LAW AND PROMISE IN GALATIANS

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this paper is to illucidate the arguments by which Paul explains the relationship between Law and Promise in order to persuade the Galatians to remain in the gospel as he has brought it to them and not to rely on keeping a part of the Law of Moses for their salvation. For this purpose Paul first uses two historical arguments and one from the legal system. He then proceeds to explain the real meaning and function of the law. In this way it is possible for him to allow them to remain positive towards the law, if understood correctly. However, at the same time he can persuade them not to rely on the law in a Judaistic manner.

1 METHOD
A few remarks about the exegetical method which is followed here are necessary.

Discourse analysis is a valuable step towards good exegesis. It must, however, be followed by a thorough reading and study of the broader unit (like the whole of Galatians) which provides an integrated understanding after the dissection of discourse analysis. This reading must be repeated many times in the original Greek as well as in sound translations in the case of a letter, like Galatians, where there are extremely difficult passages and where the connections between parts are not immediately clear. One should also be aware that there may be punctuation errors in the Greek text which is used.

Secondly, one must guard against falling into the errors of certain existing traditions regarding the interpretation of Galatians. Therefore one must thoroughly study the primary source itself before proceeding to interpretations. Presuppositions must be investigated to ascertain their validity. One such example is the widely accepted presupposition of the dichotomy between Law and Gospel. Another example of a questionable presupposition is taking for granted that Paul was inconsistent or indifferent about his use of language and theology (cf Wallace 1990:242).

A third methodological remark is necessary. The principle of interpreting a Biblical author first in his own immediate context and then in the light of his other writings is a sound one. After this step one should study other literature important to a correct interpretation in an order of concentric circles. Starting with one author’s writings, one should proceed to those writings which, from the
earliest ages, have been considered as together proclaiming the one true gospel, the New Testament writings. After this the next circle comprises other contemporary writings in the same geographical area. Of least importance are other writings from a totally different area, sphere and time.

Fourthly, Paul, and other New Testament writers, considered themselves to be continuing in harmony with the Old Testament. Their use of the Old Testament must be accepted with due respect and one should not easily assume that they made mistakes or changed the Old Testament content in support of their own theological purposes. Contemporary methods of interpreting the Old Testament must be investigated thoroughly.

A last preliminary remark. In this paper no special attention will be devoted to classical or modern rhetorical techniques nor to the letter form. Rather an attempt will be made to explain, from the content of Paul’s arguments, how he tried to persuade the Galatians.

2 BACKGROUND

A lot of uncertainty still exists about the letter to the Galatians. There is no absolute certainty as to whether it was addressed to readers in northern or in southern Galatia, although nowadays it is almost generally accepted that southern Galatia was the address. Longenecker (1990:lxix-lxxii), after a thorough discussion of the problem, comes to the conclusion that the balance of probability favours the South Galatian hypothesis. This is, however, of less importance than to know the character and composition of the congregations. Were they mainly Gentile Christians? How many Jews were there?

Paul presupposes a great deal of knowledge on the part of his readers. This does not only pertain to their knowledge of the situation when they received the gospel and their early existence as churches, but also to their knowledge of the Old Testament. When Paul uses complicated arguments in this letter, it is evident that not everyone in these churches would have been able to understand him. The letter definitely presupposes the presence of well-educated leaders. These leaders might have been Jews who had a good knowledge of the Jewish religion and who afterwards became Christians. Paul’s question in Galatians 4:21 ‘Tell me, you who want to be under a law...’ almost certainly illustrates that the letter to the Galatian churches was also an open letter to the false teachers. The conclusion must be drawn that those false teachers were either still among the Galatian church members, or that they would have been at least able to read the content of Paul’s letter.

Lategan (1992), from a reader critical perspective, points out three categories of readers: Those who were still uncircumcised, those who were Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners (2:15) and finally a universal audience. Perhaps Lategan’s conclusion about the second group should not be accepted too readily, for the
words ἡμεῖς φύσει ἱουδαίοι καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἑθνῶν ἀμαρτωλοί probably refer to what Paul said to Peter in Antioch rather than being addressed to the Galatians. Nevertheless, Lategan is correct in stating that the audience of Galatians was of a complex nature, or at least that Paul argues his case from so many perspectives that different categories among the readers must be accepted.

3 THE STRUCTURE OF GALATIANS

Du Toit (1990:160) discusses the outline of Galatians accepted by the Pauline sub-group of the NTSSA (see Addendum). The body of the letter has two main sections. In the first Paul’s historical argument that his gospel is the true gospel, is presented. In the second the principle is argued.

The whole letter to the Galatians can be divided into twenty-two pericopae.

3.1 The context preceding the passage on Law and Promise
Pericopae 1 and 2 contain Paul’s formal letter introduction (writer and greeting), (1:1-5). This is followed by the expression of his amazement at the fact that they are turning away from him who called them and thus from the true gospel (1:6-7), and a curse which he utters against those who lead believers away from the true gospel (1:8-9).

Pericope 3 describes Paul’s obedience to God and states that he proclaims the message which God has revealed to him (1:10-12). With this pericope Paul introduces the argumentative phase of the letter which continues from 1:10 to 4:11.

After this introduction Paul’s first argument follows in which he states the authenticity of the gospel which he proclaims, based on the historical facts that he received his gospel from God and not from men and that it was approved by the other apostles. This part covers 1:13 to 2:21.

3.2 The passage dealing with Law and Promise
The relationship between Law and Promise, the theme of this paper, is one of the arguments which Paul uses in the second main section of the letter to persuade the Galatians (pericopae 7-13, 3:1-4:11). Here Paul deals with the problem of faith and works of law and also with the relation between Law and Promise.

In the introductory part of this main section, 3:1-6, Paul touches on the opposing means through which men have tried to obtain the fulfilment of the promise ἐξ ἑργων νόμου or ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως, 3:2, as well as the content of the promise itself, the πιστοίοι, although the Spirit is not yet explicitly called the promise.

Pericopae 8 and 9, 3:7-18 deal with the fact that faith is sufficient for acquiring the fulfillment of the promise. It does not need works to supplement it. Then 3:17-4:11 follows where Paul describes the real meaning and function of the law over against its misuse when people try to secure righteousness through works of law. Here the second main section of Paul’s argumentation ends.
3.3 The context following the passage on Law and Promise
Pericope 14, 4:12-16, contains Paul's plea to the Galatians to restore the original relationship between him and them by returning to the true gospel. In 4:17-20 this pericope continues to express Paul's conviction that the false teachers are acting in their own interest and he also tells the Galatians that he would have liked to be with them.

Pericope 15 deals with the concept of freedom over against slavery in an allegoric passage (4:21-4:31 or 5:1). After this follows the paracletic section, i.e. pericopae 16-20, 5:1 or 5:2-6:10.

In the last two pericopae, 21 and 22, we find a strong concluding appeal and the letter ends with 6:11-18.

Bearing in mind the topic of this paper, it will become clear that the relationship between Law and Promise is mainly dealt with in pericopae 8 and 9. However, the issue of works of Law over against Promise has already been touched upon in pericope 7 where πετυμα as promise is mentioned. In pericopae 8 and 9 the relationship between the promise and the means of attaining it, namely faith, is described. The sufficiency of faith for receiving the promise is the thrust of Paul's argument here. After this the question of the relationship between Law and Promise remains. Having pointed out so far that faith does not need works of a law, or the Law, to complement it, Paul continues to describe the real meaning and function of the law before fulfilment of the promise in pericopae 10-13.

4 THE LAW OF MOSES IS NOT A NECESSITY FOR THE REALISATION OF THE PROMISE GIVEN TO ABRAHAM

4.1 Paul tries to persuade the Galatians from their own historical position
The perspective from which Paul is here speaking about the law is that of soteriology (Wallace 1990:232). This must be kept in mind throughout in order to avoid drawing in arguments about Paul's view of the law which are not relevant in this context.

In 3:2 Paul states the opposite forces

εργα νομου
or
άκοη πίστεως.

Works of a law or believing from hearing (report, news, preaching).

The manner in which Paul uses εργα and νομος in Galatians 2 and 3 must be carefully noted. He first uses εργα νομου in 2:16 (three times). He presupposes that his readers, whether from Jewish or Gentile background, will know exactly what he means. On closer investigation εργα νομου is found to be not equivalent
to νόμος or ὁ νόμος in any place in Galatians (contra Fuller 1975:40-41). From Galatians 2:16 up to 4:11 one can, with due attention to Paul’s own language, most probably only grasp the correct meaning of what he writes if one takes νόμος as meaning a law (the Law of Moses or another law, the generic use), ὁ νόμος as the law of Moses, and ἔργα νόμου as works prescribed by a law, either the Law of Moses, the Sinaitic code (Westerholm:1990) or any other law, the generic use again. This includes the ceremonial law of which 2:11-14 is an example.

Fuller (1975:37-38) argues that Galatians 2:16 must be understood in the light of the historical context which precedes, where Paul writes about Peter whom he has rebuked for not continuing to eat with the Gentiles (2:11-14; see also Dunn 1983:107,117-118 and R is nen 1986:171). Paul’s movement from the particular in 2:11-14 to the general and indefinite in 2:16 is, however, important. The use of ἀνθρώπος, ἔργων νόμου and πάσα σάρξ is indefinite in all cases (see also Longenecker 1990:85-86). Thus Paul does not only refer to the ceremonial law, which would only have applied to Jews, but any legalism: ἔργα νόμου must not be translated by ‘the works of the law’ but by ‘works of a law’. Therefore the particular Sinaitic ceremonial prescriptions also do not lead to righteousness. From the ceremonial law, especially circumcision, the food laws and keeping certain special days or feasts (Dunn 1983:107), Paul moves over to the whole Sinaitic code, as far as Jews are concerned, and to whatever laws the Gentile Galatians may have had.

Fuller says that ‘works of the law’ is not equivalent to the Law of Moses, but a perversion of the Law of Moses. It especially amounts to the ceremonial part of the law (1975:37-40). In 1975 he also wrote: ‘The Swedish exegete, Ragnar Bring, however, argues that “the works of the law” does not represent what the law itself commands, but rather the Jewish misinterpretation of the law’ (1975:32). Bring (Fuller 1975:32-33) is correct in stating that ‘works of a law’ is not equivalent to the Law of Moses but to a perversion of it. But he is wrong in accepting that what lacked or what was different, was that the Jews wanted to bribe God. What was lacking was that they did not regard the Law of Moses as something which also asked for faith and trust. They thus relied on what they were able to do. But the law above all asks for faith and trust in God and this they neglected. Braswell says that the Torah enjoins both law and faith (1991:79).

By following one of the ways, ἔργων νόμου or ἀκοὴ πίστεως, 3:2, one could try to obtain the promise, πνεῦμα. And the Galatians received the Spirit through ἀκοὴ πίστεως. They began with the Spirit (ἐναρξάμενοι). How could they now insist that the law was a necessity for receiving the promise! Faith thus stands over against works of a law. Here Paul does not mention explicitly that the πνεῦμα is the realised promise. This only follows in 3:14 with τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεῦματος. The content of the promise is the Spirit. The promise was con-
tained in the blessing of Abraham. In 3:9 Paul concludes that those who believe are blessed together with Abraham. Thus, those who believe in Christ, the seed of Abraham, who took away the curse of the law, receive the fulfilment of the promise. By becoming accursed in the place of the believers, Christ has taken the curse from them. They now do not need to keep the whole law, that is, also the ceremonial part, but only part of it, that which comes forth from faith and trust under the powerful guidance of the Holy Spirit (5:18, 23). When he says in 3:12 that the law is not out of faith, he means that faith does not require the law as its necessary complement (cf Braswell 1991:77). Westerholm (1990:110 ff) translates Galatians 3:12a as ‘the law does not rest on faith’. It might be more correct to understand the words ὃ δὲ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως as meaning that faith does not require the law as a support. Rather, as is shown in 3:22a, it was sin that made the law necessary.

4.2 It is illegal to change the conditions for the promise

The promise is compared to a man’s will in 3:15. In 3:14 the means through which the promise is received is called faith, διὰ τῆς πίστεως. When Paul now compares the promise (in the blessing) to the will of a man, it must be kept in mind that faith is the means through which the promise can be received.

A promise made in a will which has been duly drawn up according to valid legal procedures cannot be put aside, ἀθετέω. The Law of Moses did not exist at the time that God established the covenant with Abraham. It was no condition for receiving the promise. The two factors which existed at the time were the promise and Abraham’s faith. Through this faith he received the promise. But the promise to Abraham was at the same time a promise to his seed. His seed could effectuate the promise in the same way. The Law of Moses could not replace faith as the means of receiving the promise.

Paul here deals with the entire Law of Moses and not only the perverted use of it which claims that ἐργα νόμου is a prerequisite. In 3:17 Paul uses the verb ἀκυρώω as the opposite of the perfect κεκυρωμένη in 3:15, as well as the opposite of προκεκυρωμένη in 3:17. Both acts stated in 3:15, setting aside or adding to, ἀθετέω and ἐπιλατὰσσομαι, are included in ἀκυρώω.

There might have been degrees of rigorism when the false teachers tried to persuade the Galatians to accept the law or part of it as essential for attaining righteousness. Some might have wanted to replace (ἀθετέω) faith, as it existed before the law was given, by the law. Others might have wanted to add (ἐπιλατάσσομαι) ἐργα νόμου to that faith as a means towards receiving the promise. According to them, ὅ νόμος, was necessary to support or supplant faith. That is what the difficult verse 12 of Chapter 3 most probably means. The law was not born out of faith as a necessary addition for receiving the promise. Rather the law came as opposition to what is the opposite of faith, namely disobedience,
or sin. It is this opposing factor to faith, sin, which necessitated the law.

4.3 Historically the promise preceded the law
To the argument of sufficiency of faith or trust in the promise, Paul adds more information. The law was given by God four hundred and thirty years after the promise had been given to Abraham. This means that during that time not only Abraham, but also Isaac and Jacob received the promise through faith alone, without a law assisting faith, or replacing it. God’s covenant of grace in which he gave the promise to those who believed, was a functioning reality during this period. It is thus senseless after four hundred and thirty years to regard the law or part of it, as essential to receiving the promise. This would have meant that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob could not have received it.

Abraham received the promise through faith. So also did his seed. Isaac and Jacob were also called seed (singular) of Abraham. They received the promise without the aid of the law. But Christ is the ultimate seed of Abraham. As Isaac was the seed (singular) and in him the believers who were his descendants also received the fulfilment of the promise, so also, in Christ, do the nations receive the promise by means of faith. The promise to Abraham was that in him the nations would also be blessed. This did not materialise until Christ came. In this way he is really the seed of Abraham in an absolute sense.

In 3:18a Paul concludes that if the inheritance, which is the realised promise, is out of a law, then it is not a promise any more. A law and a promise are mutually exclusive with regard to receiving the inheritance. But Abraham chose the way of the promise. God bestowed grace upon him through a promise which Abraham accepted through faith (cf Rm 4:1-12).

Paul’s opponents could not deny that Abraham had received God’s blessing without possessing the Law of Moses. How could they then persuade the Galatians that the Law of Moses or a part of it was a necessity for receiving the promise?

5 THE FUNCTION OF THE LAW OF MOSES BEFORE THE RECEIVING OF THE SPIRIT AS THE REALISED PROMISE
The statement of Paul that the law is not out of faith, 3:12, has now been treated from one perspective. Faith did not necessitate the Law of Moses. Neither did the promise necessitate it. The promise only required faith or trust.

Paul however, anticipates a question from the side of the false teachers and also from those Galatians who have been on the verge of moving away from the true gospel: If the law has no function with respect to obtaining the inheritance, why did God give it then, τί ὁδὲ ὁ νόμος; 3:19a?

In answer to this Paul explains what the character, meaning, purpose and function of the law is, if it has no purpose with regard to the realisation of the
promise. By also stating the positive, but real, role of the law and not rejecting it, Paul gains a powerful psychological tool for persuading the Galatians. He is thus able to convince them not only by logical argumentation, but also psychologically that he does not intend to estrange them. If Paul had simply rejected the law, an emotional barrier would have prevented him from being accepted by the Galatians because at this stage they had already acquired a great affinity for the law. Giving it its proper place thus gave him a psychological advantage over against a position where he would have rejected it totally.

5.1 The law was given to curb trespasses
The question amounts to this: Why did God give the Law of Moses if it is not a necessary supplement to faith or if it was not intended to lead to the inheritance itself? Paul’s initial answer is very brief: τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη (3:19). At this point it is not evident whether χάριν has a positive or a negative thrust. Did the law come to curb trespasses? Or did it come to evoke trespasses? Wallace (1990:236-239) and others to whom he refers, put the question differently, namely whether the reference is prospectively or retrospectively, for the purpose of transgressions or because of transgressions. Wallace (1990:236-239) most probably misunderstands χάριν here because he does not argue from the immediate context, but rather, in his arguments against Hübner, rely more on what Paul wrote in Romans 4 and 5. χάριν in this colon can only be understood correctly if one reads Paul’s own explanation in 3:22 to 3:25.

However, before explaining this brief answer further, Paul digresses to mention for which time the law was intended (3:19b), and in which way it was received (3:19c). He also first states that the law is not against the promises of God (3:21a) and that righteousness is not out of a law (3:21b).

Only in 3:22 and 3:23 does he come back to explain τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη. Scripture says that all, τὰ πάντα, is enclosed under the power of sin, and so the law was given to keep men under its power as a protection against another power, σιν: ἀλλὰ συνέκλεισεν ἡ γραφή τὰ πάντα ὑπὸ ἀμαρτίαν... ὑπὸ νόμων ἑφρουροῦμεθα. Τὰ πάντα here means that the whole dispensation at the time when Abraham received the promise and afterwards, was infected by sin. It is because of this reality that the law was given and not for the sake of realising the promise. χάριν then has a positive thrust. Longenecker (1990:138) points out the positive relationship between χάριν and παραδοχαγόγος, ἐπιτροπῶν and ὀλιγονύμων. Braswell (1991:83-86) joins Lull in his positive appreciation of the function of the law. Westerholm’s conclusion (1990:177; cf. Sanders 1983:68) that in the heat of the argument Paul, for the moment, has nothing good to say about the law, cannot be accepted. ἑφρουροῦμεθα means to be kept in gaol for one’s own protection.

Another question deserves attention here. In Romans Paul writes that where
there is no law, there is also no παράβασις. In Abraham’s time the Law of Moses did not exist, so it might be concluded that then there could also have been no transgressions. In this case the positive meaning of χάριν must be rejected. It would then have been given to evoke transgressions. We must look deeper into Romans 4:15.

In the first instance, one should be careful not to put too much emphasis on Romans before really examining the further context in which χάριν occurs in Galatians. Secondly, Paul’s intention in Romans 4:15 is not to say that where there is no written law, there is no transgression, but where there is no written or unwritten law at all. He accepts (Rm 2:14) that also where there is no written law, there is still the νόμος ἀρχαῖος. In Romans 2:12 Paul’s intention is to say that whosoever has no law, ἀνομία ἡμαρτον, will perish without having a law, exactly because there are no such people. But whosoever has a law, and that includes all people, will be judged by a law. Thus Abraham and his descendants up to Moses could also have been transgressors as was the case with all the Gentiles. Kaiser (1990:298) draws attention to the words of Genesis 26:5 where we read: ‘...Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws.’ And he lived long before the law of Moses had been given!

In Romans 4:15 Paul endeavours to indicate that the Law of Moses results in wrath because of the conscious transgression of it. The same would be the case with the unwritten law. It is only where there is no law at all (note the absence of the article in Rm 4:15b) that there can be no transgression.

Romans 5:13 must also be understood in this way. In this case Paul goes back to Adam. His intention is to say that sin entered this world with Adam and Eve, and only afterwards did God give the unwritten law and later the written law to curb sin which also had the effect that henceforth transgressions worked more wrath. Paul’s whole argument in Romans 1 to 4 revolves around the fact that the greater God’s revelation (or grace), the greater man’s responsibility and the more severe transgressions become. If one is to understand (in Romans 5:13) that there is no accounting for sin before the Law of Moses one would come to the absurd conclusion that in this case none of the Gentiles had ever transgressed and was guilty of anything. In Romans 5:20 οὖν must be understood consecutively: the law was introduced with the result or consequence that the transgressions increased in severity.

A negative meaning for χάριν in 3:19 can therefore not be accepted with reference to Romans 4:15, 5:13 and 5:20.

Beginning with ὑπὸ κατάραν in 3:10, Paul uses ὑπὸ with the accusative in the sense of being under the power of in the following cases: ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν, ὑπὸ νόμον, ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν, ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπους καὶ οἰκουμοῦς, ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα, ὑπὸ νόμον (5 times). This being under a power, holds something of the meaning of being like a slave, unfree. Contrary to what Lategan (1991:81-82) says, however,
all these ὑπό-phrases do not have negative associations. They all mean under the power of, but this has a positive meaning in some cases and a negative one in others.

God added the law (προςετέθη is a passivum divinum; cf also Wallace 1990:235, Longenecker 1990:138, as are ἐπίγγελται, διαταγέσ and ἐφρουροῦμεθα which follow) because a power which could counteract sin was necessary before faith came as the means through which the promise would be realised. God guarded, ἐφρουροῦμεθα. Paul and the Galatians (...ομεθα), under the power of a law. (It is very important to note the absence of the article here. Paul refers to more than the Law of Moses.) In this way, when faith in Jesus Christ came, God could give the promise to those who believed, Jews as well as Gentiles.

The example of the παιδαγωγός in 3:24 must be taken in a positive sense (Van Stempvoort 1961:96). Longenecker says: 'The depiction of the ancient pedagogue as a grim and ugly character is, indeed, a caricature, and must not be imported into Paul's analogy here.' The παιδαγωγός in this passage is not a bully as he was sometimes regarded from the viewpoint of the child under his care, but the trusted slave under whose care a man would put his child to teach him good discipline, as seen from the viewpoint of adults, like the Galatian readers and Paul himself. Duncan (1944:124) says: 'The real meaning of the passage is well brought out in the translation: the Law thus helds us as wards in discipline, a discipline which was to last till such time as Christ came.' Focussing on the negative aspects of the παιδαγωγός (Betz 1988:314-315; Cosgrove 1988:71) is not in harmony with the context, especially if one pays due attention to the divine passives προςετέθη, ἐπίγγελται, διαταγέσ, ἔδοθη and ἐφρουροῦμεθα. Bertram says: 'There is certainly nothing derogatory in the term paedagogue' (1973:620). The same positive meaning must be given to ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπους καὶ οἰκονόμους. In all these cases the freedom of the person under a law was restricted for the sake of his own protection. Paul's idea is not to emphasise the restriction, but rather the function of the law to protect until the Spirit would bring full freedom. The power which the law of the Galatians, as well as that of Paul, had over them while they had not yet come to faith and thus had not yet received the Spirit, can be compared to the locking up of a drunk person in a prison cell for his own protection. The so-called usus paedagogicus of the law is not taught here (contra Ridderbos 1954:144-145). This could only have been a possibility if the gospel as an alternative was already known. The law was not a master worrying people so that they might flee to Christ. It was a protective force until faith and the Spirit were freely received upon hearing the gospel.

One should not forget that Paul is writing primarily to the Galatian churches. The Gentiles in these congregations did not possess the Law of Moses before they came to faith. But they were not without a law. This is why Paul says in 3:23 that we were guarded under a law, ὑπὸ νόμου ἐφρουροῦμεθα, even those who
were Gentiles. The first person plural is used to make the Gentile as well as the Jewish Galatians conscious of the fact that they all were under a law. Longenecker (1990:164) also says that the first person plural in Galatians seems to carry greater significance than is usually accepted (contra Braswell 1991:75). It is not strange that the words ὃστε ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγός ἡμῶν γέγονεν then follow. Here ὁ νόμος is the Law of Moses (perhaps the Sinaitic code only), and ἡμῶν means Paul and his fellow Jews. Taken in the context that he is explaining the function of the Law of Moses, ὁ νόμος in 3:19a, it naturally follows.

Paul further explains how Jews and Gentiles were guarded under a law when he says that he and the Galatians were under the basic principles, ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεία τοῦ κόσμου in 4:3. He does not hesitate to group himself, who had the Law of Moses, with those who had their own laws. Their laws, which they had before coming to faith, as well as the Law of Moses before coming to faith, are called στοιχεία (see also Moore-Crispin 1989:209-212; Bruce 1982:182-183). In Romans 2:14-15 and 2:26-27 Paul similarly attributes great positive value to the laws which the Gentiles had. Not yet being under the powerful guidance of the Holy Spirit, means being under the στοιχεία.

In 4:3 Paul moves from the example of an infant under educators and managers to that of a slave. The child who is to inherit from his parents is not free to use the inheritance while not yet of age. (Similarly one cannot receive the promise, inheritance, Spirit, when one has not yet willingly accepted the gospel of free grace as proclaimed by the apostle Paul.) This ‘not being free’ leads Paul to the idea that the child’s position is then actually the same as that of a slave who has no freedom and possesses little. When he says οὖτως καὶ ἡμεῖς οτὲ ἡμεῖς νηπιοί ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεία τοῦ κόσμου ἡμεῖς δεδομένοι (4:3), οὖτως must be understood as in the same manner. Paul is not referring to a total slavery under the law. He is only drawing attention to the aspect of not having freedom to enjoy one’s inheritance. He compares a free νηπιός to a slave.

Christ also came under this law, 4:4d (cf Mt 3:15). His solidarity with Israel in being under the law was also shown in that he was circumcised. He came under a law, the Law of Moses, in order to lead all who believe in him from under the power of a law which had guarded them, to the freedom under the new power, the promised Spirit.

In 4:21 and 5:4 Paul most probably does not only refer to some members of the Galatian churches who were moving away from the true gospel, but also to the false teachers themselves when he speaks of οἱ ὑπὸ νόμου θέλοντες εἶναι. They wanted to stay restricted under the power of a law, instead of living free under the power of the Spirit. On the other hand, those Galatians who had received the Spirit as the promise, were led by the Spirit and were no longer under a law as a power which had to guard them (5:18).
5.2 The law is not against the promises

When the promise was fulfilled it did not mean the end of the law. Already in 3:21a Paul asks the question whether the law of Moses was against the promises. Immediately he denies it strongly. This is an indication that the Law and the Promise could exist together if both were given their rightful place. Therefore Paul later, in 5:23, says that there is not a law against the fruit of the Spirit. From here he moves on to emphasise the law of Christ 6:2, which is love and which is also required in the Law of Moses as the supreme command (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18). This means that the Galatians are under no obligation to fulfil the ceremonial law and that which is particularly Jewish, but that they are still under an obligation, though free from the power of the law and led by the Holy Spirit, to fulfil the ethical law. Dunn (1985:538) says that Paul is fighting against the social function of the law which intended to make people Jews. Kaiser (1990:290-291) argues that the law is not an indivisible unity. The ‘ceremonial law’ was destined to end. This means more than only ending the social function of the law.

In another passage Paul also hints that the law is not against the promises. In 3:12b he writes ἀλλὰ ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ζησέται ἐν αὐτοῖς. What he actually means is that doing the law in the right way, means to respond with faith to the Law of Moses. Doing the law for Paul means to have the intention of walking with God, obeying him and relying upon him. It does not mean to be always able to fulfil every commandment. (This is similar to the attitude which a believer has to the law after being filled with the Holy Spirit.) The Jews believed that a person could do the law in spite of transgressing commandments from time to time. Paul emphasises the idea of affirming God's covenant, just as the pious Jews wanted to do. The obedient attitude, or the attitude of faith and reliance on God was reckoned as fulfilling (doing) the law.

In Galatians Paul does not explain how it is possible for a person to fulfil the law, but what he says, fully agrees with what he wrote in Romans 2:26-27 where he used φυλάσσω and τέλεω to describe doing the law. Even in Romans, 10:4 τέλεσθαι must be understood in the same way, namely that the aim or the fulfilment of the law is to believe in God, which, after the coming of Christ, was revealed as actually trusting in him. In Romans 10:5 he uses the same expression as in Galatians 3:12 and here ποιήσας also means to do by faith and not to be always obedient to every commandment. (There is no opposition between Romans 10:4 and 10:5 and δέ in 10:6 must also not be taken adversively. The law required trust in God [Christ]. That is how all the demands of the law were met. The righteousness which is out of faith comes in the same way.) Schoeps (1974:188) writes: 'Paul does not seem to know this idea of the fear of the Lord'. But this is exactly what Paul means when he insists that the whole law must be done. Not only was it necessary to keep the ceremonial law, but firm trust in the Lord was also im-
perative. This is how the law must be done. Paul did not have a narrow concept of the νομός which did not include doctrine as well as law (contra Schoeps 1974:29, cf Westerholm 1990:45).

Doing the law must be seen in close relation to Paul’s use of the noun εργον for faith (Rm 2:7,15; Php 1:6,22; 2:30; 1 Th 1:3; 2 Th 1:11). In Romans 2:15 Paul says that the part of the law which is its heart, which asks for faith and trust, is τὸ εργον τοῦ νομοῦ. That this sort of use had a wider scope within the circle of New Testament writers is also evident from John 6:28-29: ἔστιν τὸ εργον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα πιστεύετε εἰς ὧν ἀπέστειλεν ἐκεῖνος.. Although Paul sharply rejected the attempt to receive the promise through εργα τοῦ νομοῦ, he nevertheless had great admiration for the law as such. Therefore he says in Romans 7:12: ὅπερ δὲ μὴν νόμος ἁγιός, καὶ ἡ ἐντολὴ ἁγία καὶ δικαία καὶ ἁγαθή.

The law could be ‘done’ because it asked for recognition of the fact that it made provision that those who failed to keep it could bring sacrifices and receive forgiveness of their sins (Kaiser 1990:295). Cosgrove, in his article titled The Mosaic law preaches faith: a study in Galatians 3, comes to the following conclusion:

Paul sees the Mosaic law as very much opposed to works-righteousness. Works-righteousness represents man’s proud, thankless, sinful attempt to earn God’s favor on the basis of human merit, despising God’s gracious covenanting on his behalf. ‘Works’ stand opposed to the very goal of salvation history: the glory of God. No wonder Paul is horrified by them. No wonder the only link he sees between them and God’s covenant with Moses is the Jewish perversion of the meaning of that covenant in his day (1978:164).

5.3 The law is subordinate or inferior to the realised promise

From another perspective the Law of Moses is inferior to the promise. Not only was the law no longer necessary once the promise had been received and not only had it come later for the repression of sin, but God had not given it in the same direct way as he had given the promise to Abraham. God gave the law through a mediator, Moses, after he had put it into effect through angels (3:19). Furthermore, Moses as mediator who received the law, could not even personally speak to one angel, because they were many. So Moses was not a mediator of one (angel) but many angels. But God, who gave the promise to Abraham, without a mediator, is one. So he spoke personally to Abraham. This interpretation of 3:20, is given by Mussner (1974:248-249) and is most probably the best interpretation of this crux interpretum (cf also Stott 1968:90, Fung 1988:161). Chapter 3:19c-20 then has the intention of describing the inferiority of the law compared to the promise.
5.4 The law was temporary as a protecting power

The function of the Law of Moses (and the law of the Gentile Galatians) was to be a temporary protective force until the Spirit came. Paul sees this temporary function from two perspectives. Firstly, he sees it as temporary in the sense of being necessary until Christ would come. This means a difference in dispensations. The great breakthrough for the nations was that of coming to faith when Christ came. The law thus had to guard the nations until the power of the Spirit, the realised promise, could take charge of their lives. Paul expresses this perspective of different dispensations, with the temporary authority of the law by the words ἀρχὴς δὲ ἐλθῃ τὸ σπέρμα ὦ ἐπήγγελται in 3:19 and by ὅτε δὲ ἠλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου in 4:4.

Secondly, he does see the temporary function of the law as a protective force in a personal or existential manner. This means that every single individual is protected by a law until he personally comes to faith, when the Spirit takes over as the guiding power. This Paul expresses in πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἠλθεν τὴν πίστιν (3:23), παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν ἐγὼ Χρίστου (3:24), in the genitive absolute ἔλθοντις in 3:26 and in ὅτε ἠλευθερώθη in 4:3. It is in this sense that Paul is indignant over the fact that those who have already come under the power of the Holy Spirit, want to return to the lesser power which could only protect against trespasses and in custody.

6 SUMMARY

How did Paul persuade the Galatians to remain with the true gospel by explaining the relationship between Law and Promise? We can summarise as follows:

6.1 He demonstrated to them, by means of historical arguments and a legal argument, that the law was not a necessity for receiving the promise

For this purpose he uses two historical and a legal argument.

Firstly, he reminds them that they themselves have received the Spirit before they reverted to the law.

Secondly, a promise is like a will. Once established legally it cannot be set aside or changed. Therefore Paul compares the promise to a will. A will which has been lawfully established does not need to be changed or set aside in order to receive the inheritance. God made a will (a testament) with Abraham and his seed. It is a one-sided and free promise to which they do not have to contribute by doing anything. Only trust was required from Abraham.

Thirdly, historically when God gave his promise to Abraham, it was not accompanied by a law or the Law of Moses. A law was not necessary for the fulfilment of the promise. The Law of Moses which came later, did not change or replace the testament. It was given for a totally different purpose. What was true
for Abraham is also true for his seed, namely that they have a promise and they must respond with trust.

6.2 Paul tries to convince the Galatians by explaining the true place and function of the Law before the Promise was realised in the receiving of the Spirit

6.2.1 The law came to curb trespasses
Starting with χάριν linked closely to the divine passive προσε τῇ θν, 3:19, and the following divine passives, Paul describes the positive function of the law. If he had been totally negative about the law, he would certainly not have succeeded in convincing the Galatians. Instead of doing this, he explains the proper place and function of the law. The law was given to curb sin. It constituted additional care and love from God to the covenant people. The law functioned like walls, a παλαιωγός, an ἔπιτροπος, an οἰκουμός. All these were powers contra to sin, which protected while the Spirit had not yet come.

6.2.2 The law is not against the promises
Between the Promise and the Law there is harmony and not opposition. The law helped a person to hold on to the promise. The law itself did not only ask for works, but also for faith. Those who neglected the faith part of the law did not do (πολέω) the law. Fulfilling the Law of Moses meant to live from the source of faith and trust and to rely on God with covenant obedience. In this sense the Law of Moses asked for the same response as the promise did at the time of Abraham.

6.2.3 The law is subordinate or inferior to the promise
The promise functions independently from the law. The law was not regarded as essential to receiving the promise when the promise was initially given. God gave the promise without an intermediary. The law came in a secondary manner through angels and Moses. Although the giving of the law was a positive act, it nevertheless was true that the law was inferior in the way it was received to the promise.

6.2.4 The function of the law as a protecting power was temporary
The ceremonial law was temporary and only intended for the Jews before Christ came. The whole law was also temporary as the power which led man. When the Spirit came he took over as the guide. The Spirit is the ultimate guide for believers and not the law. This temporary function of the law was dispensational, marking time before Christ came. It also was existential, marking time before a person comes to believe. In this last sense there is no difference between the laws of Gentiles and the Sinaitic code of Moses.
7 THE RELATIONSHIP FAITH, LAW AND PROMISE

A diagram may perhaps help to describe the relationship between these three entities. We must bear in mind that promise is used in three connotations in these pericopae:

- Promise as the words contained in the blessing of Abraham
- Promise fulfilled as the πνεῦμα
- Promise as inheritance (in this last case the meaning has wider eschatological scope than merely beginning with the Spirit.)

Initially God acted sovereignly and gave the promise to Abraham and to his seed. Walking in the path of faith, Abraham continued to proceed toward the fulfilment of the promise. Abraham’s descendants lived with the promise, but they were always tempted to be disobedient. Therefore God gave them the law to be their disciplinarian and keep them on the way of faith. Doing the law in faith (πολιτισμός 3:10, πολιτισμός 3:12) they would still be on the right way towards obtaining the inheritance and would have life through this way. This does not mean that a person would never transgress the law. Keeping to this way meant that faith would always, after transgression, incite prayers for forgiveness which God would grant. In opposition to this way where the law acted as a disciplinarian for those who through faith expected the inheritance, one finds the other way, that of works of law. Here the way of faith (an integral part of the Law of Moses) had been left behind and people started relying on their own efforts to keep the entire law and earn the inheritance. In this way the inheritance became a reward for their labour and not a free gift from God which the believers had to receive from him through faith.

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