-event that focus on the imminent, cosmic triumph of God.”62 This suggests that as central as expectation of the parousia is for Paul, and Beker’s reading is impressive indeed, it is not yet “the coherent core of Pauline thought” but a vitally important element of that thought whose core lies yet elsewhere. The “elsewhere” that I argue for is, of course, the unification of humanity, of which both the realized eschatology of the Cross and the expected eschatology of the parousia are equally vital parts.

[2] Paul’s Allegorization of the Torah

“He Who Loves His Neighbor Has Fulfilled the Law” (Romans 13:8).

To the ears of a rabbinic Jew, this statements sounds both totally familiar and totally discordant. It is of a piece with Gal 5:14, discussed above, and
other Pauline statements like "neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision is anything but keeping the commandments of God" (1 Cor 7:19), or even closer to home, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). Romans 8:4, with its talk of the "just requirement of the Law" also fits into this category. This is not an accident or a sport in Pauline discourse, therefore, but a very central moment. The "just requirement of the Law" is defined as one thing and one thing only: faith working through love. Moreover, here as elsewhere, Paul refers to "fulfilling the Law" and not to "doing" it. I have already observed this crucial distinction more than once.

Frank Thielman has tried very hard to bring this complex of Pauline texts close to some form of Judaism contemporary with Paul. He considers these passages as evidence that Paul, "says straightforwardly that believers should keep the law" — from my point of view, an astonishing remark and one that simply swallows whole Paul's revolutionary redefinition of "the Law"! Thielman, of course, attempts to support this point of view by claiming:

Paul has, of course, defined obedience to the law in a way different from his Judaizing opponents. They took a strict attitude toward observing such particularly Jewish commands as circumcision whereas Paul took a more liberal attitude toward these requirements (1 Cor 7:19; Gal 6:15). Nonetheless, as we have seen in chapter three, the argument between Paul and his opponents is not between a renegade Paul who has redefined the law at will and normative Judaism, but, to a large measure, between two Jewish ways of looking at the law.

This is simply not adequate for several reasons. First of all, such modern terms as "strict" and "liberal" are entirely anachronistic in this context. If the Torah is the word of God, as all Jews, including Paul, held, something more than attitudes of strictness or liberality will be required in order to distinguish between parts of God's word which are or are not valid or binding. Secondly, since Paul is a Jew and since we no longer use such terminology as "normative Judaism" outside of theological discourse, the statement that the argument between Paul and his opponents is one of two Jewish ways of looking at the Law is tautological and therefore empty of content. The question is rather whether Paul's Jewish way of looking at the Law is or is not part of larger movements of Jews of his time and how the different Judaisms relate to each other typologically and historically.

Thielman claims to have presented evidence that Paul's position was
not substantially different from that of other Jewish groups of his time. This evidence, when examined, simply does not hold up. "Thus it is difficult," Thielman writes, "to see any great difference between what Paul says in 5:14 and what Philo describes as the principle theme of sermons heard in the synagogues of 'every city':

But among the vast number of particular truths and principles there studied, there stand out practically high above the others two main heads: one of duty to God as shewn by piety and holiness, one of duty to men as shewn by humanity and justice. . . (Spec. Leg. 262-63 [282])"64

I submit that Paul's doctrine has very little to do with what Philo's text describes. Where Philo's preachers argue that these principles are the most important of the 'Torah, this does not in any sense constitute a claim that one has fulfilled the Torah by observing these principles while not, for instance, circumcising male infants or observing the food laws and Sabbaths. To be sure, there were apparently Jews in Philo's world who thought so, but Philo himself rails against such views in the following terms:

It is true that receiving circumcision does indeed portray the excision of pleasure and all passions, and the putting away of the impious conceit, under which the mind supposed that it was capable of begetting by its own power; but let us not on this account repeal the law laid down for circumcising. Why, we shall be ignoring the sanctity of the Temple and a thousand other things, if we are going to pay heed to nothing except what is shewn us by the inner meaning of things.67

To be sure, the point of the Law is to teach these "two main heads" of piety toward God and justice toward man, but for Philo, as for virtually anyone else calling him or herself Jewish at that time as far as we know, this did not abrogate "particularly Jewish commands," and there were not, outside perhaps of very minute groups, "two Jewish attitudes toward the Law."68

Nor are any of the other texts which Thielman cites any more convincing. Eleazar's argument in the Letter of Aristeas that the purpose of the peculiarly Jewish commandments is to be "symbolic reminders of the virtues by which the people of God should seek to order their lives: justice, peace and the contemplation of God," certainly does not bespeak the abrogation of those commandments, nor do the apologetics of a Pseudo-Phocylides or the lack of mention of "ceremonial" commandments in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs demonstrate any such notions of Judaism. What all of these texts do demonstrate is that Paul was troubled
by something which troubled many, particularly Greek-speaking, Jews of the first century, the “special laws” of Judaism, those that marked off Jews from the rest of humanity. Even stories about the “Pharisees” encode this issue. Perhaps the most famous is the one of the Gentile who came to Hillel to be taught the Torah while standing on one foot. Hillel, in accordance with his fashion, answered gently: “Do not do unto others what you hate done to yourself.” But then added: “Now go learn the rest!” It is that addition which Hillel (according to the story) makes and Paul does not which marks the Pauline off from virtually any other Jewish discourse. The others wish Gentiles to appreciate Judaism, perhaps to join it; Paul wishes all humanity to become one unit in love working through faith in Christ. The “plaint” was a common one; his solution, I maintain, an uncommon one—although, perhaps not unprecedented.⁶⁹

There is further an elegant argument that allegorization and spiritualization represented Paul’s hermeneutic approach to the Law. I refer to 1 Cor 9:8-11, where Paul uses precisely an allegorical interpretation of a law in the Torah which he explicitly applies to the Christian situation:

Do I say this on human authority [κατὰ διάθεσιν]? Does not the law say the same? For it is written in the law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of a share in the crop. If we have sown spiritual good [κατὰ πνευματικά ἐκπραματίσαν] among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits [κατὰ σωφρικά δὲπράσαμεν]?⁷⁰

Paul engages in a double spiritualizing move in interpreting the verse of the law. In the first place he explicitly denies that its literal sense—Do not muzzle an ox—is relevant at all. Indeed one might ask whether, according to Paul, it is forbidden to muzzle an ox while it treads.⁷¹ To this point, however, Paul’s interpretation is not entirely unlike a fairly rare but attested midrashic move which reads certain halakhic verses as metaphors for something else. Thus, for example the verse of Leviticus which prohibits cursing the deaf is understood by the Rabbis as a prohibition on cursing anyone. Paul’s next move, however, seems to me to leave midrash behind and enter allegory, namely his re-reading of the grain which is trodden as “spiritual good,” suggesting also the familiar hermeneutic antinomy of the spiritual and the physical as well. It follows that even though Paul refers to the Law as an authority here, this is the Law as understood κατὰ πνεῦμα, in accord with its spiritual sense and not its literal, physical sense.⁷²

By understanding that the Law according to the flesh was the signifier of an allegorical Law of love according to the spirit, and that those, including
ethnic Jews, who received the spirit were absolved of the requirements of the Law according to the flesh.²² Paul was not apologizing for Jewish Law and particularity, for Jewish difference, as the other Hellenistic Jewish writers cited but annulling Jewish difference. “Remain as I am, for I have become as you are” (Galatians 4:12).²³ In the pathos of this verse, is the center of Paul’s ministry. He has given up his specific Jewish identity in order to merge his essence into the essence of the Gentile Christians and create the new spiritual People of God. If they now turn away from this transmutation into the allegorical and become Jewish Christians, they will have thereby lowered themselves and left Paul alone. The entire force of his apocalypse will have been annulled. It is difficult for me to understand how scholars can assume that Paul remained law observant given this verse. The entire continuation of this passage through verse 20 can easily be understood in the light of this interpretation. The theme of exclusion and inclusion which Paul develops in verse 17 is central and refers once more to inclusion in and exclusion from the Jewish People, and this leads with perfect naturalness into the allegory of Ishmael and Hagar, perhaps the biblical text that most explicitly thematized exclusion. For Paul, the only possibility for human equality involved human sameness. Difference was the threat. If Paul is not the origin of anti-Semitism (and I hold that he is not), it may certainly be fairly said that he is the origin of The Jewish Question.

The upshot of the above discussion is that there is no evidence in Galatians on my reading that Paul’s problem with the Law was connected with the impossibility of keeping the Law fully, nor that the Law was given in order to increase sin so that grace might abound more fully. The Law was rather given to the Jews, as a temporary measure for specific historical reasons, meant to be superseded by its spiritual referent, faith, when the time would come, which it of course has. Paul’s argument is then not anti-Judaic in the sense that certain interpretations of it would have it be. It is not a claim that God has rejected the Jews because they were inadequate in some sense or another, because their keeping of the Law was a striving against God!, an attempt to force him to justify them, a form of boasting, self-righteousness and pride, a religion of Sacred Violence or any of the other variations of this essentially anti-Judaic topos. The Jews as concrete signifier of the fulfilled spiritual signified, the body of Christ, the Church, had simply outlived their usefulness. They stood in the world now only as the sign of something else. They had been allegorized out of real historical existence, and their concrete, separate existence and cultural difference were now vestigial, excepting only the faithful promise
that in the end God would keep His promise to them, and they would be redeemed—as Christians. Paul’s hermeneutic of the Jews as signifier of the faithful body of Christians, of the Jews as the literal—κατά σάρκα—of which Christians are the allegorical signified, κατά νοημα, even if not the “origin of anti-Semitism” certainly has effects in the world until this day. In other words, I argue that while Galatians is not an anti-Judaic text, its theory of the Jews nevertheless is one that is inimical to Jewish difference, indeed to all difference as such.\textsuperscript{24}

Notes


2. Aside from Galatians 3:10 which I treat here, other verses which allegedly attest to a position that one who does not successfully keep the whole Law cannot be saved are 5:3 and 6:13 of the same Letter. Citing the former simply manifests a confusion between two entirely separate concepts: 1) the requirement to keep the whole Law and 2) success in fulfilling that requirement as a necessary condition for salvation. All Paul is saying is that if one converts to Judaism by being circumcised, then one is obligated to keep the whole Torah, a proposition which is certainly true in any form of rabbinic Judaism. He is not saying that a good faith failure to meet this obligation is damning. As for 6:13, following the interpretation that I will give to this verse below, it is entirely irrelevant to this question. As far as I know, there was no strain of Judaism, whether Qumranian, Hellenistic, rabbinic or “Shammaite,” which held that failure to completely meet the requirements of the Law was damning. Sanders has made the interesting suggestion that “God’s strange work” (the Lutheran term for God having given the Torah in order to increase sin) was indeed a genuine Pauline notion in his struggle to make some sense of the existence of the Law, but one that he later abandoned because of its palpable theological inadequacy (\textit{Paul, the Law,} 144-5). In a sense, I would agree with Sanders that Paul proposes various solutions to the problem of the Law. I would, however, cast this point quite differently, arguing that for Paul the replacement of the literal, physical κατά σάρκα Law by the spiritual, allegorical κατά νοημα interpretation was one of his central and immutable ideas. The question becomes displaced then from the problem of “the Law” per se to the problem of the literal Law.


5. I am in a tradition here of Jewish interpreters of Paul who read these passages as midrashim and interpret them by referring to standard midrashic methodologies, although the details of my interpretation are different from either of the predecessors of whom I am aware, namely Gottlieb Klein, \textit{Studien iiber Paulus} (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1918) and Schoeps, \textit{Paul}. Note that Davies wrote, regarding Btz: “The neglect of the Jewish connections of the Galatians
perhaps accounts for certain aspects of H.D.B.'s interpretation" (W. D. Davies, *Jewish and Pauline Studies* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 178). I would, however, suggest that these Jewish connections do not necessarily prove anything about the Galatians themselves, as they could have been primarily intended to be "overheard" by the opponents, who certainly were Jewish Christians. Sanders also writes of this passage, "We see, rather, Paul's skill in Jewish exegetical argument" (*Paul, the Law*, 26).

I do not know from where Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly draws his notion that in Galatians "Paul interprets the death of Christ against the background of a midrash on Numbers 25:1-13, in which Abraham and Phineas are linked by means of Psalm 106" (*Sacred Violence: Paul's Hermeneutic of the Cross* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 74). Only his inexorable determination to make Paul's discourse support his slander of Judaism explains this bizarre and unsupported interpretation.

6. James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 234. Romans 5:20 would seem to be a counterargument, and often is cited as support for the notion that Paul's theology of the Law was that it was given in order to increase the amount of sin in the world. Dunn, himself, however has provided the answer to this objection by glossing that verse as, "God's purpose for the law was not to distinguish Jewish righteous from gentile sinners, but to make Israel more conscious of its solidarity in sin with the rest of Adam's offspring" (*Romans* 1-8 [Word Biblical Commentary 38; Dallas: Word Books, 1988], 286). "Increasing transgression" means, then, increasing awareness of transgression. Another possibility is that Paul is arguing that the Law increases transgression as an unwanted side effect of its existence. Romans 7 would tend to support such a reading. In this case also, the point of Romans 5:20, as befits its context in Romans, is to convince Jews that they are not privileged vis-à-vis Gentiles in soteriology. Not only will the Law not help them get saved; it may hinder them. The Rabbis held very similar notions, also believing that it was easier for Gentiles to be saved than for Jews.


10. *Paul, the Law*, 22-3 and see the entire discussion there. Paul's interpretation is thus not dependent in any way on the "all" which is added to the verse in the Septuagint (pace Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: a Sociological Approach* [Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 56; Cambridge, 1986], 200, n. 108).


12. "Schlier's own solution is to argue from vv. 11-12 that the curse attaches to ἔκκαστος itself as it is determined by the law. But this is simply to ignore the fact
that Deut 27:6 applies the curse not to those who do the law but to those who do not” Charles H. Cosgrove, The Cross and the Spirit: a Study in the Argument and Theology of Galatians (Macon, Georgia: Mercer, 1988), 53. The interpretation of the midrash which I offer here answers this objection to Schlier's interpretation, which is the only one that makes theological sense in my view.


14. Richard Hays [Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul [New Haven: Yale, 1989], 4 [cf. also 194, n. 9]) refers to this passage and remarks that “One could hardly invent a more whimsical inversion.” If I am right, however, in my comparison with Paul, I think that we do not have whimsy here but time-honored hermeneutical principles of midrash which have to do with a theological understanding of the nature of God’s words (not Word).

15. See Stephen Westerholm, Israel’s Law and the Church’s Faith: Paul and his Recent Interpreters (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 203 and his very important remarks in n. 18. See also H. D. Betz, Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Church in Galatia (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 275. John M. G. Barclay (Obeying the Truth: Paul’s Ethics in Galatians [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991] 141) remarks (n. 114) that most commentators have not observed this distinction. Notice, however, the difference between my way of turning this interpretation and that of others who hold this view. Westerholm seems to regard this usage as a way of deflecting objections to Paul’s position by exploiting the “ambiguity” of the term fulfill. This is referred to explicitly as “looseness of speech” (Räisänen, affirmed by Barclay, 140 and 142). Barclay also ends up with this sort of explanation, “Given the Galatians’ attraction to the law, it would have been dangerous to dismiss the significance of the law altogether, but the positive statements Paul makes here about the law are hedged about with sufficient ambiguity to prevent the impression of reinstating the law” (141–2). I would phrase this entirely differently as: Given the fact that Paul believes that the Torah was given by God, it would have been impossible for him to dismiss it altogether, and the positive statements that he makes are the essence of his hermeneutical theology by which Christianity fulfills and does not abrogate Judaism. Thielsman, on the other hand, writes, “Paul, on this view, is not suddenly saying that the law has a place in Christian ethics (he has after all just forbidden the Galatians from practicing circumcision), but that Christian ethics overwhelm and, by overwhelming, supercede the Jewish law” (Frank Thielman, From Flight to Solution: a Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul’s View of the Law in Galatians and Romans [Supplements to Novum Testamentum vol. LXI; Leiden: Brill, 1989], 51). According to my interpretation, for Paul “Christian ethics” is simply the true interpretation of “Jewish Law” and always has been. This argument is supersessionist from the point of view of Jewish hermeneutics but not from Paul’s point of view. See also my discussion of Schlier’s interpretation of Galatians 3:10. Note the difference between this view and that of Dunn who draws the distinction as between “works of Law” and “doing the Law,” while mine puts works and doing on the same side over-against fulfilling (Jesus, Paul, and the Law, 202).
17. My interpretation is thus quite different from that of Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 139–40.
18. That is, I am suggesting that although it is not the same word, still by carrying a semantic component of completeness and by not including a semantic component of “mere” performance, it was available for Paul’s purpose of drawing a distinction between “doing” and “fulfilling,” once the former term, at the end of the verse, is understood as in contrast with the latter.
19. I thoroughly disagree with Schoeps’s rendition of this as a midrash based on the hermeneutic resolution of a contradiction, the “thirteenth canon of Rabbi Ishmael” (Schoeps, *Paul*, 177–8), but not on the grounds that it could not have existed before the second century (apud Beitz 138, who himself regards this hermeneutic principle to be as old as the Septuagint in another place: 158, n. 49, unless I have misunderstood him). Schoeps has both misconstrued the rabbinic canon (Nils Alstrup Dahl, *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission*, with Paul Donahue [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977], 159–77) and also reads what is not here. Schoeps’s basic instinct was, however, sound. This is a near perfect example of rabbinic style building up an argument from several verses, and, in fact, constitutes the best pendant I know for the antiquity of such style. The rabbis well recognized that their own methods of hermeneutic could be used to achieve “false” results. See also below.
21. This interpretation is similar to that of Sanders, *Paul, the Law*, 22.
24. Romans 2:13 seems to contradict this interpretation, for there, as Dunn points out, it is “doing” of the Law which justifies. This has long been recognized as a point of tension in Paul’s thought and expression. I think that the answer to this objection lies in the differences of context between the two passages. When Paul is contrasting “faith” to “works of the Law” then “doing” the Law—perhaps to be read as “mere doing”—is inadequate to “fulfill” the Law, but when he wishes to produce a polemic against hypocrisy, then “doing” is positively valued vis-à-vis mere hearing of the Law. In any case, I think it is quite clear here from the citation of the Leviticus verse that “doing them” is opposed to faith here and therefore of negative valence in this context. See Klyne R. Snodgrass, “Justification by Grace—to the Doers: An Analysis of the Place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul,” *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986) 72–93. See also Dunn, *Romans* 1–8.
25. Betz 149. Here I must say that I find Dunn's interpretation that the 'curse' is the curse of misunderstanding of the Law too narrowly focused for my taste (Jesus, Paul and the Law, 229). I do think that Paul's christology involves an ontological change in the status of the Law: It is the Law which is called by him pedagogue—not Christ!


27. It is, however, similar to the repeated pun on ἄνωθεν “to be crucified/lifted up” in John, e.g. 3:14. See the discussion in Paula Fredriksen, From Jesus to Christ: the Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1988.

28. Note that this pun is dependent on his knowing Hebrew, which his insistence on having been a Pharisee and advanced in the traditions of the Fathers would suggest. Although Betz (152) denies, in this connection, that Paul knew Hebrew, other first class Pauline scholars demur (e.g. Davies, Jewish and Pauline Studies, 177).

29. The technique is well-known from other first century texts, such as the pesharim of Qumran as well (Bilha Nitzan, Pesher Habakuk: a Scroll from the Wilderness of Judaea (IQPShab) [Hebrew: Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1986, 46–51). As for the grammatical infelicity of the feminine noun ‘curse’ being the subject of the masculine predicate פסל, that is certainly no problem for midrashic reading, for which נועם יஸר אל ישראל can mean “Pleasant are the songs of Israel!”

30. Richard Hays has referred to this bit of my text as “Boyarin’s midrash,” expressing in his dry way a great deal of skepticism as to its Pauline origin. He may very well be right, but who can tell? The operation here is paralleled by authentically midrashic readings (to be sure much later than Paul), and Paul’s argument makes no sense by any other reading, as far as I can tell.

31. Ideas of a virgin birth for Isaac were not unprecedented in pre-Christian Judaism. See, for instance, Philo, On the Cherubim, 40–52.


34. He simply asserts that this is the correct interpretation and that older commentators got it wrong without arguing the point. Presumably he is relying on arguments in other commentaries.

35. See D. J. Lull, “The Law was Our Pedagogue: A Study in Galatians 3:19–25,” Journal of Biblical Literature 105 (1986), 481–98. Barclay’s argument (Obeying the Truth, 107, n. 2), against Lull that, “whether you viewed the restraining influence of πανδιάκατός as good or bad depended on whether you were the parent employing him or the child under his care!” seems to me an uncharacteristically (for Barclay) weak reed. The issue is not how the child in her immaturity would perceive the role of the pedagogue but how an observer from outside would perceive this role, and in this, I think Lull is entirely correct in assuming that the role would be seen as positive and necessary. Therefore,
τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν must mean "to deal with transgressions"—either to prevent or punish them—and not "to generate transgressions." Sanders (Paul, the Law, 66), has made substantially the same point. On the other hand, Sanders continues generally to accept the standard Reformation claim that Paul argues here that "God gave the law, but he gave it in order that it would condemn all and thus prepare negatively for redemption on the basis of faith (3:22, 24, the purpose clauses conveying God’s intention)" (68). For my alternative interpretation of these verses, see immediately below.

36. Thielman, Flight, 74. See also next section. I am entirely unconvinced by Thielman’s notion that the only thing that has changed in the eschatological age is that now people have the ability to keep the Law, whereas before they were cursed with inability to do so. His offhand qualification in a footnote (76 n. 102) that “all but those portions that distinguish Jews from Gentiles continue to have validity in the age of the Spirit” (emphasis added), rather vitiates his argument, because it begs the question cf by what mechanism these have been invalidated and the rest continue as valid! Moreover, the parallels which Thielman offers in these pages from contemporary Jewish literature do not support his argument either. It is obvious that for most Judaisms (including rabbinic Judaism) sin is defined as breaking the Law and also that having the Law makes one more culpable for sin. This does not in any sense constitute a parallel to the alleged Pauline notion of the Law as having been given because of sin and to confine all under sin, however we understand these difficult and contested phrases. For all of the Judaisms that I know of, the Law is the way that God wants Jews (or all humans) to behave, and it is sinful to disregard his will. One who knows the Law is more culpable than one who does not for the obvious reason that his or her defiance is willful and not ignorant. This is not what Paul says on any account, because Paul is at pains (contra Thielman) to argue that the Law as it was understood by Jews, that is in its outer aspect of physical, ethnically marked observances, is no longer valid after the coming of the Christ. Thielman’s basic assumption, namely that Galatians 5:14 in which Paul identifies “You shall love thy neighbor as thyself” as the whole of the Law indicates a commitment to keeping the Law, as Jews understood it, is mistaken. To be sure, as I have already pointed out, Rabbi Akiva did understand this verse as “The great principle of Torah,” but certainly not as abrogating Sabbath, kosher, or circumcision! This can only be achieved via the sort of spiritualizing, allegorical hermeneutic that I am positing for Paul.

Thielman over and over again contradicts himself in order to maintain his basic thesis in the face of his often sound and sensible readings which raise difficulties for that thesis. As a final example, he remarks on the pedagogue metaphor:

Thus Paul explains to the Galatians that, far from being able to make them inheritors of the promise and righteous, the law can only point out and punish their mistakes. To submit to it is to step backward from maturity to childhood, from the ability to live according to God’s will to the period of constant mistakes and punishment. (79)

This seems to me to be exactly right, but then he adds, “Again, it is not the law in its every aspect which is spoken of here, but the law as something
which points out and punishes sin.” This is, I submit, incoherent. Either the Galatians are supposed to keep the Law or they are not. Clearly Paul is arguing that they should not keep the Law, and for precisely the reasons given in the first part of the quotation from Thielman. What aspect of the Law, then, remains? If it is only the love of Galatians 5:14, then Paul has thoroughly redefined the Law in any case (as I think he has) and abrogated the literal commandments by fulfilling their spiritual sense. Thielman seems so influenced by Paul’s own distinctions between Law and Law that he does not hear how revolutionary they truly are. “Gal. 2:15-16, 3:10-14, and 3:19-5:1, therefore, do not propose the cancellation of the Law, the sine qua non of Judaism. They are instead statements about the Law motivated from the conviction that the time of God’s redemption of Israel, and of all humanity, from sin has arrived. These passages serve as reminders to the Galatians of the time in which they should be living as those who believe in Jesus Christ, and thus they serve as arguments to persuade the Galatians not to submit again to the yoke of bondage to sin (5:1) by undertaking circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath keeping as if they had some value for justification before God (5:3)” (86). But from a Jewish point of view, circumcision is not a submission to the yoke of bondage to sin; it is The Law—that is a significant element of the Law. How then is it possible to claim in the same breath that Paul does not propose cancellation of the Law, but that circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath keeping have no value before God? The bottom line is that Thielman’s hypothesis is essentially the same as Davies’s that the Law is abrogated in the Messianic Age, and there is no more evidence now for a view that circumcision etc. would be canceled then in any Judaism than there ever was. All this does not vitiate the many excellent individual exegetical remarks with which the book is studded, several of which I cite in this chapter.

37. Wright, Climax, 168-72.
38. Wright, Climax, 170.
40. This interpretation is different from those who see Paul here as protecting himself from a Marcionite misinterpretation that the Law is evil, e.g., Richard N. Longenecker, Galatians (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), vol. 41 of Word Biblical Commentary, 143. My interpretation seems to me to make much more sense of the sequel than a reading which sees here a defense of the Law.
40. Nils Dahl has already noted this, but for a somewhat different exegetical purpose (Dahl, Studies in Paul, 174).
41. Barclay, Obeying the Truth, 205.
42. Longenecker, Galatians, 181-2. Longenecker’s comment on verse 23 is tortuous in its complexity:

In some respects, v 23 is remarkably parallel to v 22. Both have the verb συνάλλαγμα (“confine,” “hem in,” “imprison”), with the aorist form of the verb appearing in v 22 and the present passive adverbial participle in v 23; and both refer to the Christian gospel as the culmination of the purposes of the law, with the expression “the faithfulness of Jesus Christ” in v 22 and the term “the faith” in v 23 used in parallel fashion to signal that gospel. The verses, however, differ in their subjects and in their depictions of the functions of the law. For while v 22 portrays “everyone without distinction”
(καὶ πάνω used of people) under the law’s curse, v 23 portrays Jews (note the first person plural suffix “we” of the verb ἔφαγον and the participle συναίτησαν) as having been under the law’s guardianship. In speaking of these two functions of the Mosaic law, one condemnatory and the other supervisory, Paul uses the one verb συναίτησα, because in both cases the feature of constraint is prominent—i.e., condemning sin with respect to “everyone without distinction” (v 22), while supervising life with respect to Jews (v 23). By definition, of course. Jews are included among “everyone without distinction,” and so the Mosaic law exercises its condemnatory function in their case as well. But Jews also lived “under the law” in a special way distinct from all others, which Paul will clarify in his analogy of the paidagōgēs in vv 24–25.

I feel quite justified in claiming that my interpretation which, to be sure, requires that we understand the preposition ἀνά differently from verse to verse is to be preferred to one that requires that a key verb be understood in an entirely different fashion from verse to verse, in addition to ascribing to the Law two such contradictory functions at one and the same time.

43. Cf. William Campbell, who writes, “He is not willing to identify himself with those who see the ‘old’ covenant as obsolete, the law itself as sinful, and Jewish scriptures and culture as being both anachronistic and wrong for all Christians” (William S. Campbell, Paul’s Gospel in an Intercultural Context [Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity 69; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992], 183). Of these propositions, I think that Paul certainly does see the old covenant as obsolete and anachronistic, for otherwise how can we understand this metaphor of the pedagogue? While it may not be methodologically correct to force Romans to mean what Galatians means, neither does it make sense to interpret Romans in ways that directly contradict Galatians. I agree, of course, that it is not the sinfulness of the Law that has led to its supersession but only its ethnic specificity.

44. The best refutation of this indeed strange theological notion is Romans 7 as demonstrated by John Gager (The Origins of Anti-Semitism [New York: Oxford, 1983], 220–3) following Kristian Stendahl’s classic Paul Among Jews and Gentiles (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 86ff. and 92–4. Paul repeatedly asserts the essential goodness of the Law, which would be impossible were the function of the Law ab initio to produce and increase sin (pace Westerholm, Israel’s Law, 178). I am afraid, however, that I find the rest of Gager’s argument about this chapter unconvincing. To suppose that the “I” that speaks here of his desire to keep the Law and his inability to do so is a Gentile (or only a Gentile) I is to stretch hermeneutical ingenuity to the breaking point. On “Marcionite” interpretations of Paul, see now Campbell, Paul’s Gospel, 126.


46. Thielman, Flight, 82. In fact, the term originally meant the letters of the alphabet. The philosophical connotations of “fundamental principle or material out of which all things are composed” is a later development associated with Aristotle, so it is possible that Paul here is digging at philosophy as well. For σταυροῦσα, see Arlene W. Saxonhouse, Fear of Diversity: the Birth of Political Science in Ancient Greek Thought (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 25 and especially

47. See Schweizer, in the *TDNT* VIII 391-2 and 399.


49. “This rigorously ecclesiocratic allegory is not an anomaly but a heightened expression of themes that repeatedly surface when Paul turns to interpreting Scripture” (Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 111).

50. Betz’s remarks (*Galatians*, 239–240) reveal his misunderstanding of Paul’s text. Allegory here is not in the slightest “related to the exemplum and the metaphor,” and is therefore not “among the *figurae per mutationem*.” That refers to the construction of an allegorical device in rhetoric, while here Paul is interpreting the Bible in allegorical fashion in order to finally hammer down and home his point that following the coming of Christ the promise to Abraham has been fulfilled. Far from being a weak and merely persuasive device, this allegory is the climax of his whole argument and thus of the Letter.


52. It should be noted that in the biblical text, it is not stated that Abraham “knew Sarah his wife,” after the “annunciation.” There may have even been, then, a tradition that the conception of Isaac was entirely by means of the Promise. The birth of Isaac would be, then, an even more exact type of Jesus’s birth. This would also explain Paul’s application of Isaiah 54:1 in which Hagar is called, “she who has a husband,” to whom Sarah is contrasted. The point would be that Hagar had a man have sex with her in order to conceive, but Sarah did not! Indeed, given that the verse in Isaiah explicitly refers to Jerusalem as the barren one, and contrasts her with another city who is figured as “her who has a husband,” it is neither surprising nor startling that these two cities are read as the two Jerusalems, nor that they are mapped onto Sarah and Hagar respectively. Cf. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 118–9. See also Philo, *On the Cherubim*, 40–52 for the virgin births of the patriarchs’ wives, whereby God begets their children! Such notions were abandoned very quickly, it seems, in the post-Christian environment.


I find Martyn’s interpretation that Paul’s discourse comes to discredit entirely such oppositions rather unconvincing.

55. Parenthetically, I would like to remark that I think Hays underestimates Paul when he avers that the statement that Ishmael persecuted Isaac was “shaped significantly by the empirical situation of the church in his own time. The fact is that Torah advocates are persecuting those who carry out the Law-free mission to the Gentiles; consequently, given the way Paul has set up the allegory, the text must be read in a way that portrays Ishmael as the persecutor” (118). I think, rather, given the evidence of rabbinic readings (which are later to be sure) to which Hays refers, Paul must have already known of a tradition...
which reads as some form of persecution or harassment of Isaac by Ishmael.


57. Cf. for instance Sallust, for whom, “Despite the apparent vicissitudes of the mother of the gods and Attis this myth in fact tells of eternal and unchanging realities” (cited in Wedderburn, Baptism, 127-8).

58. Thus Paul's placement of this reading here fits perfectly as a continuation of his use of spiritual birth and rebirth in the preceding passage, and I am simply astonished at those who think the passage out of place or an afterthought.

59. Months after writing the above sentence, appeared Timothy Hampton's important paper, “Turkish Dogs': Rabelais, Erasmus, and the Rhetoric of Alterity,” Representations 41 (Winter, 1993) 58-82, which includes the following sentence: “To speak of the other is to make metaphors” (66). It is altogether quite astonishing how many themes of the present work are approached in that paper from quite a different direction.

60. Pace Betz, 239.

61. By a hermeneutic error I mean two things, which are only partly related to each other but converge nevertheless in my claim. On the one hand, I am making a fairly conventional interpretative claim to the effect that a theme that is never mentioned in a major text of a given corpus cannot be identified as the motivating moment of the entire corpus taken as a whole. In other words, unless we are prepared to separate Paul out into separate parts—as some critics are perfectly prepared to do, on e.g. chronological or situational terms—, the expectation of the Parousia, as important as it is, cannot be seen as the central, motivating force of Paul’s work. On the other hand, I am claiming that this is a hermeneutic error in the other sense of hermeneutics as that which makes a text usable to us. For those of us not living in the endtime, in the sense of the immediate expectation of that end, a Paul who is fully or largely explained as thinking only in that context will become simply irrelevant. Of course I also see Paul as apocalyptic in the sense that the Christ-event has resulted for him in a fundamental change in the structure of history. It is the content of that change that reveals—Apocalypse—Paul to us.


63. Thielman, Plight, 90. Cf. Barclay, Obeying the Truth, 135–6 who clearly does understand the revolutionary implications of Paul’s talk here.

64. Thielman, Plight, 90, n. 16.


66. Thielman, Plight, 52.

67. Philo, Special Laws, 104.

68. Alan Segal has got this point just right

For Paul and other religiously committed Jews, Torah was a body of divine wisdom that had to be adopted in its entirety, however that entirety was
defined. The only question was how Torah was to be interpreted; by means of allegory, pesher, or midrash, first-century Jews found grounds for latitude in practice. Though Paul had given up Pharisaism, he simply did not recommend that his community observe the ethical requirements of Torah and ignore the ceremonial. . . . There is no ready-made vocabulary on which Paul can depend. Paul takes an unprecedented position when he says: "With the mind, I serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin" ([Romans] 7:25b). He thus invents a new, personal vocabulary for dealing with the ceremonial laws. His vocabulary partakes of Hellenistic philosophy and apocalypticism simultaneously. Though Paul's mature position about the special laws is unique, it does have certain affinities with the extreme allegorizers to whom Philo gives credit for having found philosophical wisdom. Philo criticizes the extreme allegorizers for trying to be souls without bodies; such a criticism would make sense against Paul as well, although Paul uses a concept of a spiritual body instead of a soul in the philosophical sense. (Alan F. Segal, Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990], 246).

69. As we learn from the fact that Philo had to oppose such views.

70. The Rabbis interpreted the verse which forbids putting a stumbling block in the way of the blind as an injunction against tempting others into (and providing the conditions for them to) sin. In the early middle ages it was actually debated whether there exists in this verse a prohibition against placing stumbling blocks in the way of the blind!

71. Thielman refers to this passage to support the notion that Paul held the continuing validity of the Torah (Thielman, "Coherence," 241). Now, on the one hand, he is clearly correct. Paul does appeal to the verse of the Torah as an authoritative source for practice. On the other hand, the allegorical reading offered in that verse, such that the concrete Law becomes a signifier for something in the Christian situation is practically emblematic of Pauline hermeneutics as I understand them.

72. "Having begun in the spirit, are you now finishing up in the flesh?"

73. Dunn (Romans, 99) also makes this distinction between Paul and Philo.

74. Cf. the somewhat similar formulations of Sanders (Paul, the Law, 171) and the sensitive remarks of Campbell (Paul's Gospel, 133).