

Christology and Ethics in Galatians: The Law of Christ

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I. The Problem: Theological Roots of Ethics in Galatians

HOW IS PAUL'S ETHIC grounded in his theology? This problem has long vexed interpreters of Paul. Are Paul's ethical directives to his churches arbitrarily appended to the theological body of his letters, or does his ethic have a material relation to the gospel that he preached?¹ This question is posed acutely by Paul's letter to the Galatians: after devoting the major portion of his letter to a vigorous argument against "justification through works of the law," Paul turns abruptly in chaps. 5 and 6 to a series of exhortations against gratifying the desires of the flesh. The thrust of these exhortations seems so remote from the content of the theological exposition in chaps. 1-4 that many critics have felt compelled to suppose that Paul was either fighting enemies on two fronts at once (legalists and libertines) or fighting a single group of enemies with theologically schizophrenic tendencies.² In either case,

¹ The best general discussion of this problem remains that of V P Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968). See also W Schrage, *Die konkreten Einzelgebote in der paulinischen Paränese* (Gutersloh: Gutersloher Verlagshaus [Mohn], 1961), J C Beker, *Paul the Apostle* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 272-302.

² The most recent discussion of the problem of the identity of the opponents is that of B H Brinsmead, *Galatians—Dialogical Response to Opponents* (SBLDS 65, Chico, CA: Scholars, 1982). For other recent proposals and literature on the question, see J B Tyson, "Paul's Opponents in Galatia," *NovT* 4 (1968) 241-54, R Jewett, "The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation," *NTS* 17 (1970-71) 198-212, F F Bruce, "Galatian Problems 3: The 'Other'

regardless of the identity of the opponents, it has proven difficult to establish any direct inner connection between Paul's message of justification by faith on the one hand and his ethical admonitions on the other.³

The problem of grasping the role of the ethical exhortations within the logic of Paul's argument is vividly illustrated by H. D. Betz's erudite commentary on Galatians. Treating Gal 5:1-6:10 as the letter's *exhortatio*,⁴ Betz finds that major stretches of this parenetic section manifest little or no specifically Christian content. The lists of vices and virtues (5:19-24) are adapted from popular philosophical conventions, and the following section of the letter (5:25-6:10) is a disconnected collection of "gnomic *sententiae*" (proverbial sayings) which lack any direct relation to Paul's *kērygma*. Betz states his position bluntly:

Paul does not provide the Galatians with a specifically Christian ethic. The Christian is addressed as an educated and responsible person. He is expected to do no more than what would be expected of any other educated person in the Hellenistic culture of the time.⁵

At the same time, however, Betz seeks to establish a connection between the parenetic material and the rest of Paul's argument by a hypothesis about the occasion and purpose of the letter. Betz suggests that the Galatians are having a "problem with the flesh" and doubting the sufficiency of the Spirit

Gospel," *BJRL* 53 (1971) 253-72, J. Eckert, *Die urchristliche Verkündigung im Streit zwischen Paulus und seinen Gegnern nach dem Galaterbrief* (Biblische Untersuchungen 6, Regensburg Pustet, 1971), W. Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), G. Howard, *Paul Crisis in Galatia* (SNTSMS 35, Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1979) 1-19.

³ This difficulty, which was felt acutely by A. Schweitzer (*The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* [London: Black, 1931, reprinted, New York: Seabury, 1968]), has recently been reemphasized by E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). For a reply to Sanders, see H. Hubner, "Pauli Theologiae Proprium," *NTS* 26 (1979-80) 445-73.

⁴ H. D. Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 14-25. For more detailed discussion of Betz's "apologetic letter" hypothesis, see his earlier article, "The Literary Composition and Function of Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *NTS* 21 (1974-75) 353-79. As David Aune has noted (review of Betz, *Galatians*, *RelSRev* 7 [1981] 324-25), Greco-Roman rhetoric provides no precedent for the inclusion of an *exhortatio* in the structure of an apologetic speech (presumably juries did not customarily receive moral advice from defendants), thus, Galatians 5 and 6 intrude upon the model which provides the basis for Betz's analysis of the formal structure of the letter. The role of the parenetic material within the formal rhetorical structure of Galatians is a matter beyond the immediate scope of this essay. For an illuminating discussion, see Steven J. Kraftchick's recent study, *Ethos and Pathos Arguments in Galatians 5 and 6: A Rhetorical Approach* (Ph.D. dissertation, Atlanta: Emory University, 1985). See also Brinsmead, *Dialogical Response*, 37-55; W. Meeks (review of Betz, *Galatians*, *JBL* 100 [1981] 304-7); G. A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1984) 144-52.

⁵ Betz, *Galatians*, 292.

(which they had received through Paul's ministry) to empower an obedient moral life.⁶ The whole letter, then, in Betz's view, should be read as an apology in defense of the Spirit,⁷ an attempt by Paul to assert the efficacy of the Spirit as an empowering source for Christian existence. The merit of Betz's suggestion is that it seeks to offer a way of reading the letter as a coherent whole. The parenetic material is not, in Betz's view, aimlessly appended to the theological body of the letter; instead, it addresses a particular set of problems engendered by a gospel that replaces law with the proclamation of freedom in the Spirit.

Significantly, however, while Betz's interpretation provides a way of discerning argumentative coherence in Galatians, the bridge that he constructs between theology and ethics remains tenuous; the concrete ethical directives in Gal 5:13–6:10 are not, in Betz's view, derived directly from the gospel that Paul preached. The Spirit provides the motivation and the effective power for the moral life, but the norms and guidelines for evaluating behavior are derived from prevailing cultural standards: "no more than what would be expected of any other educated person in the Hellenistic culture of the time." The result is a reading of Galatians in harmony with Bultmann's well-known view that Christian obedience entails no particular type of moral conduct which is visibly different from that of the unbeliever.⁸ This reading imputes—unintentionally, no doubt—a peculiar bathos to Paul's position: the eschatological Spirit of God is given as a gift of grace to the nations through the death of God's Son on the cross in order to enable Christ's people to live in accordance with the conventional standards of cultured persons! Is it conceivable that Paul held such a view?

It is possible, of course, that an indirect or unstable relation between theology and ethics is inherent in the structure of Paul's thinking. This essay will seek to show, however, that there are indications within the text of Galatians that the content of Paul's ethical exhortations is rooted in his gospel more directly than Betz's interpretation recognizes and that Paul did have a distinctive vision of the way in which the Christian community ought to be shaped by the activity of the Spirit in its midst.

Why does Betz's reading of Galatians sever *kērygma* from conduct? One major reason for this disjunction lies in the fact that Betz—in common with

⁶ Ibid., 8-9, 273

⁷ Ibid., 25 This position is worked out more extensively in Betz's essay, "In Defense of the Spirit Paul's Letter to the Galatians as a Document of Early Christian Apologetics," *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. E. Schussler Fiorenza; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1976) 99-114

⁸ See R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols., New York: Scribner's, 1951, 1955) I: 138

most post-Reformation interpreters—reads the text through a hermeneutical filter that highlights the relation of the human individual subject to God. Focusing on the problem of how a person may find justification, Betz places heavy emphasis upon individualistic soteriological elements in Paul's message and accords theological priority to the individual believer's experience (of the Spirit). Though Paul addresses the Galatians *corporately* throughout the letter, Betz describes the content of Paul's exhortations in terms of their application to the *individual* Christian: "The Christian is addressed as an educated and responsible person." The fact that Paul's exhortations are addressed to a church *community*—a community regarded by Paul as the eschatological "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16), radically distinctive from its surrounding culture (cf. Gal 1:4; Rom 12:2; 1 Thess 5:4-11)—has disappeared from view. Betz's emphasis on individual soteriology, though constringent of Paul's message, is by no means idiosyncratic; it is consistent with the historical mainstream of Pauline interpretation.

The strength of the current within that mainstream may be assessed most tellingly by observing the efforts of E. P. Sanders to swim out of it. Even while resisting Bultmann's problem-solution model for describing Paul's theology,⁹ Sanders persists in interpreting Paul's thought (conceived as a "pattern of religion") in primarily soteriological categories; his attention remains circumscribed by the *range* of theological issues identified in Bultmann's presentation of Paul's gospel as a solution to an anthropological dilemma. Sanders reverses the sequence of ideas, contending that for Paul "the solution precedes the problem."¹⁰ But the fundamental categories remain the same, since he defines a "pattern of religion" as a way of dealing with the soteriological problem of how one gets in and stays in a religion.¹¹ As Sanders's own analysis of Paul's thought ought to have shown, however, this

⁹ Interestingly, though this problem-solution model is inherent in the structure of Bultmann's exposition of Pauline theology in his *Theology*, his essay entitled "Paul" (*Existence and Faith* [New York: Meridian, 1960] 111-46) clearly recognizes the issue that Sanders is concerned about: "[Paul's] conversion does not appear to him as an enlightenment that emancipates him from an illusion, from the unbearable burden of works of the law and a false idea of God. Faith is not the emancipation of a man who is yearning for freedom from chains that he himself experiences as oppressive, rather it is the resolution to surrender all that was man's pride, all self-glorification, all 'boasting.' This means, however, that Paul's conversion was the resolve to surrender his whole previous self-understanding, which was called into question by the Christian message, and to understand his existence anew" (p. 115).

¹⁰ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 442-47. Sanders expounds his position in more detail in his follow-up study, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), especially pp. 149-54. Building upon Sanders's insights is the work of Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (WUNT 29, Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1983).

¹¹ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 17.

concern with how an individual may get in and stay in a religion is actually a matter of decidedly secondary importance in Paul's range of concerns. Sanders's portrayal of Paul is skewed by his failure to develop his analytical categories from an inductive reading of the letters themselves.¹² One result is that christology, which is of fundamental importance in the overall structure of Pauline thought, is assigned only a limited role: Sanders's exposition of Paul's theology accords very little attention to what Paul believed about the figure of Christ himself.¹³ Although he recognizes that Paul's ethic is grounded in the theological motif of "participation in Christ," Sanders never sufficiently addresses the question of how this motif functions in shaping Paul's specific ethical admonitions.¹⁴

II. A Proposal: "The Law of Christ" as Paradigm for the Christian Life

This essay will seek to demonstrate that Paul's ethical exhortations are grounded in christological warrants: christology supplies not only the pre-

¹² This point is stressed in responses to Sanders's work by Beverly Gaventa ("Comparing Paul and Judaism: Rethinking Our Methods," *BTB* 10 [1980] 37-44) and by J. D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," *BJRL* 65 [1983] 95-122. Dunn comments (p. 100) that Sanders "failed to take the opportunity his own mould-breaking work offered." An analogous protest is raised by Jacob Neusner ("Comparing Religions," *HR* 18 [1978-79] 177-91), who contends that Sanders's preoccupation with a Christianly determined understanding of soteriology produces a misprision of the Palestinian Jewish texts: "Sanders does not describe Rabbinic Judaism through the systematic categories yielded by its principal documents. . . . If we come to Mishnah with questions of Pauline-Lutheran theology, important to Sanders and to New Testament scholarship, we find ourselves on the peripheries of Mishnaic literature and its chief foci" (pp. 179-80). For a brief reply by Sanders, see now *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 63 n. 140.

¹³ Sanders occasionally offers formal acknowledgments of the importance—indeed, centrality—of christology in Paul's thought (see, e.g., *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 149, 151-52), in virtually every case, however, Sanders appears to be thinking of christology in its soteriologically functional aspect: salvation is through Christ, not through the law. This is of course an accurate reading of Paul, but it is hardly an exhaustive account of what Paul has to say about the figure of Jesus Christ.

¹⁴ Two recent studies of Galatians by Brinsmead (*Dialogical Response*, 171-78) and David Lull (*The Spirit in Galatia* [SBLDS 49, Chico, CA: Scholars, 1980] 153-67) have made tentative moves toward assigning greater importance to Paul's christological thought in relation to his ethical exhortations. Lull and Brinsmead agree, however, despite their very different approaches, in treating christology as a *presupposition* of Paul's ethics in the sense that Christ is, for Paul, the inaugurator of the new eschatological age within which the Christian acts under the guidance of the Spirit. But we may still ask whether christology functions only as a presupposition for ethics or whether the figure of Jesus Christ in some way also provides a governing norm for those who participate in the eschatological life that he offers.

suppositions of the Christian's existential situation but also the pattern for Christian conduct. Paul's ethical directives to the Galatians presuppose a particular understanding of Jesus Christ as a *paradigm* for the life of the Christian believer and—to do justice to the full scope of Paul's vision—for the life of the *community* in Christ.

In one sense, there is nothing particularly novel about this proposal. It has been widely recognized that in other letters Paul appeals to Christ's humble self-sacrifice as an example or pattern for Christian behavior (cf. 1 Thess 1:6; Phil 1:27–2:13; 1 Cor 11:1; 2 Cor 8:9; Rom 15:1–9a). This motif is so clear and pervasive in Paul that Betz, in an earlier monograph, could go so far as to conclude that Paul understands the eschatological existence of the Christian “als eine Mimesis Christi.”¹⁵ However, for reasons that will appear in our discussion, studies of this imitation motif have not paid much attention to Galatians,¹⁶ and interpreters of Galatians have almost completely disregarded the imitation motif.¹⁷ Consequently, it is necessary to marshal the evidence in favor of the claim that Paul's ethical exhortations in Galatians 5 and 6 are rooted in a christology which has already found clear expression in the first four chapters of the letter.

A crucial text in this discussion is Gal 6:2: “Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Much of the critical debate on this passage has centered around the untenable opinion expressed by C. H. Dodd and W. D. Davies—and recently revived with modifications by B. H. Brinsmead and by P. Stuhlmacher—that the phrase *ho nomos tou Christou* (“the law of Christ”) refers to a new messianic torah, in other words, that Paul is referring

¹⁵ H. D. Betz, *Nachfolge und Nachahmung Jesu Christi im Neuen Testament* (BHT 37, Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck] 1967) 186.

¹⁶ In addition to the work of Furnish and Betz, see also W. Michaelis, “*Mimeomai*,” *TDNT* 4 (1967) 659–74, J. Schutz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (SNTSMS 26, Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1975) 226–32, E. J. Tinsley, *The Imitation of God in Christ* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960) 132–65, D. M. Stanley, “‘Become Imitators of Me’ The Pauline Conception of Apostolic Tradition,” *Bib* 40 (1959) 859–77, A. Schulz, *Nachfolgen und Nachahmen* (SANT 6, Munich: Kosel, 1962) 270–93. Some attention is given to selected passages from Galatians by W. P. DeBoer, *The Imitation of Paul* (Kampen: Kok, 1962) 188–96 (on Gal 4:12), and by E. Larsson, *Christus als Vorbild* (ASNU 23, Lund: Gleerup, 1962) 92–105 (on Gal 2:19–20).

¹⁷ This is particularly true of the critical literature in English. The situation in Germany is somewhat different, as two major commentators (H. Schlier and F. Mussner) point in the direction that I am suggesting here, and Heinz Schurmann (“‘Das Gesetz des Christus’ [Gal 6,2] Jesu Verhalten und Wort als letztgültige sittliche Norm nach Paulus,” *Neues Testament und Kirche* [R. Schnackenburg Festschrift, ed. J. Gnulka, Freiburg: Herder, 1974] 282–300) argues extensively along similar lines.

here to the ethical teachings of Jesus, regarded as a new and definitive type of halakah.¹⁸

Regrettably, the backlash against the Dodd-Davies interpretation of "the law of Christ" has caused many interpreters to reject altogether the possibility that Paul might intend to suggest in this phrase some distinct normative function of the figure of Jesus Christ for Christian ethical behavior. This rejection has been accomplished in one of two ways. Either "the law of Christ" is treated as a slogan of Paul's "Judaizing" opponents,¹⁹ or the phrase is explicated, with the aid of Gal 5:14, in a very general way so that "the law of Christ" is simply equated with "love."²⁰ With regard to the former view, no one has produced convincing evidence that the phrase ought to be attributed to Paul's opponents;²¹ and, even if the phrase *does* come from the opponents, Paul adopts it in a thoroughly positive and nonpolemical way. The latter position (that the law of Christ = love) is certainly correct in a general way, but greater specificity is both possible and necessary. *Agapē* finds its definitive expression for Paul in the figure of the preexistent Son of God who gave himself up for us (cf. Gal 1:4; 2:20) on the cross. A careful

¹⁸ See C. H. Dodd, "ENNOMOS CHRISTOU," *More New Testament Studies* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1968) 134-48; W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (4th ed., Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 142-44; Brinsmead, *Dialogical Response*, 173-75; P. Stuhlmacher, *Versöhnung, Gesetz und Gerechtigkeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981) 157-61. (An unconvincing variant of the hypothesis was proposed by J. G. Strelan ["Burden-Bearing and the Law of Christ," *JBL* 94 (1975) 266-76], who suggested that the "burdens" of Gal 6:2 refer to the community's financial obligation to support those who preach the gospel and that "the law of Christ" would therefore be an oblique reference to the specific dominical command alluded to in 1 Cor 9:14.) Compelling arguments, which need not be recapitulated here, have been brought against these various attempts to identify the "law of Christ" with the teaching of Jesus for discussion of the issues, with further references, see Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 59-65; Raisanen, *Paul and the Law*, 77-80. See also the important article by Peter Schafer, "Die Torah der messianischen Zeit," *ZNW* 65 (1974) 27-42 (reprinted in P. Schafer, *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des rabbinischen Judentums* [AGJU 15, Leiden: Brill, 1978] 198-213).

¹⁹ According to Betz (*Galatians*, 300 n. 71), this suggestion was first made by Dieter Georgi, "Exegetische Anmerkungen zur Auseinandersetzung mit den Einwänden gegen die Thesen der Bruderschaften," *Christusbekenntnis im Atomzeitalter* (Theologische Existenz heute 70, Munich: Kaiser, 1959) 111-12. This interpretation is accepted by Betz and now also by Brinsmead (*Dialogical Response*, 175). But see the cogent protest of Paul Meyer in his review of Betz's commentary (*RelSRev* 7 [1981] 322).

²⁰ See, e.g., Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 64-65; Betz, *Galatians*, 301.

²¹ During his 1985 Schaffer lectures at Yale Divinity School, Betz proposed that "the law of Christ" should be understood as the name for a body of anti-Pauline Jewish-Christian texts which constitute the *Vorlage* of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. This conjecture will certainly require further documentation, which Betz hopes to provide in a future study. If such a claim could be demonstrated persuasively, it would clearly have major implications for the exegesis of Gal 6:2.

reading of the evidence will suggest that “the law of Christ” is a formulation coined (or employed) by Paul to refer to this paradigmatic self-giving of Jesus Christ.²²

In the context of Paul’s argument in Galatians, it ought to be apparent that “the law of Christ” functions as an ironic rhetorical formulation addressed to “those who want to be under law” (4:21).²³ In this regard the phrase is closely analogous to the important parallel in 1 Cor 9:21, where Paul counters the (probably rhetorical) inference that he might be *anomos* (“lawless”) with the assertion that he is *ennomos Christou* (“under the law of Christ”). Contrary to the opinion of Dodd,²⁴ this expression should not be taken as evidence that Paul regarded the sayings of Jesus as the basis for a new torah; it simply means that Paul acknowledges (or, in this case, affirms) that he is under obligation of obedience to Christ, that he is not “lawless” (= autonomous). The expression *ennomos Christou* appears to be framed by Paul as a witty (though serious) response to a negative judgment on his apostolic ministry. Likewise, in Rom 3:27 (where “the law of faith” is contrasted to “the law of works”) and Rom 8:2 (“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death”), Paul seems to have coined an ad hoc “law” formulation as an ironic antithesis to a hypothetical alternative which he wants to reject.²⁵

Paul’s fondness for this sort of rhetorical antithesis should raise serious doubts against the view that “the law of Christ” must represent the actual platform of Paul’s adversaries. In Galatians, as in Romans, Paul is introduc-

²² See the suggestive but undeveloped comment of Beker (*Paul the Apostle*, 130) “It is not the teachings of Jesus but the crucified and risen Christ himself who constitutes the new Torah for Paul”

²³ The irony was noted by J. A. Bengel (*Gnomon Novi Testamenti* [3d ed., Berlin: Schlitz, 1855] 479) “Verba haec, *onera et legem*, habent mimesin ad Galatas, *oneri legali* obnixè subesse conantes” (“These words, ‘burden’ and ‘law,’ function as a parody [*mimesis*] of the Galatians, who are obstinately striving to come under a legal burden”) See also Sanders’s discussion of Gal 5:14 in *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 97

²⁴ Dodd states (“*ENNOMOS CHRISTOU*,” 147) “It appears therefore that to ‘fulfil the law of Christ’ means a good deal more than simply to act ‘in a Christian spirit’ (as we say). It connotes the intention to carry out the precepts which Jesus Christ was believed to have given to his disciples, and which they handed down in the church. This is to be *ennomos Christou*”

²⁵ For the view that “principle” is the proper translation of *nomos* in these Romans passages, see also Schrage, *Die konkreten Einzelgebote*, 99; E. Bammel, “*Nomos Christou*,” *Studia Evangelica Volume III Part II The New Testament Message* (ed. F. Cross, Berlin: Akademie, 1964) 120–28; H. Raisanen, “Das ‘Gesetz des Glaubens’ (Rom 3:27) und das ‘Gesetz des Geistes’ (Rom 8:2),” *NTS* 26 (1979–80) 101–17; idem, *Paul and the Law*, 80; Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 15 n. 26. Once that point is granted, it becomes entirely reasonable to read *nomos tou Christou* analogously

ing a wordplay to contrast the shape and quality of the new obedience in Christ to the old obedience under the Mosaic law. The Galatians want to be under law (4:21); Paul ironically accedes to their desire by exhorting them to live by the "law" of Christ. The argumentative strategy is formally parallel to his move in Gal 5:6, where he resolves the opposition between "faith" and "works" with the startling expression "faith *working* through love" (*pistis di' agapēs energoumenē*). In view of the absolute opposition between "law" and "Christ" that Paul has deliberately established in the letter (see especially 5:4), the expression "law of Christ" must fall upon his readers' ears as a **breathhtaking paradox**. The sentence is intelligible within the context of Galatians only if the word *nomos* is invested with a different meaning: not the torah of Moses, not a body of rules, but a regulative principle or structure of existence, in this case the structure of existence embodied paradigmatically in Jesus Christ.²⁶

III. The Shape of "The Law of Christ"

This reading may be tested by asking what indications there are within the text of Galatians about the "shape" of the law of Christ. These indications, which are actually fairly numerous, may be considered under three headings: (1) Paul's positive statements about Jesus Christ's action; (2) statements which affirm a correspondence of some sort between Christ and Paul; (3) passages which affirm or suggest a conformity of the Galatians to the figure of Christ. Finally, in light of all this, I will reexamine the meaning and implications of Gal 6:2.

A. Christ's Action as Described in Galatians

Although the letter to the Galatians contains no extended discussion of christology (since christology is not the point at issue), Paul does put forward concise christological formulations, some of which appear to be citations of traditional material, at various key points in the argument. These kerygmatic formulations, which in fact provide the warrants for the logic that undergirds Paul's argumentation, taken together, provide a sparsely but

²⁶ Of course, this shift in meaning is made possible by the semantic range of the word *nomos*. The phrase "structure of existence" was suggested to me by Leander Keck as a way of articulating the meaning of the paradoxical "law" formulations in Rom 3 27, 8 2, see his discussion of these texts in "The Law and 'The Law of Sin and Death' (Rom 8 1-4) Reflections on the Spirit and Ethics in Paul," *The Divine Helmsman* (ed. J. Crenshaw and S. Sandmel, New York: Ktav, 1980) 41-57, esp. pp. 45-49.

boldly sketched portrayal of what Jesus Christ did and how he did it.²⁷ Let us survey a few of the most important of these texts.

In Gal 1:3-4, Paul speaks of "the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins, so that he might deliver us out of the present evil age, in accordance with the will of our God and Father." We are told here that Christ's action was in obedience to God's will, that it involved a giving of himself, and that its purpose was redemptive. The prominence of these themes in Paul's greeting indicates that they are to play an important role in the letter which follows.²⁸

The theme of Christ's redemptive self-giving appears again explicitly in 2:20b, in which Paul refers to "the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." Both participles in this formulation (*agapēsantos* and *paradontos*—note that both are aorists) refer concretely to Christ's death (cf. 2:21) on the cross (cf. 2:19b), which is mentioned again at 3:1 in a retrospective reference to Paul's original preaching to the Galatians. The meaning and result of Christ's death are further explicated in 3:13-14, where Paul declares that "Christ redeemed us out of the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us," with the result that the "blessing of Abraham" and the promised Spirit are now conferred upon the believing community. In 4:4-7, we learn that Christ ("God's Son," cf. 2:20) was sent forth by God (cf. 1:4) and came "under the law," in order to redeem "those under the law," with the result that those so redeemed are adopted into God's family and receive "the Spirit of his Son," a Spirit which testifies to the new freedom (4:7) of those whom Christ has "set free" (cf. 5:1).

None of this material should occasion any surprise. When we look at it all together, however, several points stand out clearly. Even if Galatians were the only source for our knowledge of Paul's christology, we would know that Paul understood Jesus Christ as God's Son who simultaneously expressed obedience to God and love for humankind through surrendering himself to a death which somehow was vicariously efficacious to set others free. The operative logic here depends upon a pattern which H. Frei has called "the

²⁷ The position expressed here is argued at much greater length in Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Gal 3:1-4:11* (SBLDS 56, Chico, CA: Scholars, 1983), esp. pp. 193-246. See also James Gustafson's discussion, "Christ—The Form of God's Action," *Christ and the Moral Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 171-76.

²⁸ Gal 1:3-4 has probably received insufficient attention as an indicator of central themes in the letter. Paul characteristically "telegraphs" his basic concerns in his letter-openings. As Paul Schubert (*Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgivings* [BZNW 20, Berlin: Topelmann, 1939]) demonstrated, "all Pauline thanksgivings have either explicitly or implicitly parenetic function" (p. 89), a similar claim might be made regarding even the introductory salutations of the Pauline letters (see, e.g., Rom 1:1-7 and 1 Cor 1:1-3). This is a question which might repay further investigation.

pattern of exchange."²⁹ He became a curse to free us from the curse; he died so that we might live.³⁰ The pattern of Christ's action is a pattern of submission to God and of accepting suffering for the sake of others. This sort of self-sacrificing pattern, which appears in hymnic passages such as Phil 2:6-11, is not limited to doxological contexts; it informs Paul's presentation of Christ in these argumentative passages in Galatians as well. It should be stressed that nothing is said here about any *teachings* of Jesus on humility and servanthood, nor is there any reference to historical incidents in Jesus' ministry such as healings or table-fellowship with "sinners" or washing the feet of the disciples. Paul focuses in a single-minded fashion on the decisive significance of Christ's incarnation and death.

All of this should be beyond dispute. Equally important, but more debatable, is the observation that Paul refers at several key points in the argument to "the faith of Jesus Christ" as a crucial component in the event of Christ's redemptive death (see, e.g., 2:16; 2:20; 3:22).³¹ The translation of these passages is a difficult exegetical problem. As an illustration of the difficulty, let us consider the case of Gal 3:22: *alla synekleisen hē graphē ta panta hypo hamartian hina hē epaggelia ek pisteōs Christou dothē tois pisteuousin*. The RSV renders the text as follows: "But the Scripture consigned all things to sin, that what was promised to faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe." Several objections may be raised against this translation, in ascending order of cogency:

(1) The formulation is redundant. Paul could have said, with greater economy of expression, either of the following: (a) ". . . in order that what is promised might be given through faith in Jesus Christ."; or (b) ". . . in order that what was promised might be given to those who believe in Jesus Christ."

(2) Despite long-established tradition, it is questionable whether *pistis Iēsou Christou* should be translated as "faith in Jesus Christ." While Greek grammar theoretically permits such an interpretation (with *Iēsou Christou* understood as an objective genitive), George Howard has produced impressive evidence that this is in fact not an idiomatic construction in Hellenistic Greek, which prefers to designate the object of faith not with an objective genitive but with the dative case (as in Rom 4:3 and Gal 3:6—both quoting Gen 15:6) or with a preposition such as *epi* (as in Rom 4:24) or *eis* (as in Col

²⁹ H. Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 74-84, 102-15. See also M. Hooker, "Interchange in Christ," *JTS* ns 22 (1971) 349-61.

³⁰ For further discussion of this pattern of proclamation, with citation of other texts, see N. A. Dahl, "Form-Critical Observations on Early Christian Preaching," *Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977) 30-36.

³¹ For a review of scholarship on this issue and more detailed exegetical discussion, see Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 139-91.

2:5).³² (See, however, Mark 11:22.) The parallel construction in Rom 4:16 (*ek pisteōs Abraam*) suggests strongly that the genitive *lēsou Christou* in Gal 3:22 should be construed as subjective.

(3) It is unlikely that the prepositional phrase *ek pisteōs lēsou Christou* (translated by *RSV* as "to faith in Jesus Christ") is properly to be understood as a modifier of *epaggelia* ("that which was promised"). Certainly none of the Genesis texts to which Paul has appealed speaks of a promise "to faith in Jesus Christ." Indeed, Paul has already asserted—to the bemusement of most commentators—that the promise was given only to Abraham and to Christ (3:16). It would be more natural to take the prepositional phrase (*ek pisteōs lēsou Christou*) as a modifier of the verb in the clause (*dothē*): ". . . in order that what was promised might be given *ek pisteōs lēsou Christou* to those who believe."

(4) Most peculiar of all, however, is the *RSV*'s translation of the preposition *ek* ("out of") as "to." This anomaly, which renders the *RSV* translation completely impossible, illustrates the extent to which the exegesis of Galatians has been constrained by Western preconceptions about the overall shape of Paul's theology. When *ek* is given its proper force, and when the above observations are taken into consideration, the clause must be translated in the following way: ". . . in order that what was promised might be given *out of* (or "as a result of") Jesus Christ's faith *to* those who believe."

But what would this sentence mean? Does it make sense to say that God's promised blessing is given to believers as a result of Jesus Christ's faith? Taking into account the wide semantic range of *pistis*, which can connote not only cognitive belief but also faithfulness, trust, and reliability, this interpretation of Gal 3:22 makes very good sense indeed. Gal 3:22 becomes clearer if we translate *pistis* with the word "faithfulness": ". . . in order that, *through the faithfulness* of Jesus Christ, what was promised might be given to those who believe." Jesus Christ is the faithful one whose faithfulness to God enables believers to receive the promise. This is exactly what Paul has in mind when, in Rom 5:18-19, he contrasts the effects of Jesus Christ's "act of righteousness" (*dikaiōma*) to the effects of Adam's transgression: "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous." The unfaithfulness of fallen humanity is counteracted and overcome by the representative faithfulness of Jesus Christ.³³ Thus, "the faith of Jesus Christ" may be understood to refer

³² G. Howard, "On the Faith of Christ," *HTR* 60 (1967) 459-65, and idem, "The Faith of Christ," *ExpTim* 85 (1974) 212-15.

³³ On the relevant Romans passages, see L. T. Johnson, "Romans 3 21-26 and the Faith of Jesus," *CBQ* 44 (1982) 77-90.

neither to a body of dogma nor to Jesus' subjective attitude toward God; instead, the "faith" (= faithfulness) of Jesus Christ is definitively manifested in his death on the cross *hyper hēmōn* ("for our sake"—cf. 3:13 and 2:20). This interpretation makes excellent sense and fits the wider context well, even though it may demand some reconsideration of the overall shape of Pauline theology.³⁴

The implication of these exegetical observations is an important one: in Gal 3:22 and related passages, Paul places his emphasis not only on the believer's subjective act or attitude of believing but also—indeed, primarily—upon Christ's action of self-giving. Thus Paul's references to "the faith of Christ" reinforce and amplify the christological pattern already clearly present in Galatians. (See the discussion above of Gal 1:3-4; 2:20-21; 3:13-14; 4:4-7.) When Paul refers to Christ, he always has in mind the figure whose story the *kērygma* narrates: not merely the glorified Lord experienced in the community's prayer and worship, not the teacher and healer of the traditions of the Synoptic Gospels, but the preexistent Son of God who lovingly gave himself up to death on a cross in order to redeem us.

B. The Correspondence between Christ and Paul

The ideal of "the imitation of Christ," which found classical expression for Western Christendom in the anonymous 15th-century work, *De Imitatione Christi*, finds its earliest articulation in the letters of Paul (see 1 Thess 1:6; 1 Cor 11:1). Many theologians and critics have sought to downplay this motif in Paul because of its historical association with a mode of piety which they have deemed distasteful and susceptible to the temptation of "works-righteousness." Nonetheless, several passages in Galatians give clear evidence that Paul understands his own life as a recapitulation of the life-pattern shown forth in Christ. The most important text here, of course, is Gal 2:19b-20: "I have been crucified with Christ. No longer do I live, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith, that is, by the faith of the Son of God."³⁵ Amos Wilder explicates this passage as an affirmation of the mysterious correspondence of Paul's life to Christ's: "That which makes the peculiar mystery of the life of the Christian is that the world plot plays itself over in him, yet in such a way that it is always unprece-

³⁴ For some suggestions about the impact of this exegesis on our understanding of Pauline theology, see Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 247-66.

³⁵ This translation seeks to draw attention to the syntax of the Greek *en pistei zō tē tou huiou tou theou*. For an interesting parallel, see Rom 5:15 *en chariti tē tou henos anthrōpou Iēsou Christou* ("by the grace of the one man Jesus Christ")

dented."³⁶ The "world plot" to which Wilder refers is, of course, the story of Christ's death and resurrection, understood as a cosmic paradigm.

Paul's twin affirmation that "Christ lives in me" and that "I live by . . . the faith of the Son of God" may be taken as a hermeneutical key for the interpretation of several very odd statements in the letter. Paul bears the "stigmata of Jesus" in his body (6:17), and the Galatians are said to have received him "as Christ Jesus" (4:14). Clearly Paul believes that his own life and ministry show forth Christ. Perhaps we should also understand 1:15-16 in this way: "God was pleased . . . to reveal his Son *in me*" (*en emoi*, not, as the RSV has it, "to me"; cf. RSV margin). The *en* is surely instrumental, and the meaning of the passage is that God has chosen Paul as his eschatological messenger to the Gentiles.³⁷ In light of the strong identification between the Apostle and his Lord expressed in passages such as 6:17; 4:14; and 2:20, a very good case could be made out that Paul means to imply in 1:16 that Christ is revealed not only through Paul's *proclamation* but also in his *person*.³⁸

If this were the case, it would help us to make sense of the baffling expression in 4:12: *Ginesthe hōs egō, hoti kagō hōs hymeis, adelphoi, deo-mai hymōn* ("Brethren, I beseech you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are"). The basis for this exhortation would lie in Paul's belief that his own life manifested a conformity to the normative pattern of Christ's obedient self-sacrifice; in light of this self-understanding, Paul could commend himself to others as a paradigm for Christian existence.³⁹ Christ became what we are (cf. Gal 4:4) in order that we might become what he is: "sons" of God (cf. Gal 4:5-7). Likewise, Paul became like (*hōs*) one of the Galatians (i.e., like a Gentile; for evidence that Paul can still regard this as a loss or a sacrificial action, see Phil 3:7-8). He now exhorts them to become, like him, free from the Jewish law rather than newly subject to its demands. Gal 4:12, then, would echo in condensed form the themes of 2:14-21, now applied

³⁶ A Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel* (2d ed., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1971) 58.

³⁷ On the question of Paul's self-understanding as the eschatological messenger to the Gentiles, see J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London: SCM, 1959) 36-68, also Schutz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, 35-53, 71-78, 204-48.

³⁸ This interpretation of the text was already discerningly formulated by J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (London: Macmillan, 1865) 82-83. Particularly telling is his citation of the parallel in 2 Cor 13:3: "you seek proof of the Christ who is speaking through me (*en emoi*)".

³⁹ For the exegesis of Gal 4:12, see De Boer, *Imitation of Paul*, 188-96. On Paul's use of himself as an example for imitation, see B. Fiore, *The Function of Personal Example in the Socratic and Pastoral Epistles* (Ph.D. dissertation, New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1982) 304-55.

specifically not to Cephas and the Gentiles at Antioch but to Paul and the Gentile Christians of Galatia. (Note how well this reading suits the context of the argument.) In Galatians 2, the "correspondence to Christ" pattern is explicit (2:20-21); in 4:12, it is implicit (but cf. 4:14). In both cases, the logic of the appeal is the same: the apostolic example of conformity to Christ and freedom from the law is proposed as an example for others to follow. This appeal is spelled out definitely by Paul elsewhere, viz., in 1 Cor 4:16-17 and Phil 3:17:

I urge you, then, be imitators of me. Therefore I sent to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.

Brethren, join in imitating me, and mark those who so live as you have an example in us.

Likewise, in Galatians the close correspondence of 6:14 ("Far be it from *me* to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to *me* and *I* to the world") to 5:24 ("*Those who belong to Christ Jesus* have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires") illustrates the way in which Paul treats his own experience as paradigmatic for Christian experience in general.⁴⁰ In short, although Paul nowhere in Galatians explicitly says, as he does say in 1 Cor 11:1, "Become imitators of me, just as I am of Christ," this same idea informs his exhortations to the Galatians throughout. Paul holds himself up to them as a mirror in which they may see Christ's self-sacrificial love and faithfulness reflected.⁴¹

C. The Conformity of the Galatians to Christ

As many interpreters of Paul have stressed,⁴² the soteriology of Galatians is participatory throughout: Christ is the one seed who is the heir of the promises (3:16), and others participate in the inheritance because they are "in" him (cf. 3:14). Furthermore, there are several hints scattered about Paul's discussion which indicate that participation in Christ does (or at least should) entail a conformation of one's life to him. Those who are baptized

⁴⁰ This conclusion is supported by the insights of Beverly Gaventa, whose essay, "Galatians 1 and 2 Autobiography as Paradigm" (*NovT* 28 [1986] 309-26), complements the present investigation in arguing for the parenetic character of the Galatian letter as a whole.

⁴¹ Furnish (*Theology and Ethics*, 223), after a survey of pertinent Pauline texts (not, however, including the Galatians passages discussed here), concludes that "to imitate Christ and Paul means to be conformed to Christ's suffering and death in the giving of one's self over to the service of others."

⁴² See, e.g., Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, passim, W. Wrede, *Paul* (Lexington, KY: American Theological Library Association, 1962) 97-102, C. K. Barrett, *From First Adam to Last* (New York: Scribner's, 1962) 68-91, Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 463-68.

into Christ are said to have “put on Christ” (3:27) and to have received from God “the Spirit of his Son” (4:6), which enables them, as adopted “sons,” to cry “Abba, Father” (4:7). The formulation in 5:24 implies that *all* who belong to Christ (not just Paul) have been “crucified with Christ” (cf. 2:19; 6:14).

Most crucial, however, is a text which has received amazingly little attention in the attempts of critics to think through the relation of theology and ethics in Galatians: “My little children, with whom I am again in labor, until Christ be formed among you (*en hymin*)” (4:19). This ejaculation of distress, occurring as it does in the midst of the most disconnected and difficult passage in the letter, is not developed any further in chap. 4, but it does yield a clear indication that Paul desires to have Christ “take form” among the Galatians. The individualistic interpretation of this passage as a reference to the mystical birth of Christ in the heart of each believer, though sanctioned by long tradition (cf. the *RSV* translation: “. . . until Christ be formed in you”), is almost surely wrong; much more consonant with the thrust of the letter is a reading which interprets the phrase *en hymin* to mean “in your midst.” The text would then be understood as an expression of Paul’s passionate desire that the Galatian *community* be formed in the image of Christ.⁴³

What would it mean concretely to have “Christ formed among you”? The answer is given (though without explicit reference to Christ) in 5:13c: “through love become slaves to one another.” With that exhortation, Paul urges the Galatians to participate in a paradoxical self-giving which mirrors the action of Christ who gave himself up (1:4; 2:20) and came under the law (4:6) for us. (Compare this exhortation to the “logic” of the christological pattern described in Phil 2:5-8.) This self-giving is paradoxical because it consists in the community’s exercise of freedom (5:13a) in the interests of others in such a way that “slavery” is the result.

IV. The Distinctiveness of the Paradigm

A. *Slavery and Freedom*

Gal 5:13 provides a clear statement of the way in which Paul’s christologically shaped ethic differs dramatically from the morality current in Hellenistic popular culture. (It is significant that Betz, despite his interest in

⁴³ See H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (4th ed., MeyerK 7, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965) 214: “Paulus hat dabei die Glieder der Gemeinde in ihrer Gesamtheit vor Augen und nicht als Einzelne, in deren Herzen Christus einwohnt, obwohl sich natürlich die Geburt der Gesamtheit durch dies Starkwerden Christi in den Einzelnen vollzieht.”

citing parallels from the moral philosophers, offers none at this point.)⁴⁴ Characteristically, freedom is much extolled in the philosophical literature, and slavery is correspondingly abhorred. One can point to a wealth of philosophical texts which discuss the nature of true freedom, usually identifying it with the philosopher's autonomy and/or knowledge of the truth. In these texts, "slavery" is often used as a metaphor for the condition of the person who is constrained, through bondage to various passions and desires, to act in ways contrary to reason. A classic discussion of these issues is found in Epictetus:

He is free who lives as he wills, who is subject neither to compulsion, nor hindrance, nor force, whose choices are unhampered, whose desires attain their end, whose aversions do not fall into what they would avoid. (*Diss.* 4.1.1)

This definition is followed by a rambling series of satirical sketches demonstrating various ways in which people become "slaves": through love of "a cheap little wench," through desire to be a friend of Caesar, or to hold office or property, or through desire to cling to life and health. All of the means commonly thought to provide pleasure, security, and freedom turn out to be subtle forms of bondage. At last, Epictetus asks the basic question:

What, then, is it which makes a man free from hindrance and his own master? For wealth does not do it, nor a consulship, nor a province, nor a kingdom, but something else has to be found. (*Diss.* 4.1.62)

The answer, we are told, is to be found in "the knowledge of how to live." This knowledge is summed up in the philosopher's decision to "attach himself to God" (cf. *Diss.* 4.1.89-102), i.e., to accept whatever may befall him with imperturbable equanimity. In this way, the wise man transcends fear and desire and so becomes free. Thus, Epictetus can put such a speech as the following in the mouth of his "ideal Cynic":

⁴⁴ Even in a stimulating essay (*Paul's Concept of Freedom in the Context of Hellenistic Discussions about Possibilities of Human Freedom* [Protocol Series of the Colloquies of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, No. 26, Berkeley, CA: Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 1977] 1-13), Betz takes no notice of Paul's startling and offensive proposal that Christians should use their freedom as an opportunity to become slaves to one another. He rightly suggests that for Paul the possibility of freedom is created by Christ's act of "voluntary human self-sacrifice" (pp. 8-9), however, this insight must be supplemented by the insight that Paul presents Christ's act of self-sacrifice as paradigmatic for the conduct of Christians, who are exhorted to give their lives over in loving service to others. For a succinct statement of the essential unity of freedom and love in Paul, see F. Mussner, *Theologie der Freiheit nach Paulus* (QD 75; Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1976) 36-37.

"Look at me," he says, "I am without a home, without a city, without property, without a slave; I have neither wife nor children, no miserable governor's mansion, but only earth, and sky, and one rough cloak. Yet what do I lack? Am I not free from pain and fear? Am I not free? When has anyone among you seen me failing to get what I desire, or falling into what I would avoid? . . . And how do I face them as slaves? Who, when he lays his eyes upon me, does not feel that he is seeing his king and his master?" (*Diss.* 3.22.47-49)

The philosopher's freedom is found in a carefully cultivated detachment from external circumstances and society. "But the man who can be hampered, or subjected to compulsion, or hindered, or thrown into something against his will, is a slave" (*Diss.* 4.1.128).

These citations from Epictetus focus the issues with particular sharpness. Of course, the philosophical literature does not present us with an unqualified celebration of individual detachment; many Stoic texts also emphasize the philosopher's participation in a social order and therefore qualify radical claims to personal autonomy. For example, see Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 14.16-18:

"In a word, then, it is not permissible to do mean and unseemly and unprofitable things, but things that are just and profitable and good we must say that it is both proper and permissible to do?" "It seems so to me at any rate." . . . "Therefore we are forced to define freedom as the knowledge of what is allowable and what is forbidden, and slavery as ignorance of what is allowed and what is not."

In another context, Epictetus can argue that the duty of a citizen is "to treat nothing as a matter of private profit, not to plan anything as though he were a detached unit, but to act like the foot or the hand, which, if they had the faculty of reason and understood the constitution of nature, would never exercise choice or desire in any other way but by reference to the whole" (*Diss.* 2.9.4). Even here, though, despite an apparent formal parallelism between Epictetus and Paul, there are crucial material differences. In Epictetus, the "body" analogy provides nothing other than an illustration of the principle that the wise person will align his or her will with "the divine administration of the world," which is manifest in "nature." Epictetus' argument runs as follows: You find yourself placed as a citizen within the social order; consequently, you should act in a way which acknowledges your place within this "orderly arrangement" (*diataxis*). The idea that one ought to act self-sacrificially or to subordinate one's own rights and interests for the sake of others is far from his field of vision. The basic moral concern remains the individual's comportment in accordance with reason and nature in such a way that freedom from passions and fears is maximized. Certainly, the notion

that one might (or should) choose in love to become a “slave” of others in the community remains unthought and unthinkable in this frame of reference.⁴⁵

Against this backdrop, the distinctiveness of Paul’s advice to the Galatians stands forth in stark relief. His exhortation to “become slaves to one another” is not an isolated or random piece of advice; rather, it is an integral part of his theological vision, grounded in christology and set forth in opposition to the prospect of using freedom “as an opportunity for the flesh,” which means, in Galatians, as a cause of division in the community. It cannot be said too strongly that Paul, whatever may be the sources in religious and philosophical tradition for his lists of vices and virtues, here interprets the “passions and desires of the flesh” *primarily* as the impulses which produce rivalry, disunity, and conflict among brothers and sisters in the community of faith (cf. 1 Cor 3:1-4). Not only is the list of “works of the flesh” heavily weighted toward offenses against the unity of the community,⁴⁶ but the vice and virtue lists of 5:16-24 are also bracketed by clear directives against conflict in the church (5:13-15; 5:25-6:5). Paul’s general exhortation, “Let us walk by the Spirit” (5:25), is amplified and explicated by 5:26, with its specific prohibitions of conceit, conflict, and envy. Thus, the conformity of the Galatians to Christ is to be expressed in their communal practice of loving mutual service. It is in *this* context that the exhortation of 6:2 occurs: “Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

B. Bearing One Another’s Burdens

As we have already noted, there are compelling reasons for rejecting the interpretation of “the law of Christ” as a reference to a new messianic torah, at least if this is understood to entail a body of commandments promulgated by Jesus. Certainly, Paul himself did not formulate a new list of rules for conduct and urge them upon his communities as a *nova lex*. Neither is there any substantial evidence in the present context that “the law of Christ” represents a slogan of Paul’s opponents. Rather, in light of the foregoing considerations, we have proposed that Paul employs “the law of Christ” (whatever the origin of the phrase) as a reference to the pattern of action (or “structure of existence”) exemplified by the Christ who bore the burdens of

⁴⁵ My student Peter Carman, after reading an earlier draft of this essay, drew attention to one further significant difference between Pauline and Stoic/Cynic understandings of freedom although the philosopher may choose to relinquish certain apparent privileges or possessions, he does so as a means to the *end* of gaining freedom through self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*), Paul, on the other hand, presupposes freedom as a gift already given through Christ, not as an end to be sought, and urges that freedom be employed as a *means* to serve others

⁴⁶ See Brinsmead, *Dialogical Response*, 167-68

others in becoming a curse "for us."⁴⁷ Therein lies the fundamental paradigm for Christian ethics. That Paul is using the figure of Christ as an ethical exemplar here is strongly suggested by the direct parallel to this passage in Rom 15:1-9:⁴⁸

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves; let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him. For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached thee fell on me." . . . Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.

Betz cites Rom 15:1 as a clarification of Gal 6:2a ("Bear one another's burdens"), but then overlooks the equal relevance of Rom 15:3,7 as explications of Gal 6:2b. In fact, he explicitly rejects H. Schlier's interpretation of 6:2b in terms of the *imitatio Christi* motif (an interpretation ground in Schlier's appeal to the Romans 15 parallel) without giving any reasons at all for his rejection.⁴⁹ Surely the burden of proof lies heavily on anyone who would deny either the relevance of the striking parallel in Romans 15 or the apparent use of Christ as ethical paradigm in this passage. Christ's example of burden-bearing (2:20; 3:13; 4:4-5) establishes a normative pattern (*nomos*) which all who are in Christ are called to "fulfill" in their relationships with others.

Betz regards Gal 6:2a as Paul's formulation of a commonplace maxim in "the Socratic tradition and the Greek doctrines about 'friendship.'"⁵⁰ An examination of the wider context of the parallels adduced by Betz, however, shows how different in substance they are from Paul's exhortation to the Galatians. For example, Betz cites as "the most interesting parallel" a passage from Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (2.7.1-14) in which Socrates says to his troubled friend Aristarchus, "One must share one's burdens (*barous*) with one's friends, for possibly we may do something to ease you." However, when Aristarchus confides in Socrates his plight of economic hardship, Socrates responds by giving him advice about how to manage his household better. As the story turns out, Socrates' counsel saves the day for Aristarchus; nonethe-

⁴⁷ Schurmann ("Gesetz des Christus," 289-90 n 22) argues unconvincingly that Paul has Isaiah 53 in mind at this point

⁴⁸ Noted by Schlier, *Galater*, 271-73 See also F Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief* (HTKNT 9, Freiburg/Basel/Vienna Herder, 1974) 399 "Die Kirche liebt die Sunder, wie Christus sie geliebt hat So erfüllt sie 'das Gesetz Christi' "

⁴⁹ Betz, *Galatians*, 299 n 63 To be noted, however, is his subsequent reference (p 301) to Gal 2 20 ("Christ's love") in his discussion of "the law of Christ "

⁵⁰ *Ibid* , 298

less, this sort of “burden-bearing” is materially distinct from the sort of self-sacrificial love that Paul is urging upon his Galatian readers. Socrates becomes Aristarchus’ counselor, but hardly his slave.

A more apposite parallel is to be found in Betz’s reference to Aristotle’s discussion of friendship (*EN* 9.11.1-6). Here, after noting that “sorrow is lightened by the sympathy of friends,” Aristotle asks “whether friends actually share the burden of grief, or whether, without this being the case, the pain is nevertheless diminished by the pleasure of their company and by the consciousness of their sympathy.” Declaring this question moot, he moves on to his real point: though friendship may have a comforting effect in times of adversity, “manly natures shrink from making their friends share their pain.” Consequently, “we should summon our friends to our aid chiefly when they will be of great service to us at the cost of little trouble to themselves.” This common-sense etiquette, reflecting a sensibility very different from the one at work in Pauline parenesis, is then supplemented by counsel much closer in spirit to Paul’s exhortations: “It is perhaps fitting that we should go uninvited and readily to those in misfortune (for it is the part of a friend to render service . . .).”

Thus, Paul’s concern for love and mutual support within the Galatian community has some significant points of contact with the values of the Hellenistic culture in which he lived and wrote. However, the decisive point is that, within the theological context established by the letter, Paul’s directive to “bear one another’s burdens” receives both its warrant and its substantive content not from “Greek doctrines about ‘friendship,’” but from the figure of “the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.” If Paul employs conventional language about friendship (a friendship *topos*) here, the *topos* becomes a formal vehicle for the expression of an ethic which is radicalized and transmuted by the *kērygma* of Christ crucified. Unlike the philosophers, whose appeals rest on reason and nature, Paul characteristically seeks to ground his exhortations in the life-pattern revealed in a single paradigmatic event: the cross. The sacrificial self-surrender of the Son of God defines the ethical norm for those who live “in” him.

V. Conclusions: Christology and Ethics in Galatians

The foregoing exegetical observations suggest certain conclusions which may now be gathered and summarized briefly. The “theological” and “parenetic” sections of Galatians are linked by Paul’s understanding of the figure of Jesus Christ. In *both* sections, Jesus Christ has a paradigmatic function for Paul: the meaning of *pistis* is inseparable from the self-sacrificing obedience definitively performed by Jesus Christ. “Faith” cannot be understood to mean only cognitive assent. For Christ’s people to live *ek pisteōs* entails

nothing other than to live in accordance with the structure of existence defined by his obedience, i.e., to become slaves of one another through love. That is what it means to talk about "faith working through love" (5:6), which is, according to Paul, the only thing that matters. And that is the same thing again as "the law of Christ."

What is the situation in Galatia to which Paul's urgent words are addressed? It is all very well to say Paul grounds his ethics in his christology, but this leaves us with the question of whether the christologically grounded exhortations of Galatians 5 and 6 have any pertinence to the major problem confronted by the letter, i.e., Paul's fear that the Galatians are being tempted to seek justification by way of the law. After a lengthy exposition of justification by faith, why does Paul move into a series of exhortations which sound (as I have interpreted them) more appropriate to the situation at Corinth than to the Galatian problem?

Betz may well be right in suggesting that the Galatians were having "a problem with the flesh," if "flesh" is understood in the sense previously explained, not just as the source of immoral behavior in general, but particularly as the source of impulses which fracture the solidarity of the community of faith. The conflict and disunity already provoked within the Galatian community (5:15) by the introduction of a "law-gospel" serves for Paul as presumptive evidence that this gospel of circumcision is antithetical to the law of Christ; consequently, Paul argues so vehemently against the law because he sees it as a threat to the unity of the new community in Christ. This hypothesis illuminates the argumentative force of Paul's narration of the Antioch incident (2:11-21). Just as Cephas' scruples about the law divided the community at Antioch, so the advocates of circumcision in Galatia threaten to shatter the unity of the community, a unity which is rightly to be grounded in their common union with Christ (3:26-29).⁵¹

The thrust, then, of Paul's whole argument in Galatians is this: by giving himself up to death, Christ has set his people free. They are now summoned by God to live, by the power of the Spirit, in a free life of service which recapitulates Jesus Christ's self-giving. This pattern of self-giving Paul describes as *ho nomos tou Christou*: "the law of Christ." Paul modulates the pattern, however, so that Christ's self-giving is treated less as a moral ideal for the individual believer than as a paradigm for the community of believers

⁵¹ On this whole matter, see the seminal essay of N. A. Dahl, "The Doctrine of Justification: Its Social Function and Implications," *Studies in Paul* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977) 95-120. See also M. Barth, "The Kerygma of Galatians," *Int* 21 (1967) 131-46; idem, "Jews and Gentiles: The Social Character of Justification in Paul," *JES* 5 (1968) 241-67. See now W. Klaiber, *Rechtfertigung und Gemeinde: Eine Untersuchung zum paulinischen Kirchenverständnis* (FRLANT 127; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982).

in their relations with one another. This emphasis on community is thoroughly consistent with Paul's use of the same motif in his other letters (see, e.g., Rom 15:1-9 and Phil 2:1-13). Here the distinctiveness of Paul's theologically determined ethic is readily discernible. The point may be made most clearly by asking what it is that Paul is seeking to foster. Is he, like the Stoic and Cynic preachers, commending personal moral uprightness and autonomy? Or is he instead urging the formation and preservation of a community which manifests the love of God? To ask the question is already to suggest the answer. The loving community, which is the focus of Paul's concern, finds its moral imperative in the story of the cross. The community as a whole is given a task of burden-bearing which corresponds to and at the same time fulfills the life-pattern of Jesus Christ as portrayed in Paul's kerygmatic formulations. This "world plot," in Wilder's words, "plays itself over" not just in the lives of individuals but in the community of faith, the community in which Christ is to be formed.

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