

ARTICLE REVIEW

PAUL AND THE LAW IN THE LAST TEN YEARS

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SCHOLARSHIP on Paul and the law in the last ten years has witnessed a 'paradigm shift'.<sup>1</sup> For a long time, the dominant approach to Paul's teaching on the law was set within the framework of key reformation concepts. Against the background of Luther's struggles with 'pangs of conscience' and a works-oriented Roman Catholicism, this approach placed the justification of the individual at the center of Paul's theology and identified his opponents as legalistic Jews or Judaizers. These two key components of the old paradigm have been discarded as a decisively new direction in pauline studies has emerged. That the first century Paul would have struggled with his conscience in a way similar to the sixteenth century Luther has been severely questioned since Stendahl's influential essay in 1963.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the individualistic orientation of the 'Lutheran orthodox' approach — as scholars such as J. D. G. Dunn have dubbed it — has been replaced with a new appreciation of the centrality of historical and corporate questions in Paul. Replacing God and the individual as the foci around which Paul's thought is seen to revolve are the two peoples, Jews and Gentiles. And the old assumption that Paul's opponents were Jews or Judaizers who held that one was saved by performing a sufficient number of meritorious deeds has come in for severe criticism. To be singled out here is E. P. Sanders' 1977 monograph *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (subtitled *A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* [Philadelphia: Fortress]), a book which can justly be claimed to mark a watershed in pauline studies. Taking to task many Christian scholars for uncritically accepting the view of first century Judaism as a legalistic religion, Sanders seeks to demonstrate that the relevant sources reveal instead a 'pattern of religion' that he terms 'covenantal nomism'. This pattern attributes salvation to God's gracious election of Israel to its covenant status and upholds obedience to the law as necessary not to *gain*, but to *maintain* this covenant status. While much of this is not new, as

<sup>1</sup> Robert Jewett uses the phrase to describe the new approach to the study of Romans ('The Law and the Coexistence of Jews and Gentiles in Romans', *Im* 39 [1985], pp. 341-356).

<sup>2</sup> 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West', *HTR* 56 (1963), pp. 199-215.

Sanders notes, his massive study has received extraordinary attention, widespread acceptance and has been instrumental in forging the 'new direction' in study of Paul and the law.

The reason for this is not far to seek. Paul's teaching on the law is undoubtedly conditioned by his own understanding and experience of the law during his pre-Christian life and is hammered out against people who are insisting on the continued significance of the law for Christians — especially Gentile Christians. It used to be assumed that Paul had experienced first-hand the burdensome, joyless task of seeking favor with God through the production of the requisite number of deeds, a load that it was presumed his opponents were trying to place upon Christians also. Once these assumptions are questioned or rejected, and the background for the interpretation of Paul's theology of the law is re-shaped, the nature of that teaching itself becomes subject to serious revision. The last ten years have witnessed an impressive number of such revisions.

Typical of many of these studies is a far more positive evaluation of Paul's attitude toward the law than was the case in the so-called 'Lutheran orthodox' view. The sharp law/grace antithesis characteristic of this system is softened, if not eliminated altogether, and Paul is often pictured as less antagonistic toward Judaism. Such a shift is somewhat natural once a less 'negative' view of first century Judaism is adopted. Much as extreme positions tend to beget opposite extremes by reaction, the less 'negative' viewpoint of first century Judaism produces a more positive pauline viewpoint. This trend receives additional impetus from a factor extraneous to New Testament scholarship *per se*: the strong interest in Jewish-Christian dialogue. Scholars like Franz Mussner,<sup>3</sup> Lloyd Gaston,<sup>4</sup> Markus Barth,<sup>5</sup> and John Fisher,<sup>6</sup> to name only a few, seek to absolve Paul from any accusation of anti-Semitism by trying to show that Paul affirms the Jews' covenant privileges and the continuing validity of the law for Jews, if not for Gentiles.

The turning-point in pauline studies marked by Sanders' monograph fixes the *terminus a quo* of the survey of literature on Paul and the law that follows. While the avalanche of print characteristic of our age makes any claim to comprehensiveness excessive, I have tried to include most of the important monographs and journal articles on Paul and the law that have appeared since 1977. In addition, I have included several

<sup>3</sup> *Tractate on the Jews: The Significance of Judaism for Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984; a translation of the 1979 German original).

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., 'Paul and the Torah', *Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, ed. Alan Davies (New York: Paulist, 1979).

<sup>5</sup> *The People of God* (JSNT Supp. 5; Sheffield: JSOT, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> 'Paul in his Jewish Context', *EvQ* 57 (1985), pp. 211-236.

of the more significant commentaries and more generally-oriented monographs. Rather than simply reviewing the relevant studies sequentially, I have sought to orient the reader to some of the key issues by discussing the contributions of the last ten years under three headings that represent special concerns raised in the new paradigm. In doing so, I do not intend to suggest that the 'new paradigm' has swept the field; many of the fine studies mentioned below are, or contain responses to, or even arguments against, the new direction inaugurated by Sanders and company. Nor should the new paradigm be seen as monolithic. It has as its identifying features only some rather general convictions about the shape of the Judaism that Paul confronted and the overarching categories of his thinking; and this means that considerable diversity among studies following this basic trend is to be expected.

Before giving our attention to the specific matters used to organize this survey, there are three monographs that, by virtue of their scope and importance, deserve separate treatment. The first is Hans Hübner's *Das Gesetz bei Paulus* (subtitled *Ein Beitrag zum Werden der paulinischen Theologie* [FRLANT 119; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht]), published in 1978. (An English translation appeared in 1984 from T. & T. Clark.) A major motif in Hübner's work is an emphasis on the differences between Paul's portrayal of the law in Galatians and Romans. In the former, Paul takes an unremittingly hostile stance: the law is given by hostile angels, who use it to produce sin (cf. 3:19, pp. 27-32), and Christians are totally free from its precepts, obliged only to obey the command of love (p. 38). The reaction of James and others to this radical rejection of the law leads Paul to rethink his critique of the law; and, as a result, a much less negative appraisal appears in Romans (pp. 53-57). Instead of the law that stimulates sin, we have in Romans the law that identifies sin (pp. 71-72), the love command does not replace the law but fulfills it (p. 76), and Paul polemicizes not against the law as such, but against the law as perverted and misused by those in the flesh (pp. 115-125). Hübner's study was published too early to take into account Sanders' work, and falls generally under the more traditional 'Lutheran orthodox' approach — a direction he has confirmed in a 1980 *New Testament Studies* article.<sup>7</sup> Hübner is to be commended for his attempt to provide a comprehensive picture of Paul's teaching, and his exegesis is often persuasive. It does seem, however, that he has pushed the contrasts between Romans and Galatians to an extreme. Granted the undoubted difference in tone and emphasis, Hübner unfairly magnifies the contrasts by questionable interpretations in both books: e.g., it is unlikely that Paul intends to deny the divine origin of the law by

<sup>7</sup> 'Pauli Theologiae Proprium', *NTS* 26 (1980), pp. 445-473.

introducing its angelic mediators in Gal. 3.19; and Paul's polemic against the law in Romans is directed to more than simply a perverted view of the law.

The two other monographs that stand out are closely related. Both published in 1983, the authors acknowledge their indebtedness to each other, argue from the framework of the new paradigm and come to broadly similar conclusions. They are Heikki Räisänen's *Paul and the Law* (WUNT 29; Tübingen: Mohr) and E. P. Sanders' *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress). These are two of the most important studies of Paul and the law to appear in many years, and contain careful, often convincing exegesis of almost all the relevant pauline texts. No brief survey can hope to do justice to the wealth of exegetical detail and complexity of theological argument contained in these two works. We must be content with a cursory description of their main conclusions.

Both scholars are particularly concerned to assess the shape of Paul's teaching on the law against the background of the new consensus about the Judaism against which Paul hammered out his theology. Räisänen's is the longer, the exegetically richer and the more radical. His central contention is that Paul lacks a coherent theology of the law. In his exegetical survey, Räisänen assesses five crucial issues that exhibit this incoherence.

(1) **The dimensions and recipients of the law.** When it suits his purpose, Paul can stress the indivisibility of the law (Gal. 5.3); yet he usually singles out the ethical side of the law for discussion. And while Paul often confines the law to Israel, he at other points includes Gentiles in its scope (Gal. 3.3; Rom. 7.4) (pp. 16-41).

(2) **The continuing validity of the law.** Paul makes it quite clear in some texts that the law is no longer in force (Rom. 6.14, 4.1-6; II Cor. 3); but he also claims to 'establish the law' (Rom. 3.31), and appeals to it as authoritative for Christians (I Cor. 9.9, 14.34) (pp. 42-93).

(3) **The fulfillability of the law.** Implicit in such passages as Gal. 3.10-14 and Rom. 7.7-25 is the notion that human beings are unable to fulfil the law. Yet Rom. 2.12-16 and 25-29 state plainly that non-Christian Gentiles do just that (pp. 94-127).

(4) **The salvific function of the law.** Sometimes Paul pictures the law, as Räisänen says, as a 'poison': it was never intended to give life (Gal. 3.21), indeed, its purpose is to engender sin (Gal. 3.19; Rom. 5.20, 7.5, 7.7-11). At other times, however, Paul presents the law as an 'ineffective medicine', intended to give life (Rom. 7.10), but prevented from doing so by human sin (Rom. 8.3-4) (pp. 128-161).

(5) **The continuing validity of Israel's election.** In Paul's polemic with opponents, Paul distorts Judaism by attributing to it the belief that

obedience to the law can justify. Against this legalism, Paul highlights the grace of God in Christ as the only possible means of salvation. Yet in contrast to the clear implication of this logic — that Israel's own election is forfeit — Paul affirms in Rom. 9-11 the enduring significance of Israel's election and covenant (pp. 162-198).

Sanders shares Räsänen's scepticism with regard to the possibility of successfully 'systematizing' Paul's thought on the law. He, too, thinks that the first, second, and fourth points listed above throw up insuperable difficulties for the harmonizer of Paul's teaching. Sanders' generally less radical position is evident, however, in his preference for the word 'tension' instead of 'contradiction'. Sanders does believe that Paul's thinking begins from a coherent 'center' — participation in Christ as the only way of salvation. Paul's occasional teachings radiate outward from this center and are not amenable to exact and satisfactory synthesis. Furthermore, Sanders fails to find convincing evidence that Paul viewed the law as 'unfulfillable', leading him to play down any 'tension' in Paul's thought on this matter (see 3 above) and concludes, also in contrast to Räsänen, that Paul does not misinterpret the Judaism he combats (see point 5 above).

Why this confusion in Paul's thinking? On this, Sanders and Räsänen agree. Paul, as Sanders argued in his *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, thinks 'from solution to plight': Paul knew, as a dogmatic given, that Christ was the only means of salvation. It follows that the law cannot provide salvation and that both Jews under it and Gentiles without it are lost. Paul's insistence on the helplessness of human beings outside of Christ and the inadequacy of the law provides, as it were, nothing more than the dark background necessary to throw into relief the light brought in Christ. This background can shift its texture and contour without affecting Paul's real concerns; hence, he never attempts to systematize his teaching about the law (Sanders, pp. 151, 152; Räsänen, p. 23).

Sanders says little about the origin of this basic inconsistency in Paul's thought. Räsänen hypothesizes that Paul, in the course of his missionary work, had almost unconsciously 'internalized' a Gentile attitude toward the law. When criticism of this 'liberal' attitude arose, Paul was forced to desperate and unconvincing arguments in an attempt to rationalize the 'Gentile' attitude he had assimilated (pp. 256-263).

Sanders and Räsänen rightly reject as unconvincing and exegetically strained many efforts to harmonize Paul's teaching about the law: for instance, that Paul's view developed significantly between the writing of Galatians and Romans, or that Paul's negative statements apply only to a certain part of the law or to the law as perverted or misunderstood. But it may be asked, particularly of Räsänen, whether the effort to

systematize Paul's thinking on this crucial issue has been pushed far enough. It is also possible to question the view of Paul's opponents adopted in these books. Since both accept the view of first century Judaism delineated in Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, they have difficulty in satisfactorily accounting for the apparently 'legalistic' positions that Paul's adversaries appear to espouse. Räsänen is forced to argue that Paul has deliberately misrepresented their position. When an exegete is forced to such an extremity it is worth asking whether some of the initial assumptions are adequately grounded. It has been suggested, for instance, that there was more 'hard' legalism — such as Sanders himself finds in 4 Ezra — in first century Judaism than Sanders has allowed for. In his 1977 monograph, Sanders regularly dismisses apparently 'legalistic' statements by claiming them to be practically motivated and improper material for incorporation into the 'pattern of religion'. But one must wonder whether this represents an illegitimate restriction on the material that should go into the identification of such a pattern. Even such specific, ethically oriented sayings arise from a certain way of looking at religious reality. It may be, then, that first century Judaism was not as unified in its 'pattern of religion' as Sanders asserts. Furthermore, the evidence of the gospels and Paul's epistles should also 'count' in any assessment of first century Judaism. Granted the polemical nature of these books, and the methodologically fair insistence that any religion deserves to be described on the basis of its own writings, it is also necessary to remember that our knowledge of first century Judaism — especially of what we might call 'lay' as opposed to the more sophisticated, 'clerical' theology that is found in literary sources — is quite fragmentary. We must at least ask whether Paul may, in fact, give us a more accurate picture of his opponents than is possible for us at the present time to reconstruct.

While, then, Sanders' work has deservedly put to an end some of the more extreme legalistic assumptions about Judaism that have often been shared by Christian scholars, caution is called for in accepting wholesale his own reconstruction. It will be some time before thorough, adequate assessment of the situation is possible. Having said this, it is nevertheless the case that Sanders' work has provided much of the agenda for current study of Paul and the law. We survey next contributions on some of these agenda items.

*Why are 'works of the law' unable to justify?*

Paul uses the phrase 'works of the law' (*ἔργα νόμου*) eight times, in each case denying the efficacy of such works for the securing of justification or related concepts (Gal. 2.16 [*ter*], 3.2, 5, 10; Rom. 3.20, 28). In the 'Lutheran orthodox' paradigm, these statements, which are pretty clearly polemical thrusts against Paul's opponents, are seen as

directed against Judaizers who are advocating what is taken to be a typical Jewish belief that obedience to the law can secure one's standing before God. Against them, Paul denies that works can save because the power of sin renders human beings incapable of the perfect obedience to the law that such a system demands. This definition of *ἔργα νόμου* (which had not gone unchallenged in the past<sup>8</sup>), as well as the logic of Paul's rejection of the law as a way of salvation, have been the subjects of a great deal of critical assessment in the last ten years. For, once the view of first century Judaism espoused by Sanders and others is accepted, and it is denied that Jews at that time saw the law as a way of salvation, Paul's polemic is left hanging in mid-air, and it is necessary either to accuse Paul of misunderstanding (or misrepresenting) his opponents, or to find new opponents for him to be criticizing. While Räisänen takes the first option, most have opted for the second.

In the monograph already mentioned, Hans Hübner takes a generally traditional approach, viewing 'those out of the works of the law' in Gal. 3.10 as people who sought to establish a relation with God on the basis of obedience to the law and arguing that the curse comes on such people because they necessarily fail to keep the whole law (*Das Gesetz bei Paulus*, pp. 19-20; cf. also his 1980 article 'Pauli Theologiae Proprium', pp. 462-463). Mention might be made here of C. E. B. Cranfield's Romans commentary which, by virtue of the fact that its second volume appeared in 1979, falls within the scope of our survey (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [ICC, n.s.; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975, 1979]). Cranfield tends toward a more traditional theological approach, although one closer to 'reformed' rather than Lutheran Protestantism (sharing many concerns with Barth). This traditional perspective emerges clearly on this issue. Commenting on 3.20, he specifically rejects any attempt to narrow the meaning of 'works of the law'. What Paul means is that 'no man will earn justification by his obedience to God's requirements. The reason why this is so is that *ἔργα νόμου* in the sense of such a perfect obedience as would merit justification are not forthcoming' (Vol. 1, p. 198). However, in a 1978 article entitled 'The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith' (*Tyndale Bulletin* 29, pp. 61-88), N. T. Wright noted the emerging new perspective and criticized scholars for contrasting Paul with a non-existent Judaism that advocated works righteousness. He is also critical, however, of the failure of proponents of the new approach to provide a convincing explanation of Paul's rejection of Judaism. Wright contends that Paul *did* criticize the Judaism as

<sup>8</sup> See especially E. Lohmeyer, 'Gesetzeswerke', *Probleme paulinischer Theologie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, n.d.) and J. Tyson, "'Works of the Law" in Galatians', *JBL* 92 (1973), pp. 423-431.

reconstructed by Sanders and others, and that his critique focused on 'national righteousness', the idea that the law provided a 'charter of national privilege'. (Wright's views are further elaborated in his 1980 Oxford Ph.D Dissertation, 'The Messiah and the People of God: A Study in Pauline Thought with Particular Reference to the Argument of the Epistle to the Romans.')

The idea that Paul polemicized against the law mainly because it served to divide Jews and Gentiles gains steady ground as one moves through the literature of the last decade. George Howard, in his 1979 monograph *Crisis in Galatia* (SNTSMS 35; Cambridge: University Press, cf. pp. 62-63), saw this as key to Paul's polemic in Galatians 3 and elsewhere. In the same year, the traditional view was attacked from another perspective, as Günter Klein, in the latest of a long series of articles debating with Ulrich Wilckens, re-asserted his conviction that Paul polemicizes against the law in principle, not just because it is impossible to fulfill ('Sündenverständnis und theologia crucis bei Paulus', *Theologia Crucis — Signum Crucis* [Festschrift für Erich Dinkler zum 70 Geburtstag], ed. Carl Andresen and Günter Klein [Tübingen: Mohr, 1979], pp. 249-282).<sup>9</sup> In his 1979 commentary on Galatians (*Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress]), H. D. Betz takes an essentially traditional approach to these questions. Paul is seen as denying 'the orthodox Jewish (Pharisaic) doctrine of salvation' which holds that a person can be justified at the last judgment only by 'doing and thus fulfilling the ordinances of the Torah' (p. 116).

Coming from a very different theological perspective and with an agenda oriented toward some traditional theological tensions in American evangelical theology, Daniel P. Fuller in a 1980 monograph seeks to redefine the law/gospel contrast as traditionally conceived (*Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum? The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans]). Of relevance to our topic here is his contention that Paul's phrase 'works of the law' refers not to true obedience to the law, but to a legalistic misuse of the law (pp. 89-102). Paul sees, in accordance with the Old Testament rightly understood, that works and faith, law and gospel are necessary complements, indeed are virtually identical.

Ulrich Wilckens launched the next round in his bout with Klein in a 1982 *NTS* article, in which he defends the traditional view according to which Paul is seen as arguing that the law could, *in principle*, justify an individual, but, *in practice* cannot because no-one can fulfill the law

<sup>9</sup> For Wilckens' position, see especially 'Was heißt bei Paulus: "Aus Werken des Gesetzes wird kein Mensch gerecht"?' *Rechtfertigung als Freiheit: Paulusstudien* (Neukirchen/Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974), pp. 77-109.



perfectly ('Zur Entwicklung des paulinischen Gesetzesverständnis', *NTS* 28 [1982], pp. 154-190; cf. pp. 165-172; see also his *Der Brief an die Römer* [EKK; 3 vols.; Zürich: Benziger/Neukirchner/Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978]). The main point of his article, however, is that Paul's teaching on the law reveals a clear process of development. Galatians, for instance, presents the law in a very negative light because of the polemical situation; Romans, on the other hand, presents a more balanced, neutral treatment. Such a developmental approach to Paul's teaching on the law is widespread, and is often used as a means of explaining some of the apparent inconsistencies in Paul's thought.

In a 1982 *Festschrift* for C. K. Barrett, F. F. Bruce also advocates a traditional understanding of 'works of the law' and maintains, with Wilckens, that Gal. 3.10 does presume the logic of the unfulfillability of the law. Against Wilckens, however, Bruce maintains that Paul principally rejects the law as a way of justification ('The Curse of the Law', *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in honour of C. K. Barrett*, ed. M. D. Hooker and S. G. Wilson [London: SPCK, 1982] pp. 27-36; cf. also Bruce's *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], pp. 157-162). In the same volume, Morna Hooker faults Sanders for failing to pursue the 'inner logic' of Paul's rejection of the law ('Paul and Covenantal Nomism', pp. 47-56). She argues that the death of Christ, because it involved condemnation under the law, demonstrated the inadequacy of the law, and initiated Paul's re-thinking of the place of torah in the divine economy.

James Dunn's 1982 Manson Memorial Lecture, entitled 'The New Perspective on Paul' (published, with some revisions, in *BJRL* [1983] pp. 95-122) tempers a strong endorsement of the findings of Sanders in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* with the criticism that Sanders has not himself taken the opportunity opened by his work to offer a fresh explanation of Paul against the new Jewish background. One key, according to Dunn, is to recognize that 'works of the law' is intended by Paul to denote '*particular observances of the law like circumcision and the food laws*' (p. 167; italics in the original). What Paul is contesting, then, in polemizing against these 'badges of covenant membership', is the idea that justification depends on covenantal nomism (pp. 108-111).

Sanders' 1983 monograph provides an extensive evaluation of Paul's argument against the law as a means of justification in Galatians. Paul's teaching, Sanders claims, does not presuppose that his opponents held to an otherwise unattested 'works righteousness' viewpoint, but to the typical Jewish notion that the promises were contingent on law-keeping (pp. 9, 18-19, 51 n. 16). The reason why Paul rejects the law is clear from verses like Gal. 3.21: Christ and the law are two mutually

exclusive categories; since salvation comes through Christ only, the law must go (pp. 26-27). Certainly Paul does not argue against the law because its perfect fulfillment was impossible. That one needed to obey the law perfectly in order to be justified by it or that its fulfillment was unattainable are notions never clearly enunciated by Paul and most un-Jewish (pp. 21-27).<sup>10</sup>

Räsänen disagrees with Sanders on two of these points. First, he contends that Paul does present his opponents as holding to a legalistic works righteousness viewpoint. And since there is no evidence that anyone really held such a 'hard' legalistic view, Paul must be distorting his opponents' position for his own polemical purposes (pp. 177-188; see his article 'Legalism and Salvation by the Law: Paul's Portrayal of the Jewish Religion as a historical and theological Problem', *Die paulinische Literatur und Theologie*, ed. Sigfred Pedersen [Teologiske Studier 7; Århus: Forlaget Aros, 1980]). Second, Räsänen finds in Gal. 3.10 and elsewhere evidence that Paul did presuppose that the law could not be fulfilled; and this is inconsistent with his claim in passages like Romans 2 that some people do, in fact, fulfill the law (pp. 94-96). Both Sanders and Räsänen accept a more traditional definition of 'works of the law' (Sanders, p. 54, n. 34; Räsänen, p. 177).

This traditional, 'neutral' definition of the phrase is also upheld in my 1983 article in the *Westminster Theological Journal* ('"Law", "Works of the Law" and Legalism in Paul', vol. 45, pp. 73-100). I suggest that Paul's phrase should be seen against the background of similar phrases in Qumran and the rabbis and that the clear contextual link between Paul's use of 'works of the law' in Romans 3 and 'works' in Romans 4 implies that both specify true obedience to the law.

There appeared in the next year an article by Lloyd Gaston arguing for a very different definition of the phrase ('Works of the Law as a Subjective Genitive', *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 13 [1984], pp. 39-46). Calling to our attention Lohmeyer's insistence on the importance of the genitive νόμου, he argues that the genitive must be subjective, yielding the translation 'that which the law works'. Paul's key contrast therefore is between what the law produces, viz., sin and death, and what God produces (χριστοῦ in the phrase πίστις χριστοῦ also being taken as subjective).

Two articles by Thomas Schreiner, one of which appeared in 1984 and the other in 1985, argue, against Sanders, that Paul clearly supposes that the law cannot be fulfilled ('Is Perfect Obedience to the law Possible? A Re-examination of Galatians 3.10', *JETS* 27 [1984],

<sup>10</sup> See also Sanders' article 'Fulfilling the Law in Paul and Rabbinic Judaism', *Donum Gentilicum: New Testament Studies in Honour of David Daube*, ed. C. K. Barrett, E. Bammel, W. D. Davies (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978).

pp. 151-166; 'Paul and Perfect Obedience to the Law: An Evaluation of the View of E. P. Sanders', *WTJ* 47 [1985], pp. 245-278). John M. Espy makes the same point in a 1985 *NTS* article that re-opens the question of Paul's 'robust conscience' ('Paul's "Robust Conscience" Re-examined', vol. 31, pp. 161-188; cf. pp. 178-179). And in a wide-ranging article criticizing Sanders for his comparison of the pattern of religion in Paul and Palestinian Judaism respectively, R. H. Gundry argues that we find in Paul criticisms of the law both because of the movement of salvation history and because Paul saw it as impossible to fulfill ('Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul', *Bib* 66 [1985] pp. 1-38).

The same volume of *NTS* contains two important articles on this matter from Heikki Räisänen and James Dunn. Räisänen, while agreeing with Dunn's 1982 lecture on many points, criticizes Dunn for failing to see how radical is Paul's rejection of the law. It is not simply a doing of the law in a certain spirit, or certain elements of the law that Paul rejects, but the law as a whole. There is, claims Räisänen, a break with Judaism in Paul that Dunn's position does not sufficiently acknowledge ('Galatians 2.16 and Paul's Break with Judaism', *NTS* 31 [1985], pp. 543-553). Dunn, for his part, criticizes both Sanders and Räisänen for their 'unsatisfying' conclusion that Paul's teaching on the law is contradictory. In keeping with his earlier proposal, he holds up the 'social function of the law', the use of the law to mark out Jews from all others, as the key to Paul's polemic against it. 'Works of the law' expresses this function of the law, and the Jews are at fault for their nationalistic presuppositions in thinking that holding to such works represents true fulfillment of the law. The curse of the law from which Christ redeems Jews, then (Gal. 3.13), is the curse that 'falls on all who restrict the grace and promise of God in nationalistic terms' ('Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3.10-14)' *NTS* 31 [1985], pp. 523-542; quote from p. 536).

Finally, to bring us to the present year, Klyne Snodgrass also contends that 'works of the law' in Rom. 3.20 refers to 'works done in the flesh'. He is thereby able to explain the apparent discrepancy between that verse, which denies that works of the law can justify, and Romans 2, where Paul clearly asserts that Gentiles before the coming of Christ can be justified by fulfilling the law ('Justification by Grace — To the Doers: An Analysis of the Place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul', *NTS* 32 [1986], pp. 72-93; cf. pp. 84-85).

In summing up this section, we may borrow Sanders' categories and identify four principal, and not necessarily mutually exclusive, reasons why it is thought that Paul rejected the law as a means of justification.

1. The 'quantitative' explanation: human beings are incapable of doing the law perfectly.

2. The 'qualitative' explanation: doing the law is wrong in and of itself. (This approach is associated particularly with Bultmann and has received severe criticism.<sup>11</sup>)

3. The 'nationalistic' explanation: the law fosters Jewish exclusiveness.

4. The 'dogmatic' explanation: Paul rejected the law simply because nothing must compete with Christ.

The trend, as we have seen, is toward views three or four. Certainly some more traditional approaches have been guilty of underestimating the role of historical and corporate factors in Paul's polemic and of too readily assuming a stereotyped 'legalistic' view of Paul's opponents. But it can be asked whether the first explanation does not, after all, represent a central element in Paul's thinking. The arguments of Romans 1.18, 3.20 and 7.7-8.4, neatly summarized in 8.3 ('what the law could not do because it was weakened by the flesh') suggest that human inability does play a role in Paul's polemic against the law. And while Paul often focuses — undoubtedly for polemical reasons — on works *of the law*, his argument in Romans 4 and 9.10-12 suggests that his denial of their role in justification is as much because they are 'works' as because they are 'of the law'. As to the identity of Paul's opponents, we have already suggested that first century Judaism may have been more diverse than Sanders allows. Even if the position of Paul's opponents could not be traced to any Jewish view discernible in the literature, it would still be preferable to admit our ignorance of much of first century theology and let them remain unidentified rather than accuse Paul of misrepresentations or force the texts to say something that they do not appear to be saying.

#### *The Meaning of νόμος in Paul*

A second issue that emerges repeatedly in recent scholarship, particularly among those who advocate a relatively 'positive' view of the law in Paul, is the meaning to be given the word νόμος. In a 1982 article with the chastening title 'Paul and the Law: Reflections on Pitfalls in Interpretation', W. D. Davies warns that distortions of Paul's teaching are often introduced due to a failure to keep in mind the complexity of his use of *torah* (*Paul and Paulinism*, pp. 4.16; cf. p. 4). The issue is a broad one, but we will highlight those aspects of the problem that have surfaced in the last ten years, with particular attention given to those verses where Paul contrasts one 'law' with another (Rom. 3.27, 7.21-8.4).

We will again begin with Hübner. In keeping with a 1954 study by

<sup>11</sup> See especially Wilckens, "'Aus Werken des Gesetzes'".

Friedrich,<sup>12</sup> he maintains that both uses of νόμος in Rom. 3.27 denote the *torah*. Paul's contrast is not, then, between the Old Testament law 'of works' and the New Testament 'principle' or 'order' of faith, or between two 'orders', but between the Mosaic law viewed as a basis for boasting and the Mosaic law viewed through the eyes of faith (*Das Gesetz bei Paulus*, pp. 96, 118-119). Wilckens takes a similar position in the first volume of his commentary (pp. 245-246). In the fifth edition of his standard work, Otto Michel defends a more traditional view, suggesting that in Rom. 3.27 Paul contrasts the Mosaic law as transformed by Jews into a demand for works with the new 'Ordnung' of faith (*Der Brief an die Römer* [Meyering; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978], p. 155). Peter von der Osten Sacken, on the other hand, follows the newer approach in his interpretation of the contrast between 'the law of sin and death' and 'the law of the Spirit of life' in Rom. 8.2 ('Befreiung durch das Gesetz', *Richte unsere Füße auf den Weg des Friedens*, ed. A. Baudis, et al. [Munich: Kaiser, 1979], pp. 349-358). Both expressions refer to the Word of God, contrasting the condemning effect of the Word with its aspect of promise. In a somewhat similar direction, Peter Stuhlmacher, building on the distinction found by Hartmut Gese in the Old Testament, sees the contrast in Rom. 8.2 as between the 'Sinai torah' and the 'Zion torah', the eschatological law predicted in the prophets ('Das Gesetz als Thema biblischer Theologie', *ZTK* 75 [1978], pp. 251-280; cf. p. 274).<sup>13</sup> Cranfield follows no consistent pattern on this point, maintaining that 3.27 contrasts the 'law which directs men to seek justification as a reward for their works' with the Old Testament law viewed as a summons to faith (1, p. 220), but seeing in 8.2 a contrast between the control exercised over people by sin and the control, or authority of the Spirit (1, pp. 375-376).

Lloyd Gaston, whose many contributions to our subject attest a persistent desire to rescue Paul from the charge that he is anti-Jewish, emphasizes in a 1979 contribution to a volume on Anti-Semitism that Paul wrote exclusively to Gentiles and what he said about the law must be seen in that light ('Paul and the Torah', *Anti-Semitism*, pp. 48-71). While Paul did not demand that Jews accept Jesus as the Messiah, he did want Jews to accept the fact that Gentiles could have a relationship with God through faith and without the law. The contrast in laws in verses such as Rom. 3.27 and 8.2, then, is a contrast between the law as covenant and the law as a negative factor in excluding Gentiles.

This is probably a good place to mention the wide ranging 1980

<sup>12</sup> 'Das Gesetz des Glaubens. Röm 3.27', *ThZ* 10 (1954), pp. 401-417.

<sup>13</sup> For Gese's view, see, e.g., 'The Law', *Essays in Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981), pp. 61-90.

*Novum Testamentum* article by A. Feuillet, in which he treats the relationship among the 'law of God', the 'law of Christ' and the law of Moses in Paul ('Loi de Dieu, loi du Christ et loi de l'esprit d'après les Épîtres pauliniennes: Les rapports de ces trois lois avec la Loi Mosaïque', vol. 22, pp. 29, 65). Essentially, Feuillet sees the law of God as a general expression for the will of God while the law of Christ designates that code of ethics, more perfect than the Mosaic law, under which Christians now live. He takes the reference to 'the law of the Spirit' in Rom. 8.2 as an allusion to the new, interiorized law of Jeremiah's new covenant, loosed by Paul from its Mosaic associations (pp. 57-60).

Standing squarely against the general trend, Heikki Räisänen argues in a 1980 *NTS* article that Rom. 3.27 and 8.2 contrast, not two aspects or functions of the Mosaic law, but the Mosaic law and the order of faith ("Das Gesetz des Glaubens" (Röm. 3.27) und "das Gesetz des Geistes" (Röm. 8.2)', vol. 26, pp. 101-117). He brands as 'un-pauline' the idea that the law rescues human beings from the dilemma of sin and death. In the same year, Leander Keck also opposed the general trend, interpreting 'the law of sin and death' and 'the law of the Spirit' in Rom. 8.2 as two conflicting 'structures of power' ('The Law and "The Law of Sin and Death" (Rom. 8.1-4): Reflections on the Spirit and Ethics in Paul', *The Divine Helmsman: Studies on God's Control of Human Events, presented to Lou H. Silberman*, ed. James L. Crenshaw and Samuel Sandmel [New York; KYAV, 1980], pp. 41-57). Ernst Käsemann's stress on the centrality of the 'justification of the ungodly' sounds a well-known 'Lutheran' note, although his setting of that theme in the context of apocalyptic decisively shifts many traditional patterns. The dialectical antithesis of law and gospel remains, however. In the most recent edition of his commentary, therefore, he sees 3.27 as a contrast between the Mosaic law and the 'order' of faith: 'Faith ends the operation of the Torah, not in the opinion of the believer, but in virtue of the new order which establishes him and appears in him, and which is paradoxically called νόμος πίστεως' (*Commentary on Romans* [ET; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], p. 103).

Taking a different tack are two other 1980 publications. Gerhard Wallis re-asserts the old contention that the translation of the Hebrew *torah* by the Greek νόμος helped foment a 'harsher', more negative view of the law among Greek-speaking Jews and Christians ('Torah-Nomos: Zur Frage nach Gesetz und Heil', *ThLZ* 105 [1980], cc. 321-332). Daniel Fuller, in the monograph mentioned earlier, softens, or eliminates Paul's law/gospel contrast by following up on the suggestion of Cranfield<sup>14</sup> and understanding virtually all of Paul's

<sup>14</sup> 'St Paul and the Law', *SJT* 17 (1964), pp. 43-68; cf. p. 55.

negative statements about νόμος to be criticizing not the law as such, but 'legalism' (*Gospel and Law*, pp. 97-99, 199-204).

C. Thomas Rhyne's 1979 dissertation, published in the SBL dissertation series in 1981, has as its main purpose the determination of the meaning of Paul's claim in Rom. 3.31 that his teaching of justification by faith 'establishes the law' (*Faith Establishes the Law* [SBLDS 55; Chico, CA: Scholars Press]). He concludes that '*it is the law in its role of witness that is established in the apostolic preaching of justification by faith as Rom. 4 illustrates*' (p. 73; italics his). In reaching this conclusion, Rhyne finds in Rom. 3.21-31 a consistently dual viewpoint on the Mosaic law. Accordingly, 3.27 contrasts the law 'viewed primarily from the perspective of the works that it prescribes and that have falsely become a means to salvation' and the law 'viewed primarily from the perspective of the faith to which it bears witness' (p. 70).

In his monograph, Räisänen repeats his criticism of those who find the Mosaic law denoted in both parts of these verses and also severely criticizes the attempt to soften the negative statements of Paul on the law by interpreting νόμος to mean 'legalism' (pp. 43-47). Sanders expressly endorses Räisänen's criticisms on this point (p. 15, n. 26, 146), and I have also questioned this understanding of νόμος in a broader study of Paul's use of the word ('"Law", "Works of the Law" and Legalism', pp. 85-90).

A 1984 study by A. F. Segal reappraises the equivalence between the Hebrew *torah* and the Greek νόμος ('Torah and *nomos* in Recent Scholarly Discussion', *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 13 [1984], pp. 19-27). Noting the broad connotations of νόμος in the Greek world, and Philo's undoubtedly knowledgeable use of the word for the Jewish *torah*, he brands as 'exaggerated' the contention that the use of νόμος for *torah* must have led to a misunderstanding of the concept. Bo Reicke provides a cursory survey of Paul and the law in a 1985 essay ('Paulus über das Gesetz', *ThZ* 41 [1985], pp. 236-257). He stresses that Paul's view of the law is much more positive than has traditionally been seen, arguing, among other things, that all of Paul's uses of νόμος in Rom. 7.23-8.2 depict the Mosaic law (pp. 242-244). Finally, there is a return to a more traditional interpretation in the article of Roland Bergmeier ('Röm. 7.7-25a (8.2): Der Mensch-das Gesetz-Gott-Paulus — die Exegese im Widerspruch?' *KuD* 31 [1985], pp. 162-172), who interprets the 'law of sin' and the 'law of Spirit' as two opposing powers.

The complexity of background (Greek concepts of law, the Old Testament and Jewish use of *torah*, the position of Paul's opponents), along with the diversity of pauline usage renders the attempt to account completely for Paul's use of νόμος a formidable task. Recent contributions have raised questions about too quickly concluding that

Paul used *νόμος* rhetorically in texts such as Rom. 3.27, 7.21-8.2 and 9.30-33. Yet it must be asked, with Räsänen, whether it is probable that Paul would have pictured the Old Testament law as the liberating power now available because of the work of Christ. Such a position appears to run contrary to Paul's insistence on the 'inability of the law' (Rom. 8.3) and his consistent linking of the law with the power of sin and the flesh (Gal. 3.1-5, 19, 4.7, 5.16-18; Rom. 3.20, 4.15, 5.20, 7.1-12). Less objectionable is the position of Rhyne and others that Paul contrasts the 'legal' aspect of the law with its 'witness' aspect in 3.27. Yet even here, it may be significant that it is 'the law *and the prophets*' that testify of righteousness by faith in 3.21 and that promise and law are rather carefully distinguished throughout chapter 4.

*Romans 10.4 — τέλος νόμος*

We leave for the last a survey of recent interpretations of the most famous pauline statement about the law: Rom. 10.4, 'Christ is the *τέλος* of the law'. In the 'Lutheran orthodox' paradigm, this verse was usually translated 'Christ is the end of the law' and held up as a slogan expressing Paul's central conviction about the law. Others, also translating *τέλος* as 'end', soften the statement a bit by defining law in a narrow sense: often, connecting the following phrase with *νόμος*, as the law used to attain righteousness. Still more popular has been the suggestion that *τέλος* has the dual connotation of both 'end' and 'goal'. Recent scholarship, in keeping with the trend toward a more continuous interpretation of the relation between law and gospel, manifests a strong tendency to translate 'Christ is the goal of the law'.

This translation is advocated in a 1977 dissertation on 'The Law in the Letter to the Romans' (subtitled 'A Study of Romans 9.30-10.13', Northwestern University) by John E. Toews, who also provides a useful survey of interpretation. Cranfield strongly endorses this teleological reading of the verse, giving it a hermeneutical twist: 'Christ is the goal, the aim, the intention, the real meaning and substance of the law — apart from him it cannot properly be understood at all' (*Romans*, vol. 2, p. 519). Three works published in 1980 also favor this rendering: W. S. Campbell in an article in *Studia Biblica 1978* ('Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10.4'; Sheffield: JSOT Press), Paul Meyer in an article in the Silbermann *Festschrift* ('Romans 10.4 and the "End" of the Law', *The Divine Helmsman*, pp. 59-78) and Daniel Fuller in his book *Gospel and Law*, pp. 84-85. Defenders of this interpretation appeal to the language of 9.30-33, with its emphasis on pursuit, and to the places where Paul clearly uses *τέλος* with a teleological force.

The translation 'end of the law' has not been without its defenders. Both Michel (*Brief an die Römer*, p. 326) and Käsemann (*Romans*, p. 281-283) defend this interpretation. In an article devoted to the difficult



text critical and interpretive questions posed by Rom. 10.5, Andreas Lindemann also defends the temporal meaning of *τέλος* in 10.4 ('Die Gerechtigkeit aus dem Gesetz. Erwägungen zur Auslegung und zur Textgeschichte von Römer 10<sup>15</sup> *ZNW* 73 [1982], pp. 231-250). Brice Martin in a 1983 study ('Paul on Christ and the Law', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 26 [1983], pp. 271-282; cf. p. 279) takes the verse in the sense that Christ terminates for believers the enslavement of the law. A similar interpretation is advocated by Otfried Hofius in a 1983 article on the relationship between the law of Moses and the law of Christ ('Das Gesetz der Mose und das Gesetz Christi', *ZTK* 80 [1983], pp. 262-286). Both Sanders and Räisänen in their monographs favor the translation 'end', though not strongly (Sanders, p. 40; Räisänen, pp. 53-56).

Markus Barth's 1983 study *The People of God* argues that 'people of God' is broader than the church and that the church is the people of God only as it is incorporated into Israel, the 'people elected forever' (pp. 52-53). With this strongly continuous stress, he translates *τέλος νόμου* as 'fulfillment of the law' (p. 39; see also his essay 'St Paul — A Good Jew', *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 1 [1980], pp. 7-45). Rhyne has expanded a section of his monograph in an article on Rom. 10.4, in which he paraphrases the verse, 'in Christ the law in its promise of righteousness reaches its goal' ('*Nomos Dikaioynes* and the Meaning of Romans 10.4', *CBQ* 47 [1985], pp. 486-499; cf. p. 493). In a 1985 article devoted to the hermeneutics of Paul's Old Testament quotations in Rom. 10.6-8, Mark A. Seifrid defends the translation 'culmination' for *τέλος* ('Paul's Approach to the Old Testament in Romans 10.6-8', *TrinJ* 6 [1985], pp. 3-37; cf. pp. 6-10).

The last study of Romans 10.4 to be mentioned is also the most thorough: the dissertation of Robert Badenas, which was published in 1985 (*Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10.4 in Pauline Perspective* [JSNT Supp 10; Sheffield: JSOT Press]). In a study of non-pauline occurrences of *τέλος*, he finds that the word consistently means 'goal' rather than 'end' in the sense of termination. A particularly frequent use of the word in Hellenistic philosophy was with reference to the supreme goal of life. This lexical background, coupled with Paul's application of the race-track metaphor to Israel's pursuit of the law in 9.30-33, decisively favors the translation 'goal' for *τέλος* in 10.4. Paul is asserting that the law 'promised' and 'intended' Christ (p. 118).

While many of the studies just mentioned attempt to grapple seriously with the lexical and contextual factors that impinge on the translation of *τέλος* in Rom. 10.4, it remains the case that one's view of Paul's teaching on the law generally is often decisive. And, granted the legitimate ambiguity of *τέλος* in its context, this is not necessarily to

be deplored. One matter that needs greater precision is the sense intended when one translates *τέλος* as 'goal'. Is this intended to mean that the reading of the law should always have been seen to have Christ as its ultimate meaning (a hermeneutical sense), or that the coming of Christ has made evident the anticipatory character of the law (a salvation-historical sense)? And, while Badenas rather summarily rejects the possibility that *τέλος* might mean both 'end' and 'goal', his reasons for doing so are not compelling. What defenders of this view argue is not that the word has a dual meaning here, but that both English words are necessary to capture the full force of *τέλος*. To argue that Paul is claiming Christ as the ultimate goal of the law, and that, having attained its goal, the law is in some important manner no longer applicable, may very well do justice both to exegetical considerations and to the larger picture of the law in Paul (compare Rom. 3.21 'witnessed to by the law and the prophets', and 6.14 'no longer under the law').

The three issues we have looked at account for the bulk of attention given to the topic of Paul and the law in the last ten years. Naturally, however, there are studies of the issue that do not fit into any of these categories. To be mentioned first is the important pauline theology by J. Christiaan Beker (*Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980]). Beker takes up many issues pertaining to our topic in fine contextual studies of Galatians and Romans, arguing, among other things, that Paul contrasts Christ and the law in an ontological way in Galatians, while Romans focuses on anthropology (pp. 107, 204); that the law, as it requires obedience without revealing the desperate condition of humanity, inevitably leads to the attempt to secure righteousness before God (p. 247) and that Bultmann's 'qualitative' negation of the law is misguided (pp. 238-240). Two other monographs whose subjects relate to our topic may also be mentioned here: Roger Mohrlang's *Matthew and Paul: A Comparison of Ethical Perspectives* (SNTSMS 48; Cambridge: University Press, 1984), which finds that 'Matthew would bind Christians more tightly to the law, Paul would free them from it' (p. 127) and T. J. Deidun's *New Covenant Morality in Paul* (AnBib 89; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981) which argues that Paul's polemic against the *Mosaic* law must not be seen as a rejection of *all* law.

Several articles whose subject matter was not conducive to their inclusion above also deserve some mention. Jacob Kremer addresses Paul's letter/spirit contrast, finding that it expresses a *heilsgeschichtlich* contrast. The bulk of the article utilizes contemporary linguistic approaches in an effort to define the significance of this contrast for the modern believer ("Den der Buchstabe tötet, der Geist aber macht

lebendig." Methodologische und hermeneutische Erwägungen zu 2 Kor. 3, 6b', *Regegnung mit dem Wort* (Festschrift für Heinrich Zimmermann), ed. Josef Zmijewski and Ernst Nellessen [BBB 53; Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1980], pp. 219-250). Stephen Westerholm deals with the same subject. He argues that the *γράμμα/πνεῦμα* antithesis has to do particularly with pauline ethics and implies the believer's freedom from external law ('Letter and Spirit: The Foundation of Pauline Ethics', *NTS* 30 [1984], pp. 229-248). Articles on Galatians 3 and 4 have been written by Richard Longenecker ('The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3.19-4.7', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25 [1982], pp. 53-61) and Linda Belleville ("Under Law": Structural Analysis and the Pauline Concept of Law in Galatians 3.21-4.11', *JSNT* 26 [1986], pp. 53-78). Both view the *παιδαγωγός* as an essentially neutral image, expressing the salvation historical function of the law in the time before Christ. An attempt to elucidate the origins and meaning of the close connection between the law and sin in Paul is provided by H. Weder ('Gesetz und Sünde: Gedanken zu einem Qualitativen Sprung im Denken des Paulus', *NTS* 31 [1985], pp. 357-376; K. Kertlege explores the contrast between the law and freedom in Galatians ('Gesetz und Freiheit im Galaterbrief', *NTS* 31 [1985], pp. 383-394) and Stephen Westerholm finds in 1 Tim. 1.8-9 a prohibition of the use of the Mosaic law in Christian ethics ('The Law and the "Just Man" (1 Tim. 1.3-11)', *StTh* 36 [1982], pp. 79-95).

Finally, mention might be made of the survey of the place of law in the Bible by Rudolf Smend and Ulrich Luz that contains a good summary of Paul's teaching by the latter (*Gesetz* [Biblische Konfrontationen 1015; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1981]).

### Conclusion

Over twenty years ago, H. J. Schoeps called Paul's teaching on the law 'the most intricate doctrinal issue in his theology'.<sup>15</sup> The intervening period has not witnessed much movement toward a consensus on this issue. In large measure, this is because Paul's teaching on the law so profoundly affects so many areas of theology that have significant confessional significance. No matter how hard one may try, it is difficult, if not impossible, and perhaps not even desirable, to lay aside all such influence while exegeting Paul. A recent study by Klyne Snodgrass is entitled 'Is the Problem of Paul and the Law Insoluble?'<sup>16</sup> Realism at least would dictate that a *consensus* on a

<sup>15</sup> *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), p. 168.

<sup>16</sup> A paper read at the April 5, 1966 meeting of the Chicago Society of Biblical Research.

solution is unattainable; idealism continues to urge individual exegetes to search for a solution satisfactory at least from one perspective. Perhaps I may be permitted in conclusion to state what one such exegete thinks may be some useful avenues of approach.

First, as we suggested earlier, further critical assessment of Sanders' covenantal nomism proposal is required. Many of us *Neutestamentler* feel that Sanders' proposal fails to do justice to some important elements in both Paul and Judaism, yet feel incompetent to explore the mass of Jewish material. We eagerly await the work of the next generation of scholarship on Judaism.

Second, the use of the phrase 'Lutheran orthodoxy' to depict a certain traditional approach to Paul and the law, while used in the foregoing survey, is open to objection. For one thing, the position so depicted has been by no means confined to Lutherans; as the books of the Roman Catholic Andrea van Dülmen<sup>17</sup> and the Dutch Reformed scholar Hermann Ridderbos<sup>18</sup> demonstrate. More serious, however, is the narrowly confessional and out-moded flavor suggested by the phrase; it implies that only stuffy, doctrinaire theologians more interested in maintaining confessional standards than exegetical integrity would hold such views. Serious interaction with the views propounded under this general approach can thus be shortcircuited. The number and diversity of scholars who have advocated important elements of the position suggest that it deserves more serious consideration. On several key questions — e.g., why the law cannot save — the answers given in this paradigm appear to be at least as plausible as other alternatives.

Third, the laudable efforts of Jewish and Christian scholars to come to a better understanding of each other should not be made at the sacrifice of exegetical integrity on either side. Here Sanders' comments in the last part of his *Paul the Law and the Jewish People* are especially appropriate. While I am convinced that no reasonable definition of 'anti-Semitic' can be appropriately applied to Paul, efforts to rescue him from such a charge by removing from his writings sentiments that appear to be there are misguided and ultimately self-destructive.

Fourth, and finally, any genuine understanding of Paul's diverse teaching on the law must seek for theological frameworks and grids as integrating models. True, exegesis can easily be forced into a framework that distorts it: too often exegetical integrity has been sacrificed on the altar of doctrinal uniformity. But the exegete has not done his job until he has searched *in the material* for clues to such

<sup>17</sup> *Die Theologie des Gesetzes bei Paulus* SBM 5; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1968).

<sup>18</sup> *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

larger, integrating models. It is when such a model is found that fairly handles the diverse material of the pauline letters that the 'problem' of Paul and the law will be solved.

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