THE CALL TO RESPONSIBLE FREEDOM IN PAUL’S PERSUASIVE STRATEGY.

GALATIANS 5:13-6:10

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ABSTRACT

In this paper the allegation that Galatians 5:13-6:10 does not form an integral part of Paul’s argument in Galatians is examined and then refuted. It is argued that Paul’s positive evaluation of the law in 5:14 constitutes no contradiction of his anti-law polemic in the earlier part of the letter, but can be best understood if it is kept in mind that Paul’s polemic is not against observation of the law as such, but against the law being made an entrance requirement to the young Christian community.

1 THE PROBLEM OF GALATIANS 5:13-6:10

One of the aims of this essay is to investigate how Galatians 5:13-6:10 (pericopes 17-20, see Addendum) functions as part of Paul’s persuasive strategy in his letter to the Galatians. This presents a problem. The very basis of any rhetorical analysis of a document is the assumption that the document forms a unit, in which every part fulfils a certain function and in which the totality is greater than the sum of its respective parts. However, our problem is that the prima facie impression is that Galatians 5:13-6:10 is not an integral part of the Letter to the Galatians.

There are three main reasons for this impression:

1 The content of Galatians 5:13-6:10 is apparently not related to the rest of the letter.
2 Measured against the categories of ancient rhetoric, Galatians 5:13-6:10 seems out of place.
3 In 5:13-14 Paul seems to formulate an understanding of the law which is in apparent contradiction to his view of the law in the rest of the letter.

Galatians 5:13-6:10 is not related to the rest of Galatians. J C O’Neill comes to this conclusion, as a result of a form-critical investigation. He regards Galatians 5:13-6:10 as an interpolation, since the section ‘is really a collection of moral admonitions telling Christians at large what are their duties. There is no connection between one admonition and the next...the collector is not pursuing a
connected argument’ (1972:67).

2 **Galatians 5:13-6:10 does not fit into the categories of classical rhetoric.** Hans Dieter Betz, whose programmatic article in 1975 largely served to introduce New Testament scholars to the rediscovery of the classical rhetoric, admits that Galatians 5:13-6:10 does not fit into the rhetorical pattern. The problem is that this section mainly consists of paraenesis, which Betz (1975:375) admits, ‘plays only a marginal role in the ancient rhetorical handbooks’. For Betz the problem is increased because of the fact that he classifies Galatians as a product of the *genus iudiciale*, the judicial mode of rhetoric which in classical rhetoric was used on the occasion of a trial before a jury or judge. The judicial mode is employed in an argument seeking to establish whether someone is guilty or not, and is therefore mainly concerned with facts of the past. A speech in the judicial mode naturally has no place for exhortation — and such is also the case in classical rhetoric.

Exhortation is a feature of the *genus deliberativum*, the deliberative mode of rhetoric used in a political debate. For that reason Robert Hall classifies Galatians as a speech in the deliberative mode. ‘The important part exhortation plays in Galatians, rhetorically inexplicable if Galatians is judicial, is precisely what one expects in a deliberative speech’ (Hall 1987:281).

However, the problem is not simply solved by classifying Galatians as deliberative. Even some of those scholars who interpret Galatians as a speech in the deliberative mode, find it difficult to incorporate the hortatory elements in their pattern. Joop Smit, for example, also regards Galatians as deliberative, and gives as one of the reasons why he cannot accept Betz’s classification, the problem of the paraenesis (1989:6). But he has no answer to the apparent lack of connection between Galatians 5:13-6:10 and its literary environment. In fact, he emphasises the isolation of Galatians 5:13-6:10. According to Smit, Paul concludes his speech in Galatians 5:7-12 (pericope 16) with the last part of the *indignatio* (a regular part of the *conclusio*, intended to incite the listeners to great passion). Having ended his written speech, Paul adds a postscript in his own hand — Galatians 6:11-18 (pericope 21), which concludes the letter. Galatians 5:13-6:10 does not fit into this pattern. Smit therefore offers the time-honoured explanation of the historical-critical school to any incongruities in ancient texts: ‘Gal 5.13-6.10 was added at a somewhat later time to the letter’ (1989:9).

3 **Galatians 5:13-6:10 reflects a different understanding of the law than the rest of the letter.** The key verses here are 5:14, ‘The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbour as yourself”’, and 6:2, ‘Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way fulfil the law of Christ’. Both seem to reflect a positive understanding of the law, in contrast to earlier sections, where the law is
portrayed in a negative light (2:15f, 3:2, 3:10-13).

Therefore, any attempt to demonstrate the role of Galatians 5:13-6:10 within Paul’s persuasive strategy will have to address the issue of the relationship between Galatians 5:13-6:10 and the rest of the letter. My hypothesis (which I hope to demonstrate in the argument below) is that Galatians 5:13-6:10 is an integral part of Galatians and that an investigation of Paul’s persuasive strategy in 5:13-6:10 will demonstrate its logical connection to the earlier chapters.

2 PAUL’S ARGUMENT IN GALATIANS 1:10-5:12

Before analysing Paul’s persuasive strategy in Galatians 5:13-6:10 it is important to briefly recall his argument in Galatians 1:10-5:12 (pericopes 3-16), which forms the first main part of the letter. In 1:10-5:12 Paul argues for the authenticity of the gospel message as he has proclaimed it. He offers two arguments to prove the authenticity of his gospel, followed by an appeal to remain faithful to this gospel. In his first argument (Gl 1:10-2:21, pericopes 3-6), Paul argues that he received the gospel from God himself and not from man. In the second argument (Gl 3:4:7, pericopes 7-12), he reminds the Galatians that they have experienced the Spirit through believing the gospel and not by upholding the law. Therefore Paul appeals to them (Gl 4:8-5:12, pericopes 13-16) to remain faithful to the freedom which the gospel has given them.

So much for a summary of Paul’s argument. However, if we are to understand the issues at stake in Galatia, we need to focus on three questions: 1) Who are the Galatians whom Paul is addressing? 2) From what have they been set free by the gospel? 3) What is the issue that Paul is addressing?

1) Who are the implied readers of Galatians? They are followers of Jesus, who have received the Spirit (3:3, 3:26). They are gentile believers, because formerly they ‘did not know God’ (4:8). They are now assured that if they belong to Christ, they are ‘Abraham’s seed’ – which the Jews were anyway and had no reason to be assured of.

2) From what have they been set free? Many interpreters, following a Lutheran tradition, understand this as freedom from earning one’s salvation by doing good works. It is understood as freedom from observing the Jewish law, which becomes a metaphor for an attempt to earn God’s righteousness by good deeds.

I believe that this is not correct. In Galatians Paul’s polemic is not against earning salvation by doing good works, or even against the observance of the law as such, but against it being made a condition for gentiles’ becoming part of the people of God.

Early in his argument Paul relates the Antioch incident. There the issue at stake was not so much what Peter believed. From Paul’s question in 2:14 it is
apparent that Peter himself no longer held observance of the Torah to be mandatory; before the intruders came, Peter had no qualms to 'live like a Gentile and not like a Jew'. But when the men from the predominantly Jewish Jerusalem congregation came, allegedly with close ties to the leader of the Jerusalem congregation, Peter changed his behaviour. He no longer wanted to eat with the gentile brothers, presumably because they did not eat kosher food. Paul formulates the crucial point of difference with his question: 'How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?' — clearly a reference to kashrut laws and circumcision.

It should be kept in mind that when Paul uses nomos without qualification in the context of Galatians, he means the Torah. Observance of the Torah and the circumcision were two boundary markers to the Jewish communities in the Mediterranean world of the first century — they indicated who were Jewish and who not. Not even those godfearing gentiles who had come to believe in the one God of Israel, accepted the Jewish Scriptures as their sacred scripture and attached themselves to the fringe of the synagogues, were regarded as full Jews — not unless they were circumcised and accepted the Torah regulations as binding.

When Jesus was proclaimed the Messiah in the cities of Asia Minor, a number of Jews believed in him, as well as a number of gentiles. It is crucial to understand the different expectations of these respective groups in the new community. Gentiles believers accepted their new status in Christ with joy. For the Jewish believers it must have been a temptation to think it was business as usual — that in the new Messianic community the boundary markers would remain intact and that only those gentile believers who entered through the door of Torah and circumcision would be full members of God's people. When Paul proclaimed the gospel in Galatia, he corrected this view. Apparently his interpretation was accepted. However, it is clear that when the re-Judaisers reverted back to the Torah and circumcision, their message found many a sympathetic ear — as is illustrated by the incident in Antioch (Gl 2:11-14).

What Paul is fighting against in Galatians, is not the Torah as such, but the proposal of his opponents to re-introduce the Torah and circumcision as boundary markers. In practice that would mean the enforcement of circumcision and Torah observance on the majority of Galatian believers. If that had been successful, Christianity would have remained a sect of Judaism, and been closed to the gentile world. Bearing that in mind, one can understand Paul's sharp response.

I agree therefore with the view of E P Sanders; Paul's argument in Galatians is about the law as an 'entrance requirement' (1983:20):

The question is not about how many good deeds an individual must present before God to be declared righteous...but...whether or not Paul's Gentile converts must accept the Jewish laws in order to enter the people of God....Paul holds that faith is the
sole membership requirement; his opponents would require also circumcision and acceptance of the Mosaic law...it is not doing the law in and of itself which, in Paul's view, is wrong. Circumcision is, from one perspective, a matter of indifference (Gl 6:15). It is completely wrong, however, when it is made an essential requirement for membership.

(Sanders 1983:20)

Once this social dimension of the Galatians debate is understood, several elements of Paul's argument, fall into place — the reason for mentioning the Antioch incident, as well as Galatians 3:28 ('There is neither Jew nor Greek...'). It also explains the apparent positive appraisal of the law in 5:14, as we shall see more fully below.

3) What is the issue that Paul is addressing? We need only to draw the conclusions from the discussion above. Paul's argument concerns what Barclay (1988:73) calls the identity of these Galatian believers and their appropriate patterns of behaviour. According to Barclay, the issue was:

should they regularise and conform their place among God's people by getting circumcised and becoming proselytes? And should they adopt the ritual and ethical norms of the Jewish people?

(Barclay 1988:73)

3 PAUL'S ARGUMENT IN GALATIANS 5:13-6:10 (pericopes 17-20, see Addendum)

Pericope 17 (Gl 5:13-15)
Colon 170 (Gl 5:13) repeats the theme of colon 152 (Gl 5:1): the believers in Galatia ('brothers') are reminded of their freedom, which they have not earned, but which has been given to them by God's grace. As in cola 153 and 154 (Gl 5:1), Paul admonishes his readers to remember that their freedom is precious — they should neither forfeit (Gl 5:1/C152-154), nor misuse it (Gl 5:13/C170). In both pericopes, Paul elaborates on the consequences of their God-gifted freedom.

Colon 171 qualifies 170 — the God-given freedom should not be misused, but utilised correctly. What 'correctly' entails, is then spelled out in cola 172-174/5:13-15, first by way of a positive description in cola 172-173/5:14: serve one another in love — that is a fulfilment of the entire law; and secondly by a negative description in cola 174/5:15: if, instead of serving, the Galatians attack one another, they will eventually destroy one another. Cola 174/5:15 serves as a mirror reflecting the alternative of mutual love with a graphic metaphor — the believers will devour each other. As such it motivates the readers to understand
that there is really no alternative; they must love — and serve — one another. In verse 15 the relation between colon 174a-b and 174d is consequential — 174d spells out the possible consequence (‘destroyed’) of 174a-b (‘biting and devouring’) if unchecked (174c — ‘watch out’).

A question which has to be answered, is: Why does Paul, in his exhortation to love one another, refer to the law? To be more specific: Why does he refer to the law in such a positive manner? Why does he have to reassure his readers that the entire law is fulfilled in a single command: Love your neighbour as yourself (5:14)? And why, in a parallel in 6:2, does he encourage believers to carry each other’s burdens, because in doing so they would fulfil ‘the law of Christ’? On the surface it would seem that, after four chapters in which he argued decisively that the believers are ‘no longer under the supervision of the law’ (Gl 3:25), such a positive reference to the law runs counter to his argument.

By citing Leviticus 19:18 as the one command in which the Torah is fulfilled, Paul may seem to follow a Jewish tradition, like Jesus in Mark 12. Rabbi Hillel, for example, said, ‘What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour. That is the whole law. The rest is commentary’ (Barclay 1988:135).

However, there is a difference between Paul’s use and that of the rabbis. By summarising the Torah in one saying, the rabbis did not mean that the other parts of the law (for example the kashrut rules and circumcision) no longer had to be observed. But this is precisely the point which Paul has been making in the preceding paragraphs — believers are not under obligation to meet all the requirements of the Torah (Gl 3:25, Gl 5:1-3). Clearly then, when Paul says ‘fulfil’, he does not mean ‘do the law’. He means that by loving one’s neighbour (5:14) and by caring for one another (6:2), the essence of the law is observed. In the parallel to 5:14, Paul speaks about the ‘law of Christ’. Whether he is thinking of a new kind of ‘Christian Halakah’ (Davies 1970: 144), taught by Jesus, or simply of the way in which Christ exemplified the love command (Barclay 1988:131) is immaterial for our purposes. The important fact is that in both 5:14 and 6:2 Paul is thinking about the Torah as ‘redefined by Christ’ (Barclay 1988:134) — either by his teaching or by his example. In this law the moral teaching of the Torah, that believers should love and care for one another is concretised.

But why does Paul find it necessary to mention the Torah at this point? His argument could do without it. Betz is probably right when he suggests that Paul has no option — ‘he cannot avoid the matter, because the Galatians are so preoccupied with circumcision and Torah’ (1979:275).

In addition it should be remembered that Paul’s argument in the preceding paragraphs is directed against the ritual observances of the Torah (visibly manifested in the circumcision and the kashrut rules) as an entrance requirement. Paul’s polemic is not against the moral elements of the Torah (as, for example, formulated in Ex 20 or Lv 19), or even against a voluntary keeping of the law by
Jewish Christians. Once this is kept in mind, it does not surprise us that in his paraenesis, Paul should mention the law, and explain that the essence of the law is fulfilled in the command to love one another and to carry each other's burden. This would make rhetorical sense, especially when addressing an audience who apparently held the Torah in high regard.

By doing this Paul would accomplish two things: 1) He would reiterate his argument that a literal observance of the Torah, with all its ritual stipulations, was obsolete, and 2) He would focus on what he regarded as the most pressing ethical problem in Galatia — that of community dissension. (It will be argued below that this was Paul's main concern in his paraenesis in Galatians 5:13-6:10.)

Pericope 18 (Gl 5:16-26)
The relation of pericope 17 (Gl 5:13-15) to pericope 18 (Gl 5:16-26) is not self-evident. It starts with a general exhortation to walk *pneumati* and not to gratify the desires of the *sarx*. The 'works of the *sarx*’ are said to be obvious — sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, orgies, and the like. However, the connection with the tendency to uphold the law, which Paul opposed in the previous chapters, is not obvious. That is one reason why, as I mentioned above, many scholars do not regard Galatians 5:13-6:10 as an integral part of Paul's argument in Galatians.

Several solutions to this problem have been offered. The theory of O’Neill (that Galatians 5:13-6:10 is an interpolation) was mentioned above. There are also other explanations, for example:

1. The *two-front theory*, of which Lütgert (1919) and Ropes (1929) are the best known exponents. Pericope 18 (Gl 5:16-26) is even more of a *Fremdkörper* than the paraenetic section as a whole, because it seems that the vices described in verses 19-21 (cola 180-182) are in no way the vices of people who tend to give the law a too important place. This is precisely the argument of Lütgert and Ropes. According to Lütgert, Paul does not only polemicise against Judaisers in Galatians, but also against a second group — enthusiasts or 'spiritualistic radicals' (Ropes 1929:25) who over-emphasised their new-found freedom in Christ. They not only rejected the constraints of the Torah, but felt themselves to be free from moral codes, and thus indulged in libertinistic excesses. In this way, heathen vices from the Cybele-cult infiltrated the Christian community. Paul’s exhortation not to gratify the desires of the flesh (5:16) and to refrain from sexual immorality and idolatry (5:19f) was directed against these practices. A variation on this theory is offered by Schmithals (1956:25f) who suggests that Paul addresses Jewish-Christians heretics of a gnostic persuasion in Galatia. They observed circumcision but had libertinistic moral standards. This would explain Paul’s
argument against circumcision in Chapters 4 and 5 as well as against a seemingly libertinistic moral tendency in 5:13-6:10.

The two-front theory must be rejected as an example of an erroneous ‘mirror-reading’ (Barclay 1987). Lütgert’s reconstruction of the opponents as libertines, for example, is largely based on Paul’s addressing his readers as pneumatikoi in 6:1 — which is a good example of the fallacy of ‘latching onto particular words and phrases as direct echoes of the opponents’ vocabulary’ (Barclay 1987:81). Schmithals, in turn, again, provides a clear example of undue selectivity when he dismisses Galatians 3-4 (which forms a main part of Paul’s argument) as current ‘topoi’ in Paul’s running debate with the Jews, and therefore as less important than the indirect references in Chapters 5 and 6 to opponents who seemed to be tempted by ‘the desires of the sarx’ (5:16). In general the attempt to reconstruct libertinism as a major ingredient of the opponents’ theology, runs aground on the rock of over-interpretation: the inclination to see in ‘every statement of Paul a rebuttal of a counter-statement by his opponents’.

2 A number of scholars read this section as part of Paul’s polemic against the law. In-Gyu Hong (1991:68) points out that the origin of the two-front theory lies in its connection of sarx and libertinism. Its proponents assume that the ‘works of the flesh’ are an evidence of antinomian licence. However, this need not be. If we carefully follow Paul’s argument (Hong writes), we see that ‘Paul rather associates the flesh with the law’ (1991:68). Paul refers to the observance of the law when he asks the Galatians, ‘Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?’ (3:3, NASB). In the allegory of Hagar and Sarah (4:21-31), Paul contrasts the children of the free Sarah (those who are not under the law), ‘born as a result of a promise’ to the children of Hagar, the slave (those under the law), ‘born kata sarka’. Consequently (according to Hong), when warning against gratifying the desires of the sarx (5:16), Paul is speaking about a reliance upon the Torah and the circumcision.

George Howard argues that the conduct which Paul rejects in 5:13-6:10 ‘is not the kind which rejects the standards of law for a totally unrestrained immorality’ (1979:13). Twice Paul adds remarks to the effect that the law can be fulfilled without keeping the specific requirements of the Torah — in 5:14 and 6:2. ‘These words seem to be spoken to those whose problem is their attempt to keep the specific requirements of the law. As an alternative Paul suggests that the spirit of the law is enough’ (1979:13). It is unlikely that these words are said to antinomians. Paul is polemicsing against falling back under the law. When he writes, ‘do not use your freedom to indulge the sarx’ (5:13), Paul means ‘that now that the Galatians are free they should not use their Christianity as a stepping stone into the law.’ That is why he adds that the entire law is summed up in a single command, namely to love your neighbour as yourself — ‘the thought being, if it is the
The theory of Hong and Howard does seem to offer an explanation for Paul’s positive reference to the law in 5:14, but it does not explain how the Torah could be associated with the vices specifically mentioned in verse 19 as ta erga tés sarkos. Howard has to read Galatians from the perspective of Romans 7 to arrive at the thesis that the law leads to the works of the flesh by inciting the desires it forbids (Barclay 1988:210).

3 A third attempt to explain the apparent isolation of Galatians 5:16-26 from the rest of the letter, is the solution offered by Martin Dibelius. According to Dibelius, *paraenesis in New Testament letters is often not related to the rest of the document.* On the basis of a form-critical investigation, Dibelius defines New Testament paraenesis as ‘a text which strings together admonitions of general ethical content... sayings very diverse in content, lacking any particular order and containing no emphasis...for a particular situation’ (1976:3). The apparent lack of relation between Galatians 5:13-6:10 and the rest of the letter is, according to Dibelius’ argument, not unusual, but typical of New Testament paraenesis.

However, the isolation of pericope 18 (Gl 5:16-26) from the rest of Galatians is only apparent. In this pericope the *sarx/pneuma* contrast is the dominant motif. *Sarx and pneuma* represent two diametrically opposed forces (cola 176 and 177 in verse 17). Colon 178a (in verse 17) reiterates bluntly: ‘They are in conflict with each other.’ Paul uses this contrast because in his earlier argument he has already introduced the *sarx/pneuma* contrast. It is indeed significant that the main argument of the letter (what Betz identifies as the *probatio*) begins in 3:1-5 with an appeal to the Galatians’ initial experience pneumati (Barclay 1988:83), and an exhortation not to end sarki (3:3/C65). So important is this argument in Paul’s view that he mentions it as one sufficient reason (‘I would like to learn just one thing from you...’), 3:2) why the Galatians are not obliged to observe the Mosaic law. In 4:1-4 the presence of the *pneuma* is depicted as guarantee that its recipients are children of God. In 4:28 the conflict between the two domains is described as the conflict between the son *kata sarka* and the son *kata pneuma.* *Kata pneuma* is appealed to as the ‘only appropriate standard of behaviour’ for the believers... (Barclay 1988:85). In this paraenetical pericope 18 (Gl 5:16-26), Paul recalls this contrast, and repeats that the *pneuma* is the adequate moral guideline for their ethos. In the first colon (175.1, in 5:16) he assures them: obey the *pneuma* and you will not give in to the desires of the *sarx,* and in the second last colon (186, in 5:25) he again exhorts them to walk in the *pneuma,* since they live through the *pneuma*.

Therefore, far from being a *Fremdkörper,* pericope 18 (Gl 5:16-26) is part of Paul’s argument to convince his predominantly gentile Christian readers that for
the appropriate behaviour (the issue at stake in Galatians) they need nothing more than the pneuma.

Why was it necessary to allay fears that living pneumati would not provide sufficient moral direction? Some of Paul’s readers probably began to doubt the sufficiency of the pneuma as a moral force because, since their conversion to Christianity, they had lived in a kind of moral vacuum, in which the age-old ethical system of Torah halakhot seemed to offer the stability and continuity they lacked. ‘As Johnny-come-latelies they were in desperate need of practical advice to guide their day-to-day life....That is exactly what the Jewish way of life can offer — it has stood the test of time; it has guided the Jewish people through...their long history...it offer(s) a practical guide to the Galatians...’ (Lategan 1990:320).

It is true that the lists of vices and virtues in 5:19-23 do not seem to have a direct bearing on the Galatian situation. The reason for their inclusion is not that Paul is fighting a second front, but simply that he draws from contemporary Hellenistic vice and virtue lists. Even so, it is interesting that, although the vice list begins and ends with vices typical in Jewish polemic against gentiles, its centre consists of eight vices which describe community dissension — ‘hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy’. As I shall point out below, community dissension was a most important ingredient of the Galatian situation to which Galatians 5:13-6:10 responded. All the virtues, except engkrateia (self-control) have to do with relations between people. It is worth noting that Paul does not encourage established Hellenistic virtues (e.g autarkē-a) which would not necessarily foster mutual love. Even when listing conventional virtues, he keeps his focus on the overriding concern of the paraenesis in 5:13-6:10, namely mutual love and service within the believing community.

The two references to the law in this pericope confirm our interpretation given above. Paul rejects the Torah as a boundary marker, but at least allows that the law could have a function in defining the content of moral direction. That is why he emphasises that those who are led by the Spirit are not under the law (verse 18). Yet, in the same pericope he says of the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, etc) that the law is not against such things (in verse 23). In other words, although those who walk by the Spirit are free from the law, their moral behaviour is not in contradiction to the moral bearing of the Torah.

Pericope 19 (Gl 6:1-6)

In this pericope the theme of Galatians 5:13-15 (pericope 17) is repeated: practise your freedom by helping one another. According to Barclay (1988:149), the two themes of the individual’s accountability before God and corporate responsibility to one another are emphasised alternatively:
The heading — appeal and prohibition

Responsibility to correct a sinning church-member

Accountability — ‘watch yourself’

Responsibility to bear each other’s burdens

Accountability — ‘Each should test his own actions’

Responsibility to support those who teach

Responsibility to do good, especially to believers

Even if the detail of Barclay’s structure could be questioned, the emphasis on both caring for fellow-believers and testing one’s own behaviour is obvious.

Pericope 20 (Gl 6:7-10)

This pericope concludes the paraenesis. In this final word Paul tries to finally underline the gravity of his exhortation by a stern warning to his readers that they will ignore his exhortation at their own peril. Firstly, he voices the ominous warning that God cannot be mocked (colon 197 in 6:7). It is not stated what constitutes the mocking and what will happen to them, but the implication is clear. The mockers are those who do not obey the exhortation in the preceding verses, and they will be destroyed by God.

Secondly, Paul employs a proverb: ‘A man reaps what he sows’ (colon 198 in 6:7). What has been implied in the first warning, is now spelled out clearly: those who mock, are those who sow eis tén sarka (colon 199a in 6:8). They will reap destruction ek tês sarkos (colon 199b in 6:8). In contrast to those who sow eis to pneuma — they will reap eternal life ek tou pneumatos (colon 200 in 6:8). Cola 199-200 (in 6:8) constitute a recapitulation of the sarx/pneuma contrast in Galatians 5:16-26 (Snyman 1992).

This powerful contrast naturally leads to Paul’s concluding exhortation, ‘Let us not become weary in doing good’ (colon 201 in 6:9). At the proper time, this will be rewarded (colon 202 in 6:9). The good should especially be done to the ‘family of believers’ (colon 203 in 6:10). Thus, at the end of pericope 20, Paul repeats a dominant theme in 5:13-15 (pericope 17) and 6:1-6 (pericope 19): the believers should love, care, support, gently exhort — in other words, do good to one another. Like in 5:13-15 (pericope 17) Paul attempts to persuade his readers not only by positive exhortation, but also by informing them of the destructive consequences, should they fail to love and support one another. Colon 174 (‘watch out or you will be destroyed by each other’, in 5:15) is paralleled by colon 199 (‘the one who sows eis tén sarka...will reap destruction’, in 6:8). The coherence of Paul’s argument in the paraenetical section (Gl 5:13-6:10) is again underlined.

Persuasion is more than logical argumentation. Nowhere in Galatians 5:13-
6:10 (pericopes 17-20) is this more vividly illustrated than in this final pericope 20 (6:7-10). At the conclusion of his argument, Paul deftly employs the very human fear of eternal destruction and desire for eternal bliss to finally persuade his readers to walk in the pneuma. Snyman (1992) argues that pericope 20 (6:7-10) is used as a peroratio, the final stage in a speech constructed according to the categories of classical rhetoric. In the peroratio a speech is rounded off by 1) reviewing the main topics discussed, and 2) arousing the emotions of the audience to take action.

Whether or not Galatians as a whole was structured according to the categories of classical rhetoric remains doubtful. What seems to be beyond doubt is that 6:7-10 (pericope 20) functions as a peroratio. As shown above, Paul, in this final pericope, not only recapitulates the main themes of his paraenesis in Galatians 5:13-6:10, but appeals to the emotions of his readers.

In conclusion it should be noted that pericopes 17-20 in Galatians 5:13-6:10 are held together by a coherent strategy of persuasion. In pericope 17 (5:13-15) the freedom proclaimed in previous verses is qualified. It should be utilised correctly — and this can be done by serving members of the community (colon 172 in 5:13). Whoever does so, fulfils the Torah (colon 173 in 5:14), but who does not, brings destruction over the community (colon 174 in 5:15). Pericope 18 (5:16-26) explains how, in practising this freedom, the Spirit is the directing force. Pericope 19 (6:1-6) repeats the theme: practise your freedom by helping one another, now concretising it with an example (colon 188 in 6:1) — a weak brother or sister helped), with a repeated exhortation to carry each other’s burden (again motivated by the assurance that in this way the law of Christ will be fulfilled — cola 189-190 in Gl 6:2), and with a contrasting warning that a believer should not become proud (cola 191-194 in Gl 6:3-4). A second example reinforces this appeal: a catechumen should share his material means with his catechist (colon 195/6:6). Pericope 20 concludes the exhortation with a stern warning regarding the ghastly alternative: if believers do not use their freedom to love and to serve, they will reap what they have sowed: destruction. As in the end of pericope 17 (Gl 5:13-15), this serves to carry the message: Do not be deceived, for the believers there is no alternative to loving and serving one another — ‘Therefore...let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.’

4 FOCAL THEME: SERVE ONE ANOTHER

We may now summarise our conclusions from the argument above. Firstly, it is clear that Galatians 5:13-6:10 (pericopes 17-20) does form an integral part of Paul’s strategy of persuasion in Galatians as a whole. Secondly, there is a coherent strategy of persuasion within Galatians 5:13-6:10. The focal theme of this paraenetical section can be formulated thus: Use your freedom correctly —
serve one another.

We should not be misled by the general nature of the paraenesis in Galatians 5:13-6:10 to conclude that Paul is not responding to a specific problem. Lategan rightly argues that the very nature of the ethic that Paul develops in Galatians is 'general and open-ended' (1990:326). In accordance with his theological argument, Paul avoids a new set of rules, because he wants his readers to understand that their ethics should be formulated on the theological basis of the Christ event. What is more — they themselves are responsible for formulating their ethical decisions (1990:324). Because Paul aims at responsibility and the creative participation of the Galatians, his paraenesis provides only 'the barest essentials' (1990:324).

In other words, the general nature of the exhortation is not an indication of a general situation which Paul is addressing in Galatians but Paul's very specific response to a specific situation. This agrees with our argument above: Although Paul's paraenesis in Galatians 5:13-6:10 is not detailed in the sense of supplying rules, it has a very specific concern: Mutual love, support for one another.

The question arises: Why the emphasis on mutual love and support? Why does Paul emphasise that loving and serving one another is the appropriate way for the Galatians to use their freedom? In conclusion I would like to offer the following hypothesis:

In the Galatian congregations there was an unusual potential for tension. The attempt to re-introduce the Torah and circumcision as boundary markers would certainly have created ill feelings between gentile and Jewish believers — as had already happened in Antioch (Gl 2:11-14). Boundaries easily became barriers. The intruding teaching of Paul's opponents certainly exacerbated tensions in Galatia. This was an issue Paul could not possibly ignore.

But not only the intruding teaching created tensions. Paul realised that his harsh attack on the intruders would also contribute to the potential for conflict. In the community of believers in Galatia (like in other Asia Minor cities), the gentile believers were probably in the majority. But they had always been the junior partners in the union. The Jewish believers, probably a minority, were in a position of power. They claimed to possess the keys to interpret the founding document of the new community (the Jewish Tenach) and they were the visible reminders of the historical continuity of the Jesus-message with the Jewish religion. Although the re-Judaisers cannot be identified with the Jewish believers, it is obvious that in Jewish circles their teaching (said to have originated in the mother congregation in Jerusalem) would have found a natural sympathetic hearing.

Then Paul harshly rejected the intruding teaching. Did that implicate a tacit repudiation of the Jewish believers? Probably not. But the effect of the whole situation must surely have weakened their position, and created a climate in
which some of the junior partners — gentile believers — could possibly have seen an opportunity to assert their position.

I am not saying that this happened. To be sure, Paul says nothing about quarrels caused by ambition. But it seems to me certain that in such an atmosphere the potential for conflict was great.

Paul anticipates conflict in Galatia. In such a tense situation the call upon the believers to love and serve one another indeed constituted a very appropriate and responsible use of their freedom in Christ.

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