

Some Introductory Handouts for REL 488
Senior Seminar in Religion

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The Importance of “law” in Paul’s Thought

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1. Paul’s Use of νόμος. He employs the term 121 times in 87 passages.
2. Paul’s Use of other, well-known religious and theological terms.
 - a. Justification, justify, justifies, justified--28 times
 - b. Love, loves, loved, beloved--112
 - c. Grace-- 86
 - d. Save, saves, saved, saving-- 32

Note then, that Paul addresses “law” slightly more than he addresses “love,” substantially more often than he says “grace,” and roughly four times more frequently than he addresses “justification”-language or soteric language. To understand Paul’s letters, therefore, we must at some point address what he says about “law.” When we read his letters we tend to “look for” what interests us in them; but if we read them as we read poetry, not particularly “looking for” anything other than what is there, we find not so much that Paul had different *ideas* than we do, but that he had different *concerns* than we do.

Caveat: The frequency of Paul’s use of words is not necessarily a clue to what the center of his thinking is. Since his letters are occasional, written to instruct or correct particular churches, his vocabulary reflects those circumstances. Thus, to understand Paul’s *thought*, we must read between-the-lines of his letters, as it were, to discover the fundamental structures of his thought. But to understand his thirteen letters, we cannot overlook things that he frequently addresses, such as νόμος. If studying “Paul’s understanding of the law” seems, at first glance, an arcane or picayune thing to do; think again.

Issues in the Study of Paul and the Law

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I. The “Big Issue”--Reconciling Paul’s positive and negative statements about ὁ νόμος. Most obviously, the “problem” in the study of Paul and the Law is that his statements about the Law are both positive and negative. Reconciling these coherently is the problem to be addressed.

II. The “Sub-Issues”

A. Lexicography. The semantic range of ὁ νόμος, and its relation to:

-the English “law” (or German *dasGesetz*)

-the Hebrew תּוֹרָה.

-the Sinai Covenant. My thesis throughout is that for Paul, ὁ νόμος is used as a synecdoche for the Sinai covenant; that Gal. 3:17 is the usual use of the term for Paul.

“This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.”

- The “law” came 430 years after a particular *covenant* (in this case, the Abrahamic covenant)
- Since “law” came later, it cannot annul the previously-ratified covenant (which implies that the “law” is a covenant of some sort, but not one that annuls a previous one)
- Specifically, the “law” cannot make void the promissory character of the Abrahamic covenant
- Any student of the OT knows that what “came” to Israel 430 years after the Abrahamic covenant was the Sinai covenant.

B. History. The nature of Palestinian Judaism in Paul’s day.

One way that Paul’s interpreters have reconciled his positive and negative statements about ὁ νόμος is by assuming that his negative statements are directed not against ὁ νόμος *itself*, but against some alleged *abuse* thereof (e.g., Cranfield’s argument that, since no Greek equivalent of the English “legalism” existed, Paul could employ ὁ νόμος to mean “legalism.”). With few exceptions prior to 1978, Christian students of the NT have assumed that the Judaism of Paul’s day taught that one’s justification could be merited, in part or whole, by one’s obedience to God’s law. E. P. Sanders’ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* challenged this assumption on several grounds, and the weight of his

argumentation produced what James Dunn has referred to as a “New Perspective on Paul.”

1. What sources provide reliable evidence for re-constructing Judaism of the pre-70 A.D. era?
2. Was there any “normative” Judaism? How sectarian was Judaism of this time? Can we make any sweeping generalizations about the religion? Was it “Variegated Judaism” (Carson et al.)?
3. What do we mean when we refer to “legalism” in the first century?
 - a. Meritorious understanding of (eschatological) justification.
 - b. Adding oral sources to the written revelation of God, and regarding those sources as having equal authority to the written revelation.
4. Do the reliably-dated sources warrant the assumption that Judaism was “legalistic” in any or all of these senses?
5. What do the NT sources say about pre-70 A.D. Judaism?
 - a. May Paul’s first-person biographical statements (e.g. Philippians 3) reliably be assumed to be a commentary on the entire religion?
 - b. Jesus surely has a critical attitude towards “the scribes and Pharisees,” but is it because of legalism, or is it because of hypocrisy and non-servant leadership? If he had a substantial doctrinal concern (vs. a moral concern), could he have said: “They sit on Moses’s seat, therefore do and practice whatsoever they teach” (Mat. 23:1-3)?

C. Exegetical issues. There are a number of passages relevant to the discussion, and many of these passages themselves face a number of interpretive difficulties. Examples include:

1. Whether the ἐγὼ in Romans 7 is a reference to Paul the Christian, Paul the Jew, Israel at Sinai, etc.
2. Whether the ellipsis in Romans 9:32 is the copula, or δὶλωλω (cf. my “Why Israel Did Not Obtain Torah-Righteousness: A Translation Note on Romans 9:32.” *Westminster Theological Journal* 54 (1992): 163-66).
 - a. “Because they did not pursue it through faith, but as if it were based on works.”
 - b. “Because the Sinai covenant is not characterized by faith, but by works.”
3. Philippians 3
4. 2 Corinthians 3
5. Inexplicably gratuitous mis-translations such as Gal.3:10 or 5:4
 - a. Gal. 3:10 Ὅσοι γὰρ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσὶν
RSV- “For all who *rely on* works of the law are under a curse”

NIV- “All who *rely on* observing the law are under a curse”

b. Gal. 5:4 οἵτινες ἐν νόμῳ δικαιοῦσθε

RSV- “You are severed from Christ, you who *would be* justified by the law”

NIV- “You who are *trying to be* justified by law”

c. Rom. 10:5 Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law (τὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ [τοῦ] νόμου) shall live by it (an incredibly poor translation of ὅτι ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς, Paul’s citation of Lev. 18:5. Why the RSV’s translators omitted ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ will remain a mystery for some time). 6 But the righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart,

D. Biblical-theological issues

1. General continuity-discontinuity issues between the Sinai covenant and the New covenant.
2. Specific (the only useful category of discussion) continuity-discontinuity issues between the Sinai covenant and the New covenant.
 - a. Israel:
 - i. How she is like and unlike the church
 - ii. How she is like and unlike Christ
 - b. Obedience in the Sinai administration
 - i. Its relation to temporal prosperity or adversity in the land of Canaan. Do “life” and “death” sometimes or always have reference to temporal life and death, or to eschatological life and death?
 - ii. Its relation to the Adamic administration
 - iii. Its relation to the Abrahamic administration

Paul's Use of νόμος

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The following is a complete list of Paul's usage of νόμος. He employs the term 121 times in 87 passages. Both Greek and English are supplied for convenience.

Rom. 2:12 Ὅσοι γὰρ ἀνόμως ἤμαρτον, ἀνόμως καὶ ἀπολοῦνται, καὶ ὅσοι ἐν νόμῳ ἤμαρτον, διὰ νόμου κριθήσονται. 13 οὐ γὰρ οἱ ἀκροαταὶ νόμου δίκαιοι παρὰ [τῷ] θεῷ, ἀλλ' οἱ ποιηταὶ νόμου δικαιωθήσονται. 14 ὅταν γὰρ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν, οὗτοι νόμον μὴ ἔχοντες ἑαυτοῖς εἰσιν νόμος. 15 οἵτινες ἐνδείκνυνται τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν, συμμαρτυροῦσης αὐτῶν τῆς συνειδήσεως καὶ μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων τῶν λογισμῶν κατηγορούντων ἢ καὶ ἀπολογουμένων,

Rom. 2:17 Εἰ δὲ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ἐπονομάζῃ καὶ ἐπαναπαύῃ νόμῳ καὶ καυχᾶσαι ἐν θεῷ 18 καὶ γινώσκεις τὸ θέλημα καὶ δοκιμάζεις τὰ διαφέροντα κατηχούμενος ἐκ τοῦ νόμου, Rom. 2:20 παιδευτὴν ἀφρόνων, διδάσκαλον νηπίων, ἔχοντα τὴν μύρωσιν τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐν τῷ νόμῳ.

Rom. 2:23 ὃς ἐν νόμῳ καυχᾶσαι, διὰ τῆς παραβάσεως τοῦ νόμου τὸν θεὸν ἀτιμάζεις.

Rom. 2:25 Περιτομὴ μὲν γὰρ ὠφελεῖ ἐὰν νόμον πράσσης. ἐὰν δὲ παραβάτης νόμου ᾖ, ἡ περιτομὴ σου ἀκροβυστία γέγονεν. 26 ἐὰν οὖν ἡ ἀκροβυστία τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου φυλάσσει, οὐχ ἡ ἀκροβυστία αὐτοῦ εἰς περιτομὴν λογισθήσεται; 27 καὶ κρινεῖ ἡ ἐκ φύσεως ἀκροβυστία τὸν νόμον τελοῦσα σὲ τὸν διὰ γράμματος καὶ περιτομῆς παραβάτην νόμου.

Rom. 3:19 οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὅσα ὁ νόμος λέγει τοῖς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ λαλεῖ, ἵνα πᾶν στόμα φραγῇ καὶ ὑπόδικος γένηται πᾶς ὁ κόσμος τῷ θεῷ. 20 διότι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας. 21 Νυνὶ δὲ χωρὶς νόμου δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανέρωται μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν,

Rom. 3:27 Ποῦ οὖν ἡ καύχησις; ἐξεκλείσθη. διὰ ποίου νόμου; τῶν ἔργων; οὐχί, ἀλλὰ διὰ νόμου πίστεως. 28 λογιζόμεθα γὰρ δικαιούσθαι πίστει ἄνθρωπον χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου.

Rom. 3:31 νόμον οὖν καταργοῦμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως; μὴ γένοιτο. ἀλλὰ νόμον ἰστάνομεν.

Rom. 2:12 For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

Rom. 2:17 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God 18 and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law;

Rom. 2:20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—

Rom. 2:23 You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.

Rom. 2:25 For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. 26 So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? 27 Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.

Rom. 3:19 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Rom. 3:21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—

Rom. 3:27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

Rom. 3:31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

Rom. 4:13 Οὐ γὰρ διὰ **νόμου** ἡ ἐπαγγελία τῷ Ἀβραάμ ἢ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ, τὸ κληρονόμον αὐτὸν εἶναι κόσμου, ἀλλὰ διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως. 14 εἰ γὰρ οἱ ἐκ **νόμου** κληρονόμοι, κενένωται ἡ πίστις καὶ κατήργηται ἡ ἐπαγγελία· 15 ὁ γὰρ **νόμος** ὀργὴν κατεργάζεται· οὐ δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν **νόμος** οὐδὲ παράβασις. 16 Διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ πίστεως, ἵνα κατὰ χάριν, εἰς τὸ εἶναι βεβαίαν τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν παντὶ τῷ σπέρματι, οὐ τῷ ἐκ τοῦ **νόμου** μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ, ὅς ἐστιν πατὴρ πάντων ἡμῶν, Rom. 5:13 ἄχρι γὰρ **νόμου** ἁμαρτία ἦν ἐν κόσμῳ, ἁμαρτία δὲ οὐκ ἐλλογεῖται μὴ ὄντος **νόμου**,

Rom. 5:20 **νόμος** δὲ παρεισηλθεν, ἵνα πλεονάσῃ τὸ παράπτωμα· οὐ δὲ ἐπλεόνασεν ἡ ἁμαρτία, ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν ἡ χάρις, Rom. 6:14 ἁμαρτία γὰρ ὑμῶν οὐ κυριεύσει· οὐ γὰρ ἔστε ὑπὸ **νόμον** ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ χάριν. 15 Τί οὖν; ἁμαρτήσωμεν, ὅτι οὐκ ἔσμεν ὑπὸ **νόμον** ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ χάριν; μὴ γένοιτο.

Rom. 7:1 Ἡ ἀγνοεῖτε, ἀδελφοί, γινώσκουσιν γὰρ **νόμον** λαλῶ, ὅτι ὁ **νόμος** κυριεύει τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐφ' ὅσον χρόνον ζῆ; 2 ἡ γὰρ ὑπανδρος γυνὴ τῷ ζῶντι ἀνδρὶ δέδεται **νόμῳ**· ἐὰν δὲ ἀποθάνῃ ὁ ἀνὴρ, κατήργηται ἀπὸ τοῦ **νόμου** τοῦ ἀνδρός. 3 ἄρα οὖν ζῶντος τοῦ ἀνδρός μοιχαλὶς χρηματίζει ἐὰν γένηται ἀνδρὶ ἐτέρῳ· ἐὰν δὲ ἀποθάνῃ ὁ ἀνὴρ, ἐλευθέρᾳ ἐστὶν ἀπὸ τοῦ **νόμου**, τοῦ μὴ εἶναι αὐτὴν μοιχαλίδα γενομένην ἀνδρὶ ἐτέρῳ. 4 ὥστε, ἀδελφοί μου, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐθανατώθητε τῷ **νόμῳ** διὰ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι ὑμᾶς ἐτέρῳ, τῷ ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγερθέντι, ἵνα καρποφορήσωμεν τῷ θεῷ. 5 ὅτε γὰρ ἦμεν ἐν τῇ σαρκί, τὰ παθήματα τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν τὰ διὰ τοῦ **νόμου** ἐνηργεῖτο ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν, εἰς τὸ καρποφορῆσαι τῷ θανάτῳ· 6 νυνὶ δὲ κατηργήθημεν ἀπὸ τοῦ **νόμου** ἀποθανόντες ἐν ᾧ κατειχόμεθα, ὥστε δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος καὶ οὐ παλαιότητι γράμματος. 7 Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; ὁ **νόμος** ἁμαρτία; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔγνων εἰ μὴ διὰ **νόμου**· τὴν τε γὰρ ἐπιθυμίαν οὐκ ἦδεν εἰ μὴ ὁ **νόμος** ἔλεγεν· οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις. 8 ἀφορμὴν δὲ λαβοῦσα ἡ ἁμαρτία διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς κατειργάσατο ἐν ἐμοὶ πᾶσαν ἐπιθυμίαν· χωρὶς γὰρ **νόμου** ἁμαρτία νεκρά. 9 ἐγὼ δὲ ἔζων χωρὶς **νόμου** ποτέ, ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς ἐντολῆς ἡ ἁμαρτία ἀνέζησεν,

Rom. 7:12 ὥστε ὁ μὲν **νόμος** ἅγιος καὶ ἡ ἐντολὴ ἀγία καὶ δικαία καὶ ἀγαθή.

Rom. 4:13 For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15 For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

Rom. 4:16 That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

Rom. 5:13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.

Rom. 5:20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

Rom. 6:14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Rom. 6:15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

Rom. 7:1 Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? 2 Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. 3 Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

Rom. 7:4 Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. 5 For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

Rom. 7:7 What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” 8 But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law, sin lies dead. 9 I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.

Rom. 7:12 So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Rom. 7:14 Οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ὁ **νόμος** πνευματικός ἐστίν, ἐγὼ δὲ σάρκινός εἰμι πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν.
Rom. 7:16 εἰ δὲ ὁ οὐ θέλω τοῦτο ποιῶ, σύμφημι τῷ **νόμῳ** ὅτι καλός.
Rom. 7:21 εὐρίσκω ἄρα τὸν **νόμον**, τῷ θέλοντι ἐμοὶ ποιεῖν τὸ καλόν, ὅτι ἐμοὶ τὸ κακὸν παράκειται· 22 συνήδομαι γὰρ τῷ **νόμῳ** τοῦ θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον, 23 βλέπω δὲ ἕτερον **νόμον** ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου ἀντιστρατευόμενον τῷ **νόμῳ** τοῦ νοός μου καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντά με ἐν τῷ **νόμῳ** τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου.
Rom. 7:25 χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν. Ἄρα οὖν αὐτός ἐγὼ τῷ μὲν νοῦ δουλεύω **νόμῳ** θεοῦ τῇ δὲ σαρκὶ **νόμῳ** ἁμαρτίας.
Rom. 8:2 ὁ γὰρ **νόμος** τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσέν σε ἀπὸ τοῦ **νόμου** τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου. 3 Τὸ γὰρ ἀδύνατον τοῦ **νόμου** ἐν ᾧ ἠσθένει διὰ τῆς σαρκός, ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν πέμψας ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ σαρκί, 4 ἵνα τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ **νόμου** πληρωθῇ ἐν ἡμῖν τοῖς μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα.
Rom. 8:7 διότι τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς ἔχθρα εἰς θεόν, τῷ γὰρ **νόμῳ** τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ὑποτάσσεται, οὐδὲ γὰρ δύναται·
Rom. 9:31 Ἰσραὴλ δὲ διώκων **νόμον** δικαιοσύνης εἰς **νόμον** οὐκ ἔφθασεν.
Rom. 10:4 τέλος γὰρ **νόμου** Χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι. 5 Μωϋσῆς γὰρ γράφει τὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ [τοῦ] **νόμου** ὅτι ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.
Rom. 13:8 Μηδενὶ μηδὲν ὀφείλετε εἰ μὴ τὸ ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν· ὁ γὰρ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἕτερον **νόμον** πεπλήρωκεν.
Rom. 13:10 ἡ ἀγάπη τῷ πλησίον κακὸν οὐκ ἐργάζεται· πλήρωμα οὖν **νόμου** ἡ ἀγάπη.
1Cor. 9:8 Μὴ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον ταῦτα λαλῶ ἢ καὶ ὁ **νόμος** ταῦτα οὐ λέγει; 9 ἐν γὰρ τῷ Μωϋσέως **νόμῳ** γέγραπται· οὐ κημώσεις βοῦν ἀλοῶντα. μὴ τῶν βοῶν μέλει τῷ θεῷ
1Cor. 9:20 καὶ ἐγενόμην τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ὡς Ἰουδαῖος, ἵνα Ἰουδαίους κερδήσω· τοῖς ὑπὸ **νόμον** ὡς ὑπὸ **νόμον**, μὴ ὦν αὐτός ὑπὸ **νόμον**, ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ **νόμον** κερδήσω·
1Cor. 14:21 ἐν τῷ **νόμῳ** γέγραπται ὅτι ἐν ἑτερογλώσσοις καὶ ἐν χεῖλεσιν ἑτέρων λαλήσω τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ καὶ οὐδ' οὕτως εἰσακούσονται μου, λέγει κύριος.

Rom. 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.
Rom. 7:16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.
Rom. 7:21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.
Rom. 7:25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.
Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.
Rom. 8:7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.
Rom. 9:31 but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law.
Rom. 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.
Rom. 10:5 For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.
Rom. 13:8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.
Rom. 13:10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.
1Cor. 9:8 Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned?
1Cor. 9:20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.
1Cor. 14:21 In the Law it is written, "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord."

1Cor. 14:34 οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν, ἀλλὰ ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ **νόμος** λέγει.

1Cor. 15:56 τὸ δὲ κέντρον τοῦ θανάτου ἡ ἁμαρτία, ἡ δὲ δύναμις τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ **νόμος**.

Gal. 2:16 εἰδότες [δὲ] ὅτι οὐ δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων **νόμου** ἐὰν μὴ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν, ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων **νόμου**, ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων **νόμου** οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ.

Gal. 2:19 ἐγὼ γὰρ διὰ **νόμου νόμου** ἀπέθανον, ἵνα θεῷ ζήσω. Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι.

Gal. 2:21 Οὐκ ἀθετῶ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ· εἰ γὰρ διὰ **νόμου** δικαιοσύνη, ἄρα Χριστὸς ὄρωσεν ἀπέθανεν.

Gal. 3:2 τοῦτο μόνον θέλω μαθεῖν ἀφ' ὑμῶν· ἐξ ἔργων **νόμου** τὸ πνεῦμα ἐλάβετε ἢ ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως;

Gal. 3:5 ὁ οὖν ἐπιχορηγῶν ὑμῖν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἐνεργῶν δυνάμεις ἐν ὑμῖν, ἐξ ἔργων **νόμου** ἢ ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως;

Gal. 3:10 Ὅσοι γὰρ ἐξ ἔργων **νόμου** εἰσίν, ὑπὸ κατάραν εἰσίν· γέγραπται γὰρ ὅτι ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ὃς οὐκ ἐμμένει πᾶσιν τοῖς γεγραμμένοις ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τοῦ **νόμου** τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτά. 11 ὅτι δὲ ἐν **νόμῳ** οὐδεὶς δικαιοῦται παρὰ τῷ θεῷ δῆλον, ὅτι ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται. 12 ὁ δὲ **νόμος** οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως, ἀλλ' ὁ ποιήσας αὐτά ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς. 13 Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἐξηγόρασεν ἐκ τῆς κατάρας τοῦ **νόμου** γενόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατάρα, ὅτι γέγραπται· ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ὁ κρεμᾶμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου,

Gal. 3:17 τοῦτο δὲ λέγω· διαθήκην προκεκυρωμένην ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ μετὰ τετρακόσια καὶ τριάκοντα ἔτη γεγονώς **νόμος** οὐκ ἀκυροῖ εἰς τὸ καταργῆσαι τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν. 18 εἰ γὰρ ἐκ **νόμου** ἡ κληρονομία, οὐκέτι ἐξ ἐπαγγελίας· τῷ δὲ Ἀβραάμ δι' ἐπαγγελίας κεχάρισται ὁ θεός. 19 Τί οὖν ὁ **νόμος**; τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη, ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ τὸ σπέρμα ᾧ ἐπήγγελται, διαταγεῖς δι' ἀγγέλων ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου.

Gal. 3:21 ὁ οὖν **νόμος** κατὰ τῶν ἐπαγγελιῶν [τοῦ θεοῦ]; μὴ γένοιτο· εἰ γὰρ ἐδόθη **νόμος** ὁ δυνάμενος ζωοποιῆσαι, ὄντως ἐκ **νόμου** ἂν ἦν ἡ δικαιοσύνη.

Gal. 3:23 Πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἐλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν ὑπὸ **νόμον** ἐφρουρούμεθα συγκλειόμενοι εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι, 24 ὥστε ὁ **νόμος** παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν, ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν.

1Cor. 14:34 For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says.

1Cor. 15:56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

Gal. 2:16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

Gal. 2:19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God.

Gal. 2:21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Gal. 3:2 Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

Gal. 3:5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—

Gal. 3:10 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” 11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” 12 But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—

Gal. 3:17 This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. 18 For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

Gal. 3:19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

Gal. 3:21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.

Gal. 3:23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. 24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

Gal. 4:4 ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου, ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός, γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον, 5 ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ, ἵνα τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν.

Gal. 4:21 Λέγετέ μοι, οἱ ὑπὸ νόμον θέλοντες εἶναι, τὸν νόμον οὐκ ἀκούετε;

Gal. 5:3 μαρτύρομαι δὲ πάλιν παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ περιτεμνομένῳ ὅτι ὀφειλέτης ἐστὶν ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι. 4 κατηργήθητε ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ, οἵτινες ἐν νόμῳ δικαιοῦσθε, τῆς χάριτος ἐξεπέσατε.

Gal. 5:14 ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ πεπλήρωται, ἐν τῷ ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν.

Gal. 5:18 εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε, οὐκ ἐστὲ ὑπὸ νόμον.

Gal. 5:23 πραύτης ἐγκράτεια· κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος.

Gal. 6:2 Ἀλλήλων τὰ βάρη βαστάζετε καὶ οὕτως ἀναπληρώσετε τὸν νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Gal. 6:13 οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι αὐτοὶ νόμον φυλάσσουν ἀλλὰ θέλουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμνεσθαι, ἵνα ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρα σαρκὶ καυχῶνται.

Eph. 2:15 τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας, ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίσῃ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον ποιῶν εἰρήνην

Phil. 3:5 περιτομῆ ὀκταήμερος, ἐκ γένους Ἰσραὴλ, φυλῆς Βενιαμίν, Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων, κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος, 6 κατὰ ζήλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος.

Phil. 3:9 καὶ εὐρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ, μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει,

1Tim. 1:8 Οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι καλὸς ὁ νόμος, ἐάν τις αὐτῷ νομίμως χρῆται, 9 εἰδὼς τοῦτο, ὅτι δικαίῳ νόμῳ οὐ κείται, ἀνόμοις δὲ καὶ ἀνυποτάκτοις, ἀσεβέσι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοῖς, ἀνοσίοις καὶ βεβήλοις, πατρολώαις καὶ μητρολώαις, ἀνδροφόνους

Gal. 4:4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Gal. 4:21 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?

Gal. 5:3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. 4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.

Gal. 5:14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Gal. 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Gal. 5:23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Gal. 6:2 Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Gal. 6:13 For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.

Eph. 2:15 by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,

Phil. 3:5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness, under the law blameless.

Phil. 3:9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 1Tim. 1:8 Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 9 understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers,

Lexical Observations Regarding Paul's use of νόμος

T. David Gordon

Thesis: That the most prominent semantic domain influencing Paul's use of νόμος is "the Sinai covenant." The term ordinarily is employed to refer to the distinctive attributes of that covenantal administration, and from this general usage, the term is also employed to describe the inscripturated document of that covenantal administration, or the members (when employed as part of a substantive prepositional phrase such as οἱ ἐκ νόμου) of that covenantal administration. Technically, νόμος is a synecdoche for the Sinai covenant; that is, since that covenant is so characterized by Torah-giving at Sinai, the term "law" can be used to denominate that covenant characterized essentially by law-giving. Analogously, Paul sometimes employs "promise" as a synecdoche for the Abrahamic covenant, since that covenant is so characterized by promise-giving. In one single passage, he employs both synecdoches: "This is what I mean: the law (νόμος), which came four hundred and thirty years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise (ἐπαγγελίαν) void." (Gal. 3:17). A subsidiary concern, then, is to avoid those un-pauline usages that are more influenced by the semantic domain of the English "law" (or the German *das Gesetz*) or the Protestant term, "legalism."

My three-part form of proving the thesis is: First, to demonstrate that there are many passages where νόμος (with or without articles or prepositions) cannot mean either "God's moral will" or "legalism;" Second, to demonstrate that there are many texts where it surely *is* a reference to the covenant made at Sinai (or some aspect thereof); Third, to demonstrate that this second usage makes best sense of those passages that cannot be understood by the other definitions.

The challenges this makes to exegesis and theology are several:

1) Since the term νόμος in many contexts is evidently a synecdoche for the Sinai covenant, this definition is an indisputably pauline *option* for any text. Since νόμος rather evidently does not and cannot mean "will of God" or "legalism" in some passages, it cannot even be *considered* as

an option until such passages are found. If such passages are found, then and only then can this option be considered for other passages. Further, if a particular text is found that could make plausible sense if νόμος were rendered by “will of God” or “legalism,” such a text should not be so interpreted if it is also plausibly interpreted by the already-established meaning of “Sinai covenant.”

That is, sound lexicography requires not only that a term be contextually plausible, since often several options are contextually plausible. Sound lexicography would require that the interpreter choose that plausible option that is also established elsewhere, unless there is substantially greater plausibility to another option. That is, no lexical option (or any other exegetical option) can be responsibly *preferred* to alternatives simply because it is plausible. Some additional reason must demonstrate that the option is *more* plausible than the alternatives. If the alternatives are established by other usage, then they are *prima facie* more plausible, and the burden of proof is rightly on the individual who argues to the contrary of that which is *both* plausible *and* elsewhere established.

The burden of proof does not rest upon the one whose view is new; it rests upon the one whose view is less plausible. If an unwarranted, implausible, or unattested option is asserted without justification once; and if that unwarranted assertion is repeated a thousand times; it does not become less unwarranted for its repetition. We concede that many have intruded the semantic domain of the English “law” (or German “das Gesetz”) upon Paul’s νόμος for many generations; what we dispute is whether a cogent lexical argument has ever been introduced as justification for this intrusion. Further, what we dispute is whether we, who can produce incontestably pauline usages of νόμος meaning “Sinai covenant” and passages where νόμος could not possibly mean “God’s will” or “legalism,” must assume any further burden of proof.

On the basis of what we have demonstrated, we believe that the first definition of νόμος to be considered in any pauline text is “Sinai covenant.” We believe that the burden of proof lies with others to demonstrate that other renderings are *more* plausible than this in any given text. We believe that, contextual considerations being equal, “Sinai covenant” is the most responsible choice.

What has happened in the history of Pauline interpretation is that the English/German semantic intrusion into Paul's vocabulary has been so oft-repeated that it has now assumed intellectual "squatter's rights." Had anyone ever introduced sound evidence for this option (other than the plausible rendering of a passage thereby), then this option would have as much validity, *prima facie*, as other options. Until such evidence is produced, it remains an option only for readers of the English or German texts; not for readers of the Greek text.

2) Passages where the death of Christ is described as having reference to the law are to be interpreted as Paul's understanding of the redemptive benefits of Christ for those who were *under* the law; such passages are not to be universalized.

I. Passages where it is not possible that νόμος means "legalism":

Rom. 7:14 οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ὁ νόμος πνευματικός ἐστίν, ἐγὼ δὲ σάρκινός εἰμι πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν.

"Legalism" is *not* spiritual, in any sense of the word. It is at least plausible to render this: "We know that Sinai covenant is spiritual, but I am fleshly, sold under sin."

Rom. 8:4 ἵνα τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου πληρωθῆ ἐν ἡμῖν τοῖς μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα.

The just requirement of legalism is certainly not fulfilled among those who walk according to the Spirit; indeed there is no just requirement of legalism. It is at least plausible to render this: "in order that the just requirements of the Sinai covenant might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

1Cor. 9:20 καὶ ἐγενόμην τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ὡς Ἰουδαῖος, ἵνα Ἰουδαίους κερδήσω· τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον ὡς ὑπὸ νόμον, μὴ ὢν αὐτὸς ὑπὸ νόμον, ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον κερδήσω·

Paul did not become legalistic to win legalistic people; he did not rely on his own efforts for salvation in order to win those who relied on theirs. It is at least plausible to render this: "and I became as a Jew to the Jews in order that I might win Jews; I became as under the Sinai covenant

to those under the Sinai covenant, although myself not under the Sinai covenant, in order that I might win those under the Sinai covenant.”

Gal. 3:24 ὥστε ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν, ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν·

Legalism did not guard or instruct us until (or “unto”) Christ; rather, wherever it exists, it drives people *away* from Christ and his gracious justification. It is at least plausible to render this: “Therefore the Sinai covenant was our guardian until Christ; in order that we might be justified by faith.”

Gal. 4:4 ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου, ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός, γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον,

Christ was not legalistic. It is at least plausible to render this: “When the fullness of time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the Sinai covenant...”

Gal. 5:14 ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ πεπλήρωται, ἐν τῷ Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν.

Legalism is neither summarized nor fulfilled by loving the neighbor. It is at least plausible to render this: “For the entire Sinai covenant is fulfilled in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Gal. 6:13 οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι αὐτοὶ νόμον φυλάσσουσιν ἀλλὰ θέλουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμνεσθαι, ἵνα ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ σαρκὶ καυχῶνται

If νόμος means “legalism” here, then Paul argues that those who desire to circumcise the Galatians do *not* observe legalism. It is at least plausible to render this: “For those who are circumcised do not even themselves keep the Sinai covenant, but they require you to be circumcised, in order that they may boast in your flesh.”

II. Passages where it is not possible that νόμος means “God’s moral will”:

Rom. 6:14 ἁμαρτία γὰρ ὑμῶν οὐ κυριεύσει· οὐ γὰρ ἐστε ὑπὸ νόμον ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ χάριν.

Paul could hardly say that the redeemed community is not under God’s moral will. It is at least plausible to render this: “For sin will not have dominion over you, since you are not under the Sinai covenant but under grace.”

Rom. 6:15 Τί οὖν; ἀμαρτήσωμεν, ὅτι οὐκ ἐσμὲν ὑπὸ νόμον ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ χάριν; μὴ γένοιτο.

Same as above; it may be true that new covenant believers are not under the Sinai covenant, but it is not possible that they are not under God's moral will.

Rom. 7:4 ὥστε, ἀδελφοί μου, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐθανατώθητε τῷ νόμῳ διὰ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι ὑμᾶς ἐτέρῳ, τῷ ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγερθέντι, ἵνα καρποφορήσωμεν τῷ θεῷ.

As with the texts in the chapter six, Paul could hardly say here that believers have died to the moral will of God in order that they may bear fruit to God. It is at least plausible to render this: "Therefore my brothers, you also died to the Sinai covenant through the body of Christ, in order that you might belong to Another, to Him Who was raised from the dead, in order that you might bear fruit to God."

Rom. 7:6 νυνὶ δὲ κατηργήθημεν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου ἀποθανόντες ἐν ᾧ κατειχόμεθα, ὥστε δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος καὶ οὐ παλαιότητι γράμματος.

Same as at 7:4.

1Cor. 9:20 καὶ ἐγενόμην τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ὡς Ἰουδαῖος, ἵνα Ἰουδαίους κερδήσω· τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον ὡς ὑπὸ νόμον, μὴ ὢν αὐτὸς ὑπὸ νόμον, ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον κερδήσω·

If to be "under the law" means to be under God's moral will, then why do such people need redemption? Further, is the moral will of God something that Paul only observes when it is expedient to do so for evangelistic purposes? It is at least plausible to render this: "and I became as a Jew to the Jews in order that I might win Jews; I became as under the Sinai covenant to those under the Sinai covenant, although myself not under the Sinai covenant, in order that I might win those under the Sinai covenant."

Gal. 3:10 ὅσοι γὰρ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσὶν, ὑπὸ κατάραν εἰσὶν· γέγραπται γὰρ ὅτι Ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ὃς οὐκ ἐμμένει πᾶσιν τοῖς γεγραμμένοις ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τοῦ νόμου τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτά.

Those who are within the moral will of God are hardly under a curse; rather, such individuals would be enjoying fellowship with God. It is at least plausible to render this: "For as many as are characterized by observance of the Sinai covenant are under a curse..."

Gal. 3:12 ὁ δὲ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως, ἀλλ' ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.

The moral will of God is indeed characterized by faith; those who submit to God's will are characterized by "the obedience of faith." It is at least plausible to render this: "The Sinai covenant is not characterized by faith, but: "The one who does them shall live by them."

Gal. 3:13 Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἐξηγόρασεν ἐκ τῆς κατάρας τοῦ νόμου γενόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατάρα, ὅτι γέγραπται, Ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ὁ κρεμάμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου, Christ has surely not redeemed us from the "curse" of God's moral will. It is at least plausible to render this: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Sinai covenant by becoming a curse for us..."

Gal. 5:18 εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε, οὐκ ἐστὲ ὑπὸ νόμον.

Same as at Ro. 6 and Ro. 7.

Eph. 2:14 Αὐτὸς γὰρ ἔστιν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν, ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφοτέρα ἐν καὶ τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας, τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ, 2:15 τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας, ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίσῃ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον ποιῶν εἰρήνην

Christ has not united Jew and Gentile by destroying the moral will of God. It is at least plausible to render this: "For he is our peace, who has made them both one, and has destroyed the dividing wall of hostility by his flesh, having abolished the Sinai covenant with its commandments and ordinances..."

III. Passages where it is evident that νόμος means "the covenant made at Sinai":

Gal. 3:17 τοῦτο δὲ λέγω· διαθήκην προκεκυρωμένην ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ μετὰ τετρακόσια καὶ τριάκοντα ἔτη γεγονώς νόμος οὐκ ἀκυροῖ εἰς τὸ καταργῆσαι τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν.

The only significant event in the history of redemption that took place 430 years after the Abrahamic promise was the giving of the law at Sinai. It is at least plausible to render this: "The Sinai covenant, that came 430 years after the promise previously ratified by God, does not annul the covenant so as to abolish the promise."

Gal. 3:19 Τί οὖν ὁ νόμος; τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη, ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ τὸ σπέρμα ᾧ ἐπήγγελλται, διαταγείς δι' ἀγγέλων ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου.

The moral will of God is not added “until” Christ comes; it continues afterward. It is at least plausible to render this: “Why then the Sinai covenant? It was added because of transgressions...”

[n.b., this usage is consistent with the usage of the Old Testament also, where the “law” or “ten words” were virtually a synecdoche for the Sinai covenant. E.g.: 1Kings 8:20 Now the LORD has fulfilled his promise which he made; for I have risen in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and I have built the house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. 21 And there I have provided a place for the ark, *in which is the covenant of the LORD* which he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.” Of course, what was “in the ark” was not the “covenant of the Lord,” but the ten words.

IV. Passages where it is evident that νόμος (at least in the substantive form in which it here appears) means “those who belong to the covenant made at Sinai”:

Rom. 2:9 θλιψις καὶ στενοχωρία ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ψυχὴν ἀνθρώπου τοῦ κατεργαζομένου τὸ κακόν, Ἰουδαίου τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἕλληνος· 10 δόξα δὲ καὶ τιμὴ καὶ εἰρήνη παντὶ τῷ ἐργαζομένῳ τὸ ἀγαθόν, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἕλληνι· 11 οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν προσωποληψία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ. 12 ὅσοι γὰρ ἀνόμως ἤμαρτον, ἀνόμως καὶ ἀπολοῦνται, καὶ ὅσοι ἐν νόμῳ ἤμαρτον, διὰ νόμου κριθήσονται·

Paul twice (in 9 and 10) describes the equal standing before God of the Jew and the Greek, then (with a connecting γὰρ) grounds this in the general principle of their being no favoritism in God’s justice, then (with another connecting γὰρ) puts the same truth differently: that those who sin, whether Jews under the law or Gentiles without the law, will perish before God’s judicial presence. If all humans are “in the law,” then who are these who sin “without the law”? Paul establishes two categories here; those whose sin takes place within the Sinai covenant, and those whose sin takes place outside of it; and these categories are the same as the “Jew or Greek” mentioned before. Plainly, Gentiles here are not under the law.

Rom. 2:17 Εἰ δὲ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ἐπονομάζῃ καὶ ἐπαναπαύῃ νόμῳ καὶ καυχᾶσαι ἐν θεῷ 18 καὶ γινώσκεις τὸ θέλημα καὶ δοκιμάζεις τὰ διαφέροντα κατηγούμενος ἐκ τοῦ νόμου,

As with the earlier part of the chapter, the Jew is distinguished from the Gentile because of his boasting in the law and because of his being instructed in the law. The Gentiles are not so instructed.

Rom. 2:23 ὃς ἐν νόμῳ καυχᾶσαι, διὰ τῆς παραβάσεως τοῦ νόμου τὸν θεὸν ἀτιμάζεις·

Same as above.

Rom. 3:19 Οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὅσα ὁ νόμος λέγει τοῖς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ λαλεῖ, ἵνα πᾶν στόμα φραγῇ καὶ ὑπόδικος γένηται πᾶς ὁ κόσμος τῷ θεῷ·

Interestingly, Paul refers to those “who are in the law.” If everyone is “in the law,” what would the point be of saying this?

1Cor. 9:20 καὶ ἐγενόμην τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ὡς Ἰουδαῖος, ἵνα Ἰουδαίους κερδήσω· τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον ὡς ὑπὸ νόμον, μὴ ὦν αὐτὸς ὑπὸ νόμον, ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον κερδήσω·

Note that Paul can refer to the Jews in two different ways, by calling them τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις or by calling them τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον.

V. Passages admittedly difficult by any reading of νόμος·

Rom. 7:23 βλέπω δὲ ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου ἀντιστρατευόμενον τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοῦ μου καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντά με ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου.

Rom. 8:2 ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσέν σε ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου.

VI. Passages where νόμος evidently means “God’s Sinai revelation in the holy scriptures”:

Rom. 3:21 Nunὶ δὲ χωρὶς νόμου δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανέρωται μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν, (the first use here may very well be a reference to the Sinai covenant, but the second use, coupled with “prophets,” refers to the revelation in the Torah)

1Cor. 9:9 ἐν γὰρ τῷ Μωϋσέως νόμῳ γέγραπται, Οὐ κημώσεις βοῦν ἀλοῶντα. μὴ τῶν βοῶν μέλει τῷ θεῷ

1Cor. 14:21 ἐν τῷ νόμῳ γέγραπται ὅτι Ἐν ἑτερογλώσσοις καὶ ἐν χείλεσιν ἑτέρων λαλήσω τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ καὶ οὐδ' οὕτως εἰσακούσονται μου, λέγει κύριος.

1Cor. 14:34 αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν· οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν, ἀλλὰ ὑποτασέσθωσαν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει.

Paul's Use of "Law": Trying on the Shoe (moral will) T. David Gordon

Rom. 2:12 For all who have sinned without God's moral will will also perish without God's moral will, and all who have sinned under God's moral will will be judged by God's moral will. 13 For it is not the hearers of God's moral will who are righteous before God, but the doers of God's moral will who will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have God's moral will, by nature do what God's moral will requires, they are a God's moral will to themselves, even though they do not have God's moral will. 15 They show that the work of God's moral will is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

Rom. 2:17 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on God's moral will and boast in God 18 and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from God's moral will;

Rom. 2:20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in God's moral will the embodiment of knowledge and truth—

Rom. 2:23 You who boast in God's moral will dishonor God by breaking God's moral will.

Rom. 2:25 For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey God's moral will, but if you break God's moral will, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. 26 So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of God's moral will, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? 27 Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps God's moral will will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break God's moral will.

Rom. 3:19 Now we know that whatever God's moral will says it speaks to those who are under God's moral will, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For by works of God's moral will no human being will be justified in his sight, since through God's moral will comes knowledge of sin.

Rom. 3:21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from God's moral will, although God's moral will and the Prophets bear witness to it—

Rom. 3:27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of God's moral will? By a God's moral will of works? No, but by God's moral will of faith. 28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of God's moral will.

Rom. 3:31 Do we then overthrow God's moral will by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold God's moral will.

Rom. 4:13 For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through God's moral will but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if it is the adherents of God's moral will who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15 For God's moral will brings wrath, but where there is no God's moral will there is no transgression.

Rom. 4:16 That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of God's moral will but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

Rom. 5:13 for sin indeed was in the world before God's moral will was given, but sin is not counted where there is no God's moral will.

Rom. 5:20 Now God's moral will came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

Rom. 6:14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under God's moral will but under grace.

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Rom. 7:1 Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know God's moral will—that God's moral will is binding on a person only as long as he lives? 2 Thus a married woman is bound by God's moral will to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from God's moral will of marriage. 3 Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that God's moral will, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

Rom. 7:4 Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to God's moral will through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. 5 For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by God's moral will, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we are released from God's moral will, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

Rom. 7:7 What then shall we say? That God's moral will is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for God's moral will, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if God's moral will had not said, "You shall not covet." 8 But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from God's moral will, sin lies dead. 9 I was once alive apart from God's moral will, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.

Rom. 7:12 So God's moral will is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Rom. 7:14 For we know that God's moral will is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.

Rom. 7:16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with God's moral will, that it is good.

Rom. 7:21 So I find it to be a God's moral will that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in God's moral will of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another God's moral will waging war against God's moral will of my mind and making me captive to God's moral will of sin that dwells in my members.

Rom. 7:25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve God's moral will of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve God's moral will of sin.

Rom. 8:2 For God's moral will of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from God's moral will of sin and death. 3 For God has done what God's moral will, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of God's moral will might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

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Gal. 2:16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of God's moral will but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of God's moral will, because by works of God's moral will no one will be justified.

Gal. 2:19 For through God's moral will I died to God's moral will, so that I might live to God.

Gal. 2:21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through God's moral will, then Christ died for no purpose.

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Paul's Use of "Law": Trying on the Shoe (Sinai Covenant) T. David Gordon

Rom. 2:12 For all who have sinned without the Sinai covenant will also perish without the Sinai covenant, and all who have sinned under the Sinai covenant will be judged by the Sinai covenant. 13 For it is not the hearers of the Sinai covenant who are righteous before God, but the doers of the Sinai covenant who will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the Sinai covenant, by nature do what the Sinai covenant requires, they are a Sinai covenant to themselves, even though they do not have the Sinai covenant. 15 They show that the work of the Sinai covenant is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

Rom. 2:17 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the Sinai covenant and boast in God 18 and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the Sinai covenant;

Rom. 2:20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the Sinai covenant the embodiment of knowledge and truth—

Rom. 2:23 You who boast in the Sinai covenant dishonor God by breaking the Sinai covenant.

Rom. 2:25 For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the Sinai covenant, but if you break the Sinai covenant, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. 26 So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the Sinai covenant, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? 27 Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the Sinai covenant will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the Sinai covenant.

Rom. 3:19 Now we know that whatever the Sinai covenant says it speaks to those who are under the Sinai covenant, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For by works of the Sinai covenant no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the Sinai covenant comes knowledge of sin.

Rom. 3:21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the Sinai covenant, although the Sinai covenant and the Prophets bear witness to it—

Rom. 3:27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of Sinai covenant? By a Sinai covenant of works? No, but by the Sinai covenant of faith. 28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the Sinai covenant.

Rom. 3:31 Do we then overthrow the Sinai covenant by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the Sinai covenant.

Rom. 4:13 For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the Sinai covenant but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if it is the adherents of the Sinai covenant who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15 For the Sinai covenant brings wrath, but where there is no Sinai covenant there is no transgression.

Rom. 4:16 That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the Sinai covenant but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

Rom. 5:13 for sin indeed was in the world before the Sinai covenant was given, but sin is not counted where there is no Sinai covenant.

Rom. 5:20 Now the Sinai covenant came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

Rom. 6:14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under Sinai covenant but under grace.

Rom. 6:15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under Sinai covenant but under grace? By no means!

Rom. 7:1 Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the Sinai covenant—that the Sinai covenant is binding on a person only as long as he lives? 2 Thus a married woman is bound by Sinai covenant to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the Sinai covenant of marriage. 3 Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that Sinai covenant, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

Rom. 7:4 Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the Sinai covenant through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. 5 For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the Sinai covenant, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we are released from the Sinai covenant, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

Rom. 7:7 What then shall we say? That the Sinai covenant is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the Sinai covenant, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the Sinai covenant had not said, “You shall not covet.” 8 But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the Sinai covenant, sin lies dead. 9 I was once alive apart from the Sinai covenant, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.

Rom. 7:12 So the Sinai covenant is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Rom. 7:14 For we know that the Sinai covenant is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.

Rom. 7:16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the Sinai covenant, that it is good.

Rom. 7:21 So I find it to be a Sinai covenant that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the Sinai covenant of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another Sinai covenant waging war against the Sinai covenant of my mind and making me captive to the Sinai covenant of sin that dwells in my members.

Rom. 7:25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the Sinai covenant of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the Sinai covenant of sin.

Rom. 8:2 For the Sinai covenant of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the Sinai covenant of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the Sinai covenant, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the Sinai covenant might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Rom. 8:7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s Sinai covenant; indeed, it cannot.

Rom. 9:31 but that Israel who pursued a Sinai covenant that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that Sinai covenant.

Rom. 10:4 For Christ is the end of the Sinai covenant for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Rom. 10:5 For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the Sinai covenant, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.

Rom. 13:8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the Sinai covenant.

Rom. 13:10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the Sinai covenant.

1Cor. 9:8 Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Sinai covenant say the same? 9 For it is written in the Sinai covenant of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned?

1Cor. 9:20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the Sinai covenant I became as one under the Sinai covenant (though not being myself under the Sinai covenant) that I might win those under the Sinai covenant.

1Cor. 14:21 In the Sinai covenant it is written, “By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.”

1Cor. 14:34 the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Sinai covenant also says.

1Cor. 15:56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Sinai covenant.

Gal. 2:16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the Sinai covenant but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Sinai covenant, because by works of the Sinai covenant no one will be justified.

Gal. 2:19 For through the Sinai covenant I died to the Sinai covenant, so that I might live to God.

Gal. 2:21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the Sinai covenant, then Christ died for no purpose.

Gal. 3:2 Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the Sinai covenant or by hearing with faith?

Gal. 3:5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the Sinai covenant, or by hearing with faith—

Gal. 3:10 For all who rely on works of the Sinai covenant are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Sinai covenant, and do them.” 11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the Sinai covenant, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” 12 But the Sinai covenant is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Sinai covenant by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—

Gal. 3:17 This is what I mean: the Sinai covenant, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. 18 For if the inheritance comes by the Sinai covenant, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

Gal. 3:19 Why then the Sinai covenant? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

Gal. 3:21 Is the Sinai covenant then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a Sinai covenant had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the Sinai covenant.

Gal. 3:23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the Sinai covenant, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. 24 So then, the Sinai covenant was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

Gal. 4:4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the Sinai covenant, 5 to redeem those who were under the Sinai covenant, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Gal. 4:21 Tell me, you who desire to be under the Sinai covenant, do you not listen to the Sinai covenant?

Gal. 5:3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole Sinai covenant. 4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the Sinai covenant; you have fallen away from grace.

Gal. 5:14 For the whole Sinai covenant is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Gal. 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Sinai covenant.

Gal. 5:23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no Sinai covenant.

Gal. 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the Sinai covenant of Christ.

Gal. 6:13 For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the Sinai covenant, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.

Eph. 2:15 by abolishing the Sinai covenant of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,

Phil. 3:5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Sinai covenant, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness, under the Sinai covenant blameless.

Phil. 3:9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the Sinai covenant, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—

1Tim. 1:8 Now we know that the Sinai covenant is good, if one uses it Sinai covenantfully, 9 understanding this, that the Sinai covenant is not laid down for the just but for the Sinai covenantless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers,

Philippians 3 and First Century Judaism

T. David Gordon

Introduction.

A. Paradigms and paradigm-shifts

B. “The New Perspective on Paul”

1. E. P. Sanders (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978) argued that first century Judaism was not characteristically meritorious/legalistic in its soteriology. This challenges the dominant Protestant paradigm since the Reformation, a paradigm that asserted that Luther’s struggle with Rome’s doctrine of justification was analogous to Paul’s struggle with Judaism’s doctrine of justification.

2. James D. G. Dunn “The New Perspective on Paul,” *BJRL* 65 (August, 1982): 94-122. Reprinted in *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, Louisville: John Knox, 1990.

I. The Question Stated: Does Paul here in Philippians 3 affirm that 1st. century Judaism was characteristically legalistic? Our concern is for that phrase around which Robert Gundry (“Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul,” *Biblica* 66 [1985], 1-38) has focused so much of his rejection of the “new perspective on Paul,” to wit, *μη ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου, ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει* 3.9.

II. The Question Answered: Philippians 3 does *not* teach that first-century Judaism was characteristically meritorious.

A. Even if Paul were recounting a “legalistic” or meritorious righteousness in this text, it would not be fair to condemn the entire religion because of Paul’s error. That is, if a given Christian confessed that, while a member of a genuinely Reformed church, he was himself legalistic for many years before God’s grace transformed him, would such a confession be proof that Christianity is characteristically legalistic?

B. Paul’s entire point here is to demonstrate his high regard for gospel privileges by indicating that he would suffer the loss of every other “gain” (*κέρδη*) in order to have Christ. The other “gains” in this passage are genuine gains, but they are primarily sociological in nature. Paul had a good status in the community, and was well-esteemed. He would forfeit such esteem, however, in order to gain Christ. Yet if the

“righteousness” here referred to were legalism, a false, damning error, how could Paul refer to that as a “gain” that he would *count* as loss? Would it not have *been* a loss (ζημίαν), not a gain?

C. Paul elsewhere contrasts the righteousness of faith with the righteousness of the Sinai covenant, without implying that the members of that covenant community were themselves inherently legalistic. He refers to the righteousness of that covenant as “doing” righteousness.

1. Romans 10: 5 For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who *does* those things shall live by them.” (NKJV: Gk: Μωϋσῆς γὰρ γράφει τὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ [τοῦ] νόμου ὅτι ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.)

2. Rom. 2:13

Rom. 2:9 There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. 11 For God shows no partiality. 12 All who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the *doers* of the law who will be justified (οὐ γὰρ οἱ ἀκροαταὶ νόμου δίκαιοι παρὰ [τῷ] θεῷ, ἀλλ’ οἱ ποιηταὶ νόμου δικαιωθήσονται.).

3. Gal. 3:12

10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to *do* them (τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτά).” 11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” 12 Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who *does* them shall live by them (ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς).”

4. Gal. 5:3

Gal. 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. 2 Now I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. 3 I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he is bound to *keep* the whole law (ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι).

Appendix

The Adamic administration, as a covenant, requires faultless obedience as a covenantal condition of entering the confirmed, eschatological state. Christ fulfils (though Adam did not) the obedience required, and attains by his obedience eschatological blessings for himself and for those represented by his mediation. One who is “righteous,” within the Adamic administration, is one who:

- has satisfied the requirements of the covenant (either in his own person or in the person of the covenant Mediator);
- has therefore passed the scrutiny of God, as the sovereign administrator of the Adamic administration;
- is therefore entitled to the blessings promised to obedience.

The Sinai administration, as a covenant-administration, requires obedience of the covenant people as a covenantal condition of entering and prospering in Canaan. One who (though the terms are, technically speaking, corporate and not individual) is “righteous,” within the Sinai administration, is one who has maintained covenant with Yahweh, has satisfied the conditions of the covenant, and is thereby entitled to appeal to Yahweh to confirm him in the land.

Thus, if this model is correct, “justification” is covenantally-conditioned. To be “justified” within the Sinai administration means to be approved by the covenant Suzerain as having satisfied the stipulations of the covenant, and therefore entitled to those benefits conditioned upon obedience to such stipulations. To be “justified” within the Adamic administration is, again, to be approved by the covenant Suzerain as having satisfied the stipulations of the covenant, and therefore entitled to those benefits conditioned upon obedience to such stipulations.

Thus, “justification” in the Bible is used both sub-eschatologically (within sub-eschatological covenants) and eschatologically (within eschatological covenants). The apparent tension between texts such as Rom. 2:13 (“For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified [οἱ ποιηταὶ νόμου δικαιοθήσονται.]”) and Gal. 3:16 (“yet who know that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ” [ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιοθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ]) is thus resolved by acknowledging that there is indeed a kind of justification available to the members of the Sinai

community, based upon “their own” actual and personal obedience; yet such was nothing but a typological picture of a greater, eschatological justification, available to members of the Abrahamic, Sinaitic, and New Covenant administrations, based upon the actual and personal obedience of the only Mediator of God’s elect, Jesus Christ.

The “I” of Romans 7
T. David Gordon

I. Known options

- A. Paul (pre-Christian or post)
- B. Adam
- C. Israel at Sinai
- D. Humanity in general

II. Why it is not to be understood as a believer

A. Broader question of 7.7-25 in Romans

- 1. Paul addressing Jews, 7.1, “for I am speaking to those who know the law”
- 2. Death to Torah necessary in order to bear fruit to God (7.4)
- 3. Is Torah, then, sin (7.7)? Does that which is good become death (7.13)?
- 4. How could Paul possibly answer *this* question by describing the experience of an individual who is *not* under the Torah?

B. Narrower question of *ego* (“I”) in 7.14-25

1. Eight things affirmed here normally affirmed of unbelievers

a. “I am carnal (fleshly)”, 7.14a.

i. Rom. 7.5: “While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.”

ii. Rom. 8.3-9: “and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.”

iii. Rom. 8.12-13: “So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh--for if you live according to the flesh you will die”

b. “sold under sin,” 7.14b. The verb translated “sold” here is employed in two ways in the Greek of the period. It is used generally of commercial selling, and more specifically of the selling of slaves.

i. “sold” as commerce. Elsewhere, when Paul uses commercial language of buying and selling to describe sin and redemption, he refers to believers as those who are “bought,” “redeemed,” “purchased”: 1 Cor. 6.20; Gal. 3.13; Gal. 4.5.

ii. “sold” as slave-trading. 1 Cor 7.23: “You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.” Romans 6 particularly argues throughout that we have *died* to sin’s *enslaving* power, to that which formerly enslaved us. In chapter six, the serving, ruling, enslaving, liberating language is all directed to the same end: believers are no longer enslaved to sin and death; they are indeed enslaved to righteousness and to God (6.6c,12,14,16,17,18,19,20,22)

c. “under sin,” 7.14b. A common thread of chs. 5-8 is the believer’s deliverance from both the legal guilt (ch. 5) and the moral power (6-8) of

sin. The texts cited above indicate that the believer of chapter six is not enslaved or sold under sin.

d. “Who will deliver me from this body of death?,” 7.24. Throughout chs. 5-8, death is the penalty for sin, from which we who are in Christ are free (5:12, 15, 17, 21, 6:23). While the believer has not yet put on the immortal body, he or she does not cry out wondering who will deliver from the present mortal one. The believer knows who will deliver from this mortal state.

e. “For I know that nothing good dwells within me,” 7.18. Note the contrast to this “nothing good” *dwelling* in me here, with the Spirit *dwelling* in me in 8:9

f. “I can will what is right, but I cannot do it,” 7.18. This is in stark contrast to what Paul says elsewhere (Phil. 2:13), namely that God works in believers both to will and to do what pleases God. This is in contrast to the “I” of Ro. 7, who does not do good. Note also that the “I” of Ro. 7, while alleged to be an example of a “struggling” believer is less than a struggler; he is not one who *sometimes* succeeds in doing right, but someone who can *only* wish but not do.

g. “We know that the law is spiritual,” 7.14. The only possibly redeeming trait of the “I” of Ro. 7 is that this one *knows* and *wishes for* what is right (vv. 15-20). But such qualities do not protect the Jew of Romans 2:17-29 from scathing denunciation. Indeed, in that passage, it is precisely the Jew’s knowledge of God’s will (2.18--“and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed in the law”) which renders him particularly blameworthy (compared to the Gentile) for his disobedience.

h. “Wretched man that I am!,” 7.24. The “wretched” man of Ro. 7 is not to be perceived as someone who is psychologically distraught about the situation; but someone who is indeed wretched regardless of whether recognizing the wretchedness or not (cf. Rev. 3:17, where the people do not *perceive* themselves to be wretched, but are indeed wretched, and, in all likelihood, outside of God’s redemption).

2. Some of these things are affirmed in chapters 6 and 8 of unbelievers. The immediate context especially makes the points mentioned above significant. It is especially in chapters 6 and 8, which surround this chapter, that we find a stark contrast to what is affirmed about the “I” of Romans 7.

3. Contextual relation to chapter 8. Some accounting must be made for the a[ra at 8.1, and the ga;r at 8.2 and 8.3. “For what the law was unable to do, being weakened by the flesh, God has done, sending his Son...” This suggests that what is being contrasted (between Rom. 7 and Rom. 8) is the people under the law with the people in Christ. Paul is again speaking covenantally, contrasting that epoch during which the Sinai administration governed God’s people with that epoch in which the New Covenant administration governed God’s people.

III. Why so many think it *is* a believer

A. Rejection of a rhetorical “I.” Some people don’t think Paul is capable of speaking in such a manner. Yet the capacity to do this in Koiné Greek, and in Paul’s own writings, is reasonably well-established by W. G. Kümmel’s monograph, though the qualifications of Douglas J. Moo are important. As at Jeremiah 10.19-22; Lamentations 1.9-22; 2.20-22, the “I” can be rhetorical, but also involve the speaker, who is a member of Israel.

Further, any interpretation of Romans 7 regards embracing something rhetorical; either the “I” is rhetorical, or the eight things mentioned above are rhetorical (Paul *says* “sold under sin” but he doesn’t really *mean* “sold under sin;” he *says* “fleshly,” but he doesn’t really *mean* “fleshly;” he *says* “wretched,” but he doesn’t really *mean* “wretched,” etc.). Ironically, then, the “rhetorical” view of “I” is less rhetorical than the alternatives.

B. Experiential hermeneutic imported. People know, experientially, that they struggle to live righteously; they assume that Paul addresses the same Christianity which they experience; and they conclude, consistently with these beliefs, that Romans 7 is discussing this struggle. By contrast, note the (correct) insistence of N.T. Wright that the “I” is viewed here *theologically* not emotionally or autobiographically.

C. Rejection of Wesleyan perfectionism. Some have so frequently employed Romans 7 to refute Wesleyan perfectionism, that they believe the rhetorical understanding of the “I” implies a defense of Wesleyan perfectionism.

D. “Softening” of language of R. 7. “Wretched,” for them, does not really mean wretched; “fleshly” does not really mean fleshly; “sold” does not really mean sold; “under sin” does not really mean under sin; the inability to do good is not really an inability to do good.

E. Apparent exegetical difficulties. The question of verse 25 does seem to make more sense if the “I” is Paul. Also, how could it be that an unregenerate person would “rejoice” in the law of God (the objection of Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Barth, Murray)? This latter problem, however, is easily answered if the “I” is not the human race generally considered, but Israel as recipient of the Sinai covenant (“For I speak to those who know the Law”).