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ESCHATOLOGY AND ETHICS IN PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS*

Renato R. Repole, S.J.

This author's whole dissertation, of which this paper is a part, explores the role of eschatology in the ethical arguments or teachings of St. Paul. Now it is widely acknowledged that Paul generally issues an imperative based on a given indicative or, in the language of this work, motivation. This indicative or motivation may be either a "warrant" or a "sanction"—categories that we have borrowed from L. Keck.[1] Accordingly, for every moral appeal that Paul issues in the letter to the Galatians, we explore its motivations or "indicatives" that are eschatological in nature, that is, realities that pertain formally to the end-times or end-time realities that have already impinged on the present, and show how they inform or ground Paul's moral appeals.

Before we jump into our main task, it may be helpful to begin with some introductory observations concerning the nature and structure of this letter.

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[1]L. Keck, "Re-thinking 'New Testament Ethics'," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115:1 (1996): 3–16.

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The Doctrinal and the Paraenetic Sections

We have seen in Paul's letters to the Corinthians how the doctrinal and the hortatory parts, the "indicative" and the "imperative," are rather interspersed such that one cannot really distinguish a theological section and a paraenetical section. This is not the case, however, with the Apostle's letter to the Galatians, for in this correspondence one can clearly single out the doctrinal part and the hortatory part. Despite the difference in opinion as to where the hortatory section begins,[2] one cannot deny the fact that it is in chapter 5 that Paul draws out the conclusion (οὐ) and implications of the freedom that the Christian has attained by accepting Christ in faith. Longenecker sees that addressing the issue of practical lifestyle is necessary "if Paul's case concerning Christian freedom from the law is ultimately to have force.… Without a demonstration of how his gospel provides a framework out of which moral and social responsibility emerges, the concerns of the Galatians would not have been fully addressed."[3] Thus, the two sections should not be seen as unrelated to each other, or that the hortatory section is merely an addition to the doctrinal section[4] or independent of it: it "*develops out of and concludes his earlier arguments*."[5] Matera even argues

[2]For a detailed discussion on this question, see O. Merk, "Der Beginn der Paränese im Galaterbrief," *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 60 (1969): 83–104. See also F. Matera, "The Culmination of Paul's Argument to the Galatians: Gal. 1.1–6.17," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 32 (1988): 80–81. To cite just a couple of opinions, Ebeling fixes the beginning at 5:1, Barclay at 5:13, and Duncan at 5:26.

[3]R. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC 41 (Dallas: Word Books), 80–81.

[4]Matera, "The Culmination," 85, cites this opinion of J. Smit, "Redactie in de brief aan galaten: Retorische analyse van Gal. 4.12–6.18," *Tidjschrift voor Theologie* 26 (1986): 113–144.

[5]J. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 79–80.

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that the paraenetical section actually serves as the culmination of Paul's argument in this letter.[6]

The Link between the Doctrinal and Paraenetic Sections

Tracing the connection between the doctrinal and the paraenetical sections in broad strokes, one notes that up to chapter 5 Paul has been trying to show the Galatians how they have allowed themselves to slip back into their condition of slavery or un-freedom by listening to those who are disturbing them, forcing them to put the law, with all its accompanying ritual observances, instead of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ back into the center of their lives. In various terms, Paul describes this as a "slipping back" into a condition of slavery. He speaks, first of all, of their deserting him who called them in the grace of Christ and of their turning to a different gospel. In other words, Paul had already introduced them into the realm of the Spirit (3:3) but their present turning away from the Gospel amounted to "ending in the flesh." Before they began in the life of the Spirit, Paul reminded them of how they lacked knowledge of God and were serving those who by nature are not gods. Then, through Paul's preaching, they had come to know God (or God had come to know them). But no sooner had they attained the knowledge of God did they turn back to the weak and beggarly elements which they wished to serve once again (5:9). All these manifestations of wanting to become "slaves" again are then reformulated and summed up by Paul as their "desire to be under the law" (4:21). Yet Paul declares by the allegory of Sarah and Tamar that as Christian believers they are not "children of the slave but of the free woman" (4:31). In short, they have become free by their faith in Jesus Christ. What this freedom entails or implies Paul will expound upon in the next remaining chapters.

[6]Specifically, Matera argues that the chapters containing moral exhortation "should not be viewed exclusively as paraenesis. They are the climax of Paul's deliberative argument aimed at persuading the Galatians not to be circumcised" (Matera, "The Culmination," 80).

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1. Standing Fast to the Freedom Won by Christ (5:1)

The first text that is relevant to our study comes right at the beginning of the paraenetic section. While the first explicit imperative in this letter is given in 4:12, it is in 5:1 that we find the first one that is grounded in an eschatological idea. Let us now examine this relevant verse.

In what appears to be a conclusion to all that he has said so far, Paul says:

> 5:1 Τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν· στήκετε οὖν καὶ μὴ πάλιν ζυγῷ δουλείας ἐνέχεσθε.
>
> [For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.]

The first part of the statement contains the reason or motivation, the content of which is that Christ has brought us to freedom. The second part is the consequent (οὖν) appeal to "stand fast" and "not submit again to a yoke of slavery." Thus, we have the usual Pauline formulation of an "indicative" followed by an "imperative."

1.1 The exhortation

What Paul is asking the Galatian community in this verse is expressed in both positive and negative terms. Positively, he calls on them to "stand firm" (στήκετε), that is, hold fast to the freedom that Christ has won for them. Negatively, he asks them "not to submit again to a yoke of slavery" (καὶ μὴ πάλιν ζυγῷ δουλείας ἐνέχεσθε). Paul is asking the Galatians not to go back to their old life and to stand fast to the present one. This appeal may be best understood by reviewing what occurred in the Galatian community after Paul had evangelized them. As the letter itself says, some outsiders came to Galatia and troubled the community by introducing a "different gospel" (ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον [1:6]). Whereas for Paul, there can be no gospel other than

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that which he has preached to them; thus, he did not spare condemning words against those who claimed to preach another one.

On the other hand, Paul confronts and rebukes the community for easily giving in to the trouble-makers, "quickly deserting him who called (them) in the grace of Christ" (1:6). Somebody must have bewitched (ἐβάσκανεν) them, making them completely forget that it was before their very eyes that Jesus Christ was portrayed as crucified (3:1). Paul expected them to have grown in their faith, but by "turning to a different gospel" they who have begun with the Spirit are now ending with the flesh (3:3). Moreover, Paul rebukes them for turning back to observing "days, and months, and seasons, and years"—an observance which recalls their former state when they did not yet know God and were subject to beings that were not really gods (4:8–10). Paul sees this slipping back to their former condition as going back again into "slavery" (5:1). Whereas, as Paul reminds them now, the law, once their παιδαγωγὸς (3:24) or ἐπιτρόπους or οἰκονόμους (4:2), has been superseded with the coming of Christ and faith (cf. 3:23ff). In Christ, they are no longer "slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe" (4:3) but have become children and heirs (4:6–7), and free men and women being children not of the slave but of the free woman (4:31).

Thus, Paul wants the Galatians to leave behind their past which was characterized by enslavement. Instead, they are to embrace this new life of freedom Christ has won for them. Specifically, Paul's appeal appears to be oriented toward resisting occasions or temptations to go back to that old life. While Christ has definitively won their freedom, they are still subject to the influences of sin in the world where they live. Thus, Paul says στήκετε: "hold or stand firm; do not be moved by any form of persuasion especially towards that old life." And this means primarily, as we have seen, holding on to the gospel Paul had preached to them rather than turning to a different one. Negatively, they are not to allow themselves to be subjected again (πάλιν) to a "yoke of slavery" (ζυγῷ δουλείας), that is, not to allow themselves to be burdened again by pursuing the "works of the law" and circumcision and also by being subject to the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου which included the observance of certain calendars.

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1.2 The eschatological motivation

As the text shows, Paul grounds his appeal to the Galatian believers on the fact that Christ has already won for them their freedom. Paul refers, of course, to what Christ has done for humanity, that is, given his life for them by his death on the cross. It is not by the work of someone else or by means of something else that they have attained their freedom; it is only by the sacrifice of Christ. Paul also underlines the liberating aspect of Christ's sacrifice. His death has loosened all bonds, especially the bond of sin and death.

Thus, it is by the liberating act of Christ that Paul reinforces his appeal to the Galatians. Yet this act is not merely some this-worldly phenomenon or event. It takes on an eschatological character, and this eschatological quality can be seen from at least four angles. First of all, it is eschatological in that it is won for believers by Christ whose coming marks the beginning of the eschatological age. Paul proclaims this truth in a number of ways in this letter. This is expressed in 4:4–5, when Paul says, "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law" (4:4–5). God's sending of his son as a human being ushers in the dawning of redemption. In the words of Vollenweider,[7] this "fullness of time" (4:4) "schlägt die Selbstverschliessung in der Vergangenheit zur Öffnung in die Zukunft, schlägt die Stabilisierung eigener Identität sur Participation an der eschatologischen Dynamik des Geistes um."

Another aspect of Christ's life which Paul emphasizes as the means by which Christian freedom is won is precisely his death on the cross. By saying that "if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose" (2:21), Paul implicitly asserts that it is through the death of Christ that justification is effected. And justification means that former sinners and enemies of God are put right and achieve reconciliation with God, thus marking a new, eschatological life. The

[7] S. Vollenweider, *Freiheit als neue Schöpfung. Eine Untersuchung zur Eleutheria bei Paulus und in seiner Umwelt*, FRLANT 147 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 310–311.

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eschatological character of Christ's death on the cross is also hinted at in Paul's resolve and wish not to boast in anything (such as "glorying in the flesh," in the case of those who impose circumcision) "except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (6:14). What the Jews considered a supreme example of disgrace (death on the cross) became for Paul the source of boasting and of bringing him into a new relationship with the world: it is "crucified" to him as he is "crucified" to it. Thus, "the new freedom does not exist apart from Christ, not even for the Jews."[8] As Kertelge expresses it, "Die von Paulus verteidigte Freiheit der Christen hat ihren 'Ort' und ihren Bestand 'in Christus', und dies deswegen, weil sie ihren Grund in der *Tat* Christi hat."[9] And the same author rightly identifies the freedom won for believers by Christ as "das eschatologische Heilsgut, das in einem *konsequenten* Glauben an Jesus Christus Gegenwart wird."[10]

Secondly, the liberating act of Christ is also eschatological in that *it signals a break from the law and circumcision as means of being justified before God*. The law has always been for the Jews a source of blessing (cf., for instance, Ps. 119). It was what bound them to God. Equally valued was the mark of circumcision: it was not only the sign of God's covenant with God's people (Gen. 17:11) but also the content of that covenant itself (Gen. 17:10). However, Paul declares that with the coming of Christ, and thus faith, the law and circumcision have ceased to be the "custodian" of God's people. For the coming of Christ signals the maturation of the relationship between God and God's people; that is to say, in Christ they are no longer children, "slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe" (4:3), but adopted sons and daughters and hence heirs (4:5–7). Cosgrove has articulated well what for Paul is the significance of the coming of Christ—particularly his death—for

[8]B. Gerhardsson, "*Eleutheria* (Freedom) in the Bible," in B. Thompson, ed., *Scripture: Meaning and Method* (Hull, England: Hull University Press, 1987), 14.

[9]L. Kertelge, "Freiheitsbotschaft und Liebesgebot in Galaterbrief," in H. Merklein, ed., *Neues Testament und Ethik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1989), 329.

[10]Kertelge, "Freiheitsbotschaft und Liebesgebot in Galaterbrief," 337.

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the law and, indeed, for the cosmos. He says that for the Apostle, the death of Christ marks the radical break "between life in Christ and life 'in this present evil age' (1:4),"[11] that is, Christ's death is death to the law (cf. 2:19) as it is death to the cosmos.[12] Consequently, "the rules that promote life in the present cosmic order," "the rules ordained by the Torah ('the works of the law')" "do not promote life in Christ."[13] Indeed, as Cosgrove further affirms, "Paul attends to the symbol of death (more than the resurrection) in making his case against the theory that works of the law promote eschatological life."[14]

As for circumcision, Paul declares that to impose it means to nullify what Christ has done (5:2; cf. 2:21) because receiving circumcision means binding oneself to the law which means, in turn, wanting to be justified by it. Thus, to receive circumcision means to be cut off from Christ and to "have fallen away from grace" (5:4). The freedom that the death of Christ brings is therefore eschatological in that his death means death to the cosmos and death to the law and its requirements; positively, it ushers in eschatological life.

Thirdly, the freedom that Christ's sacrifice brings to believers is eschatological in its *orientation and purpose*. For, as Paul qualifies, this freedom is not to be used "as an opportunity for the flesh" (ἀφορμὴν τῇ σαρκί [5:13]). Now, the "flesh" (σάρξ), as Paul will elaborate in a couple of verses further on, is the power that competes with the Spirit (πνεῦμα) in soliciting the obedience of human beings. In this context, Paul presents it as a negative force, obedience to which brings forth "works" such as fornication, impurity, licentiousness, and other vices (cf. 5:19–21a). Thus, Paul appeals, Christian freedom is not to be used to promote these forms of wickedness. Instead, as Paul continues, this freedom is to be used in the service of one another through love

[11]C. Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit: A Study in the Argument and Theology of Galatians* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 183.

[12]Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit*, 183.

[13]Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit*, 183.

[14]Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit*, 183.

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(διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις [5:13b]). This is because, as Paul adds right away, "the whole Law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (5:14). Thus, the new freedom of believers has a paradoxical character: it is freedom from bondage to the law and circumcision, yet it is also entering into servanthood with one another (cf. δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις). Such a conception of freedom departs from that of the philosophers of Paul's day who held rather that a free person "exists for [himself or herself] and not for another."[15] This new "slavery," however, is of a different kind since it is to be practised διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης. Christian "servitude" is "servitude" in love. Thus, love is the appropriate form and expression of Christian freedom.[16] Now, as the summary and fulfillment of the law, and as "the greatest" of the three cardinal virtues[17] (cf. 1 Cor. 13), ἀγάπη assumes an eschatological character. This is also affirmed by S. Pedersen when, in the light of 1 Cor. 13, he proclaims love as "den eschatologischen Hauptbegriff des Paulus."[18] If this is so, then Christian freedom, which finds its appropriate concretization in love, also acquires an eschatological character.

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[15]Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I, 2, as quoted by V. Furnish, "Paul: Faith Active in Love," in *The Love Command in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1973), 98 (also quoted by G. Friedrich, "Freiheit und Liebe im ersten Korintherbrief," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 26 [1970]: 85). Furnish also cites a similar conception of freedom in Epictetus, *Discourses* IV, vii, l6–17: "I have been set free by God. I know His commands, no one has power any longer to make a slave of me…" (also quoted by J. Moffatt, *Love in the New Testament* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932], 190).

[16]For a more detailed treatment of the relationship between freedom and the love-commandment in this letter, see Kertelge, "Freiheitsbotschaft und Liebesgebot in Galaterbrief," 326–337.

[17]That is, faith, hope, and love (cf. 1 Cor. 13).

[18]Quoted by Kertelge, "Freiheitsbotschaft und Liebesgebot in Galaterbrief,", 337, from S. Pedersen, "Agape – der escathologische Hauptbegriff bei Paulus," in *Die paulinische Literatur und Theologie*, Skandinavische Beiträge, Theologiske Studier 7 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 159–186.

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Fourthly and lastly, Christ's liberating act (or the freedom that it brings) is eschatological in that *it is closely linked to the Spirit*, the eschatological gift *par excellence*. Particularly for Paul, Christian freedom is to place oneself under the guidance of the Spirit (πνεῦμα). This is the reverse side of using one's freedom "as an opportunity for the flesh." At the same time, it is also true that "the Spirit of the Lord creates freedom";[19] as God's creative dynamism, it empowers believers to obedience and enables the "fruit" of the Spirit to be born in them. That Christian freedom is to be exercised under the lead of the Spirit is expressed by Paul in his appeals in 5:16 and 5:25. In these verses, Paul calls for "walking in the Spirit" (πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε) and "living in harmony with the Spirit" (πνεύματι καὶ στοιχῶμεν), respectively. Negatively, "walking in the Spirit" entails "not gratify(ing) the desires of the flesh" (5:16). When it is the Spirit that controls the lives of believers, it bears "fruit" in them with manifold expressions—"love, joy, peace, patience" (5:22–23)—realities which, in the words of Furnish, "may be regarded as social manifestations of the believer's radically new (eschatological) life in Christ, 'sustained' by his love."[20] Thus, the close connection of Christian freedom with the power of the Spirit, God's primary eschatological gift, attests to the eschatological character of this freedom itself.

1.3 The reason for holding on to eschatological freedom

While Christ has already won for believers their freedom, this freedom can be lost again. And Paul in vv. 2–12 shows how this is possible. Paul's discussion focuses on the issue that has caused the major concern—that of circumcision. Specifically, Paul says that insisting on receiving circumcision is tantamount to being "enslaved" again and nullifying what Christ has done for them. Paul says that if they desire to receive circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to them (5:2). It also means they are bound to keep the whole law (5:3)

[19]Gerhardsson, "*Eleutheria*," 21.

[20]Furnish, *The Love Command*, 98.

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which, as Paul says, no one has ever done perfectly (3:10; 6:13). Indeed, Paul tells them that by wanting to be justified by the law, "[they] are severed from Christ … [they] have fallen away from grace" (5:4). Secondly, having declared that receiving circumcision and being under the law does not bring about justification, Paul declares instead what does justify: the hope of righteousness that is through the Spirit by faith (5:5). At the same time, Paul declares why this is so: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision or uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love" (5:6). Thirdly, Paul alerts them to the fact that whereas they have been running well, someone is now trying to hinder them from obeying the truth. This thinking cannot be coming from him who has called them (5:7, 8). He also warns that whoever has misled them will not escape God's judgment (5:10b). Lastly, he argues from his personal example. He said that he himself has stopped preaching circumcision and that this is why he is still being persecuted (5:11a). But he says that to preach circumcision still is to remove the stumbling block of the cross (5:11b), the very thing that his enemies have been wanting to do (6:12) but which for Paul is the only source of glory (6:14).

Through all this argumentation Paul tries to use persuasion—appealing to his readers' minds by offering explanation— rather than simply resorting to sanctions of threat of punishment or the promise of reward. While Paul mentions the fact that those who insist on receiving circumcision are severed from Christ and have fallen away from grace, reference to this sanction is not made the expressed motivation for the appeal not to slip back to the condition of slavery. On the contrary, Paul lets the Galatian believers see how that freedom which Christ has won for them is too precious to be passed over or disregarded. And how incompatible old enslaving ways are to this fresh freedom in Christ.

1.4 Summary and conclusion

In 5:1, Paul invokes the freedom Christ has won for believers to ground his appeal to the Galatian Christians that they hold fast—precisely to this freedom and to the gospel they have received—and not

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submit again to a life of "slavery." Christ won this freedom through his cross. Through this sacrifice, Christ liberated them from the "elemental spirits of the universe," from "bondage to beings that are by nature no gods" (4:8). Through it, he also liberated them from the "curse" which those who rely on the works of the law are under (3:10, 14). However, this newfound eschatological freedom is not a license to do anything; it has a definite form and character. It is to be exercised not as an instrument of the flesh but of the Spirit. The extraordinary source and character of this freedom, therefore, ought to motivate believers to remain in it and guard it. The use of the eschatological idea of Christian freedom in this text also shows the Apostle's concern to base his appeals on warrants rather than on sanctions.

5:13–6:10: Life in the Spirit

In 5:1–12, Paul asks the Galatian believers to hold fast to the freedom Christ has won for them by not submitting again to the "slavery" of circumcision. At the same time, however, this newfound freedom should be used properly, for it can be used either for good or for bad. Specifically, Paul says it can be used to further the interests either of the flesh (σάρξ) or of the Spirit (πνεῦμα)—the two opposing forces vying for supremacy in the lives of people in the world. Naturally, Paul wants the Galatians to use their newfound freedom to further their life in the Spirit. This is what he will constantly urge them to do from 5:13 through to 6:10 by means of both general and particular appeals.

The first general way by which the Galatians are to use their newfound freedom properly is by not using it "as an opportunity for the flesh" (εἰς ἀφορμὴν τῇ σαρκί [5:13a]). What Paul precisely means by this is illumined by the opposite behavior he wants the community to exhibit. That is, they are to promote mutual service through love (cf. ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις [5:13b]). Implicitly, then, using one's freedom "as an opportunity for the flesh" means to live in selfishness and desire evil for one's neighbor, to live contrary to love. Paul highlights the importance of ἀγάπη by reminding the Galatians that the whole law is fulfilled in the command to love the neighbor (5:14). Love of the neighbor is to be promoted instead of its exact

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opposite which is desiring evil for the neighbor. This is confirmed by Paul's warning to the community against "biting," "devouring," and "consuming" one another (cf. v. 15)—behavior associated with fighting among ferocious animals. Instead of such "animalistic" behavior, the Galatians are to "walk by the Spirit" (cf. v. 16: πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε) or to "live in harmony with the Spirit" (cf. v. 25: πνεύματι … στοιχῶμεν). These general appeals are backed up by motivations some of which are eschatological. Let us now look closely at the relevant texts.

2. Walking by the Spirit (5:16–24)

2.1 The moral appeal

The call to proper use of freedom receives another specification in v. 16 when Paul calls on the Galatians: Λέγω δέ, πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκὸς οὐ μὴ τελέσητε. By introducing his appeal with Λέγω δέ, Paul seems to underline the importance of his call by pointing to the fact that it is he, their spiritual founder, who is calling on them. Paul's imperative is that the Galatians walk by the Spirit (cf. πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε). This most likely means to live a life which is guided by the Spirit, or a life in which the primary dynamism is the Spirit, a life controlled or propelled by the Spirit. Negatively, the call to "walk by the Spirit" means that they are not to "gratify the desires of the flesh" (cf. ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκὸς οὐ μὴ τελέσητε). That is to say, they are not to feed on the desires of the flesh and bring to completion or fulfillment (cf. τελέσητε) its various cravings.

A closer look at the imperatives in vv. 13 and 16 reveals that there is a reversal in their formulations. Verse 13 begins with a negative imperative (=prohibition) followed by a positive command. Whereas v. 16 begins with a positive command followed by a prohibition. Paul's basic imperative in both verses is that the Galatians employ their freedom in the service of the good (the Spirit) and not of evil (the flesh).

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2.2 Eschatological warrants and sanctions

Looking at the imperatives we have just seen in vv. 13 and 16, we also find their accompanying motivations. The appeal to the Galatians not to use their freedom as an occasion for the flesh but as a means for loving service is grounded on the idea that love fulfills what the law commands (cf. v. 14). On the other hand, the appeal in v. 16 to walk by the Spirit and not gratify the desires of the flesh is grounded on what Paul would elaborate in vv. 17–24. In these verses, Paul essentially points to how the opposing forces—flesh and Spirit—work and what they have to offer to those who "serve" them. By considering how each works and what each has to offer, Paul hopes that it will not be difficult for the Galatians to see which of the two they should follow. However, given that serving or following either force or realm determines one's ultimate destiny, the motivations that are involved here do have an eschatological character. Let us now determine the configuration of the eschatological motivations involved.

That the elaboration in vv. 17–24 constitutes an explanation for the appeal in v. 16 is marked by γὰρ (v. 17). In these verses (17–24), Paul establishes the stark contrast and opposition between the flesh and the Spirit. Paul develops this contrast in three moments. First, he says that the flesh and the Spirit act or work contrary to each other (cf. v. 17: ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμεῖ κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα κατὰ τῆς σαρκός, ταῦτα γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀντίκειται…). Second, he declares that being led by the Spirit means not being under the law (v. 18). Third, he shows the contrasting influence each realm has in people's lives in referring to the "works of the flesh" (vv. 19–21a) and the "fruit of the Spirit" (vv. 22–23a). On this point, Paul adds that doing the "works of the flesh" will result in the forfeiting of the kingdom of God (v. 21b) whereas allowing the "fruit of the Spirit" to bear infringes no law (cf. v. 23b). In each of these parts, Paul shows why the Galatians have to reject the flesh and embrace the Spirit as the guiding force in their lives.

2.2.1. Eschatological sanction: the threat of forfeiting the Kingdom. After enumerating "the works of the flesh" (v. 19), Paul adds this warning: "I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." This warning of an eschatological

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sanction contains an implied appeal not to engage precisely in the enumerated wicked deeds. The list of vices or wicked deeds is certainly not exhaustive yet is representative of the wicked deeds that any person can do. Now, whereas for the moral philosophies existing at the time (such as Stoicism) such a catalogue of vices might have been seen as nothing more than being contrary to good character, it has a more serious and eschatological repercussion in the Christian perspective: it leads to the forfeiting of the inheritance of the Kingdom of God.[21] This is a clear affirmation that engaging in the "works of the flesh" even on the part of believers results in the forfeiting of the inheritance of the kingdom. Hansen explains why this is so by saying that those who do such works really do not show that they have the Spirit in them, for the presence of the Spirit results in moral transformation.[22] At the same time, he argues that one cannot claim to have the Spirit without such moral transformation, and if one does not have the Spirit then one has not really been justified, and that one who is not justified cannot inherit the kingdom of God.[23]

Paul's declaration that those who engage in the works of the flesh shall not inherit the kingdom of God is significant in a number of ways. Some see in this Paul's desire "to vindicate his gospel from even the suspicion of antinomianism."[24] "By doing so he is refuting his opponents' claim that his gospel ignores the whole issue of correct behavior since it dismissed the Law."[25] While this observation is true, it must also be insisted upon that Paul's urging to proper behavior is not by means of observance of the law but by means of the use of

[21]Cf. F. Matera, *Galatians*, Sacra Pagina 9 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 210.

[22]Cf. G. Hansen, *Galatians*, IVPNTC (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 177.

[23]Hansen, *Galatians*, 177.

[24]G. Duncan, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1934), 172.

[25]P. Tarazi, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994), 296.

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Christian freedom concretized in living or "walking" by the Spirit. Another significance given to Paul's warning is that it appears to run counter to Paul's doctrine of justification by faith in its giving importance to individual human effort. However, this seeming contradiction is rightly explained by saying that although avoiding these vices is the believer's task, it is her or his "work"; she or he does not "earn" the Kingdom of God by doing so. For the Kingdom is an *inheritance* and thus a gift.[26] As such, it is given to children or heirs—the believers who are children of God—who do not need to work for it. As long as they remain God's children, they have a claim to it, or, rather, God bestows it upon them as a Father. The right to inherit it is abolished when they cease to act as God's children, that is, when they follow the lead of the flesh rather than of the Spirit.[27]

Thus, Paul's mention of the eschatological threat is fitting and called for in this context. It is not superfluous or given merely for the sake of evoking fear and thus commanding obedience. Paul is concerned that believers, especially those who think that they have been freed from the law or those who think they can take refuge in their being circumcised, do not exhibit overconfidence and neglect their moral tasks. At the same time, lest they underestimate God's reaction to such evildoing, Paul insists that it is not just some light thing that they will miss but the Kingdom of God altogether. The Galatian believers (or all believers, for that matter) cannot remain God's children and still keep their inheritance while engaging in evil behavior. For the reference to the Kingdom as an "inheritance" implies the idea that only sons and daughters merit the benefit. Believers are adopted sons and daughters of God (4:5–7) and are promised the inheritance of the Kingdom. However, once they no longer live as such, they lose their privilege.[28]

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[26]Cf. L. Morris, *Galatians: Paul's Charter of Christian Freedom* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 172.

[27]Cf. Duncan, *Galatians*, 173.

[28]We do not say "right" because God's kingdom is intended for us not as a "right" but as a privilege or grace.

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2.2.2. Eschatological warrant: the superiority of life in the Spirit over life in the flesh. The seriousness of Paul's warning in 5:21b may lead to overemphasis on the eschatological threat contained therein. However, as one notes in other parts of vv. 17–25, the Apostle tries to ground his exhortation in v. 16 by other means, leading to the ultimate eschatological motivation he gives in v. 25. The result is that the Apostle, in trying to dialogue with this community and convince them to "walk by the Spirit," is motivated not only by eschatological sanctions but more importantly by eschatological warrants. Let us now illustrate how this is so.

One notes that after Paul has expressed his exhortation in v. 16, he takes pains to provide an explanation for it. That is, he does not resort immediately to sanctions (of reward or punishment) but tries to convince his audience that what he is asking of them is reasonable and fits their status as believers. Accordingly, he begins by presenting the believers with the context of their moral lives by introducing the two forces that compete for their loyalty—the flesh and the Spirit. As we have said earlier, Paul presents various aspects of their opposition. First, he describes them in terms of their opposite actions: ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμεῖ κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα κατὰ τῆς σαρκός, ταῦτα γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀντίκειται, ἵνα μὴ ἃ ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε (v. 17). While there is no problem understanding the first parts of this statement, the concluding *hina*-clause has proved to be an exegetical challenge. The common reading is that the resultant condition whereby believers cannot do what they want flows from the fact that the flesh and the Spirit are opposed to each other. However, if this is so, then a person who wants to do either good or bad always ends up being frustrated because each force exerts its influence to frustrate the desired action. Also, if this is the case, then what is the meaning of Paul's exhortation to "walk by the Spirit"? Thus, the common reading should be rejected. Among the plausible alternatives that have been suggested, that of Kilgallen[29] seems preferable. Examining the syntax of the verse more closely, Kilgallen surmises that Paul is making an

[29]J. Kilgallen, "The Strivings of the Flesh … (Galatians 5,17)," *Biblica* 80 (1999): 113–114.

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affirmation about the action of the flesh (ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμεῖ κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος), the intended purpose of which is given in the final *hina*-clause (ἵνα μὴ ἃ ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε). Accordingly, he reads the clauses in between as a parenthetical explanation for the initial affirmation. Thus, the whole verse should be read as: "For the flesh desires against the Spirit (and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other), so that (or in order that) you cannot do what you want." When read this way, Kilgallen says, the fact that a person cannot do (the good)[30] that they want to do is the result not of the natural opposition of the flesh and the Spirit but of the fact that the flesh tries to frustrate it.[31]

Thus, Paul unravels the character of the flesh—how it is opposed to the Spirit and tries to frustrate the good that the Galatian believers would want to do. On the contrary, he says, "if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law" (εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε, οὐκ ἐστὲ ὑπὸ νόμον [5:18]). The re-introduction of the idea of the "law" (νόμος; cf. 2:16ff) appears abrupt and uncalled for. But this is not really so, since at the beginning of this chapter (5) Paul speaks of the law again when he says that if the Galatians insist on being circumcised, they are bound to keep the whole law (v. 3). In this light, the statement in v. 18 makes sense. Paul is declaring that to be led by the Spirit is not to be under the "yoke" of the law. To be guided by the Spirit means to be freed from the control of the law. Thus, the Spirit reinforces or promotes the freedom that Christ has won for believers.

A third way by which Paul establishes the contrast between the flesh and the Spirit (and thus underlining why believers should let

[30]This is to be assumed from the thrust of Paul's argument. Since it is the flesh which is the principal focus, then, what it tries to frustrate is the "good" that a person wants to do.

[31]As to alternative solutions, Kilgallen recommends as "the best solution" from an exegetical perspective that of J. Lambrecht ("The Right Things You Want to Do: A Note on Galatians 5,17d," *Biblica* 79 [1998]: 515–524). See also the suggestion of Barclay (*Obeying the Truth*, 115) which Matera (*Galatians*, 207) finds helpful.

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themselves be guided by the Spirit) is by presenting their respective manifestations or effects. First, Paul presents "the works" (ἔργα) of the flesh. These are easily recognizable in the form of fornication, impurity, licentiousness, and other shameful behavior (vv. 19–21a). In contrast, Paul points to "the fruit" (ὁ καρπὸς) of the Spirit which is manifested in terms of love, joy, peace, patience, and other spiritual qualities (vv. 22–23a). The contrast between "the works of the flesh" and "the fruit of the Spirit" has a number of implications. First of all, by speaking of "fruit," Paul implies that where believers walk by the Spirit, "Christian character and conduct develop naturally.…"[32] These grow spontaneously as the fruit of a tree does. At the same time, this expression implies a positive dynamic of growth, whereas the "works of the flesh" show a negative dynamic of decadence or of dying.[33]

Secondly, by describing what the Spirit produces not in terms of "works" but rather of "fruit," the Apostle shifts the emphasis away from human endeavor. This idea is also implied in Paul's reference to this "fruit" as that *of the Spirit* (τοῦ πνεύματός). While these spiritual qualities are to be manifested by the believer on the one hand, their ultimate source is Spirit. Believers cooperate by obeying the prompting of the Spirit, although they cannot by themselves make these virtues bear fruit.

Thirdly, Paul speaks of the "fruit" (καρπὸς) of the Spirit (singular) and not "fruits" of the Spirit (plural). Thus, Paul imagines these virtues (as they are often called in moral philosophy) not as many individual, separate manifestations of the outworking of the Spirit but as one entity. While one is able to distinguish the particular manifestations of each, these often go together such that where there is love, for instance, there is also joy, peace, goodness, etc. In contrast to the many and varied "works" of the flesh, "the life of the Spirit is a harmonious whole, and is in essence the same wherever it is found."[34]

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[32]Duncan, *Galatians*, 173.

[33]Cf. D. Guthrie, *Galatians*, NCBC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), 139.

[34]Duncan, *Galatians*, 174.

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Fourthly, some scholars also point out that Paul speaks here of the "fruit" of the Spirit as distinct from its so-called "gifts" (χαρίσματα).[35] The "gifts" are powers or capacities with which the Spirit of God endows believers for special service, and they naturally differ in different persons. The "fruit" or the "harvest" of the Spirit, on the other hand, refers to "the natural expression in character of the divine life which is within."[36]

Thus, by showing clearly what each of the two forces (flesh and Spirit) produces, or how each manifests itself, Paul hopes to convince the Galatians that they ought indeed to walk by the Spirit.

After listing the various manifestations of the "fruit" of the Spirit, Paul adds other comments which also serve to highlight the desirability of being led by the Spirit. One of these additional notes is in v. 23b. Following the list of the "fruit" of the Spirit, Paul adds that "against such there is no law (κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος)." Earlier, in v. 18, Paul remarks that if one is led by the Spirit she or he is not under the law. Thus, there seems to be an intended parallelism in these two verses:

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

v. 23b: κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος.

Accordingly, in v. 18, Paul declares that if one is led by the Spirit, the law ceases to be the guiding factor. And Paul seems to be suggesting that to be led by the Spirit is to be in the ideal situation. For to be under the law is to be constantly under attack by the flesh. And Paul had already declared that the law cannot be the means for justification because no one is able to fulfill it perfectly (3:10). Whereas if one is guided by the Spirit, there is guarantee that what the law requires will

[35]Cf. 1 Cor. 12:4ff.

[36]Duncan, *Galatians*, 173. E. Burton (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, ICC [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921], 313) also follows the same line of thought, although contends that while the "fruits" of the Spirit were not popularly thought of as evidences of the Spirit's presence, in the mind of Paul these were of far greater import than the so-called χαρίσματα.

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be fulfilled. Analogously, Paul declares what is obvious by his statement in v. 23b: there can be no law against manifestations of love, joy, peace, etc. As a matter of fact, these are what the law intends to bring about.

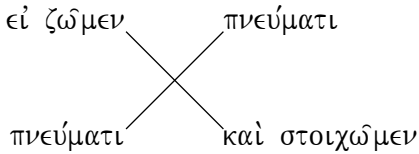
Aside from saying that there is no law against the "fruit" of the Spirit, Paul also adds (δὲ) another comment with a Christological content. He says, "Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passion and desires." What Paul has just said pneumatologically he now restates Christologically, that is, allowing the fruit of the Spirit to manifest in one's life also means, at the same time, having crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. For it is not possible to serve two masters at the same time: the "fruit" of the Spirit cannot co-exist with the "works" of the flesh (5:17). It is worth noting that Paul does not say that those who belong to Christ "are crucifying" or "(do) crucify" (present tense) but, rather, that they "have crucified" (ἐσταύρωσαν [present perfect tense]), the flesh. This implies that to have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires is a prerequisite for belonging to Christ and being able to produce the fruit of the Spirit. Any vestige of the flesh should be removed before the fruit of the Spirit can emerge.

By adding these comments, Paul wants to motivate the community to walk by the Spirit and allow its fruit to be born in their lives. Paul's statement that against the fruit of the Spirit there is no law is meant to encourage the community to follow the Spirit. And by mentioning that those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires, he also aims at providing the ideal which the Galatians ought to imitate. For they themselves, too, belong to Christ. Thus, they also ought to crucify the flesh with its passions and desires. If their other brothers and sisters in Christ (those who belong to Christ) have done so, so also they ought to do. What Paul has done, in other words, is to appeal to the Galatians' privileged status. They belong to Christ, and are not like those who have crucified Christ. What they are to "crucify" instead is the flesh with its passions and desires, so that the Spirit alone will take control of their lives.

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3. Living in Harmony with the Spirit (5:25)

After Paul has presented how the realms of the flesh and the Spirit work or what their manifestations are, he wraps up his discourse. He says, "εἰ ζῶμεν πνεύματι, πνεύματι καὶ στοιχῶμεν." The statement is composed of a condition (protasis) and a consequent exhortation (apodosis), of an "indicative" followed by an "imperative." As one notes, this statement exhibits a chiastic structure:



The *protasis* contains the warrant or reason for the exhortation in the *apodosis*. However, while the form is conditional, some interpreters take this statement as stating a real fact rather than a conditional one. Thus, the statement may be translated as "*Since* we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."[37] For certainly Paul is not questioning the fact that believers have received the Spirit and, therefore, now live in its realm. Paul's intention is merely to challenge the Galatian believers to live out this given status in concrete day-to-day behavior, knowing well that even believers can choose to obey the flesh instead. "Life in the Spirit carries with it unavoidable responsibilities."[38]

This statement is a classic example of the "indicative-imperative" pattern that is characteristic of Paul.[39] The indicative, on the one hand, describes the situation that believers are in: they live in the realm of the Spirit; thus, they are under its influence. They received the Spirit as

[37]Thus, e.g., B. Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 412–413; Guthrie, *Galatians*, 141. Duncan (*Galatians*, 177) has "As we live by the Spirit, let us be guided by the Spirit."

[38]Guthrie, *Galatians*, 141.

[39]See also 1 Cor. 5:7; 12:20.

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a gift[40] when God sent His Son that they might become His adopted daughters and sons. And being daughters and sons, they received the Spirit which God poured into their hearts (4:4–7). The Spirit, therefore, is the source of their life in Christ and the power to realize this life in day-to-day behavior. The imperative, on the other hand, expresses the challenge for believers to manifest the signs that they are indeed under the realm of the Spirit. It "expresses our responsibility: to protect our freedom from slavery under the law, to use our freedom to serve one another in love and to keep in step with the Spirit."[41] The indicative has no meaning if it is not expressed into what the imperative requires. As a matter of fact, one cannot claim to have or be what the indicative expresses if the conduct or behavior called for by the imperative is absent. Paul, however, firmly believes that the Galatian believers live by the Spirit, and so he exhorts them: πνεύματι στοιχῶμεν.

3.1 The exhortation

In v. 16, we have seen Paul appealing to the Galatians: πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε. Now, in this verse (v. 25), he asks them, "πνεύματι στοιχῶμεν?" Most translations do not reflect the difference in the verbs used, rendering them both by "walk,"[42] and some scholars treat them as synonymous.[43] While the basic meanings of the two verbs

[40]Thus, too, Hansen, *Galatians*, 181.

[41]Hansen, *Galatians*, 181.

[42]E.g., RSV, KJV, etc.

[43]Indeed, F. Bruce (*The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC [Exeter: Paternoster, 1982], 257) says that

> there is little material difference between πνεύματι στοιχεῖν here, πνεύματι περιπατεῖν (v. 16) and πνεύματι ἄγεσθαι (v. 18). Walking by the Spirit is the outward manifestation, in action and speech, of living by the Spirit. Living by the Spirit is the root; walking by the Spirit is the fruit, and that fruit is nothing less than the practical reproduction of the character (and therefore the conduct) of Christ in the lives of his people.

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are not really the same, they do have common nuances.[44] It is possible, however, that by employing a different verb in v. 25, Paul wants to highlight a particular behavioral manifestation. The verb στοιχέω has the basic meaning of "(to) be drawn in line," and thus, figuratively, to "be in line with," "agree with," or "follow."[45] Thus, it has often been compared to the military formation of walking in a row or marching in line.[46] From a moral perspective, it means to conduct oneself or live according to a rule or principle,[47] or according to the example set by a leader.[48] Applied to our text, this means that the Spirit, rather than someone else, is to be the guide or the leader of believers in their actions. It means to let the Spirit direct the course of our lives,[49] "to marshal us in our corporate relationships."[50] Thus, Paul's earlier call to "walk" (περιπατέω [v. 16]) becomes more specific and pointed in the call to let the actions of believers be "in line with," or "in harmony with," the Spirit. And to be "in harmony with the Spirit" means, as v. 26 has it, avoiding self-conceit, provocation, and envy of one another. These particular appeals give flesh to the general appeals to "walk by

[44]The basic meaning of "walk" or "go about" in περιπατέω finds resonances in the idea of "being in line with," "follow," or "keeping in step with" in στοιχέω. See W. Bauer et al., "στοιχέω," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979), 769; cf. G. Delling, "στοιχέω," in G. Kittel & G. Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 666–669 (cited hereafter as TDNT).

[45]See Bauer et al., "στοιχέω," 769. The cognate, στοιχεῖα (cf. Gal. 4:3, 9), refers to "fundamental principles" or "elemental substances" (cf. Bauer, "στοιχεῖον," 768–769); in the RSV, it refers to "elemental spirits."

[46]Cf. Duncan, *Galatians*, 178; Bruce, *Galatians*, 257.

[47]As expressed by the same verb in Gal. 6:16.

[48]As in Rom. 4:1.

[49]Cf. Bruce, *Galatians*, 257.

[50]Duncan, *Galatians*, 178.

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the Spirit" (v. 16) and "to be in harmony with the Spirit" (v. 25). Other particular appeals will follow in chapter 6.

3.2 The eschatological motivation

Paul's call to be "in harmony with the Spirit" is grounded in the fact that believers "live by the Spirit" (εἰ ζῶμεν πνεύματι). As we have said, Paul is not doubting that believers now live in the realm of the Holy Spirit; he is simply affirming this very fact and wants them to concretize it by being "in harmony with the Spirit." Let us now examine the force of this reality as a motivation, although first, a word on the eschatological character of the Spirit or life in the Spirit.

3.2.1. *The Spirit as an eschatological reality.* In the introductory part of this research, we have shown that "eschatology" in Paul involves not only the events or ideas associated with the end time (final judgment, resurrection, the parousia, etc.) but also ideas or realities which are already present in the here and now and signal the breaking-in of the Kingdom of God. One of these signs is that of the Spirit.[51]

Paul describes in various ways the "eschatological" character of the Spirit. He uses it to indicate the new principle by which we serve, in contrast to that of the old written code (cf. Rom. 7:6). He also speaks of it in terms of the law and calls it "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" as opposed to the "law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). Moreover, he speaks of it as the "Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead" (Rom. 8:11) and through which believers become adopted children of God (Rom. 8:14, 15, 16, 23). Moreover, as the "Spirit of God," it is the means by which we understand the gifts bestowed on us by God (1 Cor. 2:12) and interpret spiritual truths (1 Cor. 2:13–14), not the "spirit of the world." Furthermore, it is "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11) that Paul says the work of sanctification and justification of believers is achieved. In establishing the legitimacy of his (and his companions') ministry, Paul asserts that it is God who has established and commissioned

[51]Others include "love" (ἀγάπη), "new creation" (καινὴ κτίσις), etc.

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them in Christ; it was God who has put his seal upon them and has poured his Spirit in their hearts as a guarantee (ἀρραβών).[52] And the future "home," that is, the glorious body with which believers will be clothed, is prepared by God himself, who has given them his Spirit as ἀρραβών (2 Cor. 5:5).[53] The Spirit is not only the "guarantee" of God's promises but also the "firstfruits" (ἀπαρχή) of the coming "harvest" by which believers receive adoption as children and the redemption of their bodies (cf. Rom. 8:23). Thus, in every respect, the gift of the Spirit is "eschatological," already breaking into the present and thereby bridging the present life and the next one, and making it possible to live as the "new creation."

3.2.2. *Life in the Spirit as motivation.* As is clear from the text, Paul's call to walk by the Spirit is grounded on his conviction that believers "live in the Spirit" (ζῶμεν πνεύματι). As we said, the statement is expressed in conditional form, but, as many authors assert, Paul is not questioning or doubting the fact that believers have the Spirit. Their faith and baptism in Christ guarantee that they have received the Spirit (Cf. 3:2, 5; also 1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 5:5, etc.). Thus, the statement may be understood thus: "Since we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."[54] Paul's appeal to the Galatian believers, therefore, is that since they possess the Spirit in their lives, they should also follow its prompting and allow it to direct their lives. The Spirit is the realm in which believers live; thus, it would be betraying this fact if they followed the lead of another entity or principle.

It is worth noting that Paul makes no mention here of the danger of forfeiting the Kingdom of God as in 5:21b. His exhortations in 5:26 which may be seen as the concretization of his call to "walk by the Spirit" are motivated solely by the warrant that believers "live by the Spirit." Such a listing of things to avoid (self-conceit, provocation, envy) could have been motivated by the prospect of disinheriting the Kingdom of God as punishment, yet Paul leaves it to be motivated in

[52]Cf. 2 Cor. 1:21–22.

[53]Cf., too, Eph. 1:14.

[54]And in the NIV, for instance.

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this context by the truth that believers live by the Spirit. This shows how Paul does not consider sanctions as some "summary instrument" for commanding obedience.

3.3 Summary and conclusion

We have seen how in this letter Paul develops the theme of the Spirit as the primary driving force in the ethical lives of believers. The Spirit directs their newfound freedom in Christ. As the interior law of the new covenant,[55] it replaces the Mosaic Law as the means by which believers fulfill God's will. As God's eschatological power bestowed on believers, it makes possible a life of obedience in a world still touched by the power of sin. Through the power of the Spirit, believers are able to resist the solicitations of the flesh and, instead, manifest the "fruit" of the Spirit in their lives. This is the condition of believers (the "indicative"): they live in the realm of the Spirit. And Paul invokes this truth in exhorting the Galatian community to continue to *follow the lead of, or conduct themselves in harmony with,* the Spirit.

4. Testing One's Own Work (6:4–5)

The general appeals to "walk by the Spirit" (5:16) and to "live in harmony with the Spirit" (5:25) give way to concrete appeals in chapter 6. Some of these appeals are more specific (cf. vv. 1–6) while others are more general (cf. vv. 7–10). In these appeals, we find eschatological motivations employed by the Apostle to reinforce his imperatives. One text which appears relevant to our theme is 6:4–5.

4.1 The text

6:4 τὸ δὲ ἔργον ἑαυτοῦ δοκιμαζέτω ἕκαστος, καὶ τότε εἰς ἑαυτὸν μόνον τὸ καύχημα ἕξει καὶ οὐκ εἰς τὸν ἕτερον·

6:5 ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον φορτίον βαστάσει.

[55]B. Ramazzotti, "Etica cristiana e peccati nelle lettere ai Romani e ai Galati," *Scoula Cattolica* 3–4 (maggio-agosto 1978): 296.

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4.2 The meaning of the exhortation in context

These two verses form part of the series of imperatives that dominate the sixth chapter. What exactly Paul is asking the Galatians to do is best determined from its immediate context. In v. 1, Paul calls the πνευματικοὶ of the community to set right (καταρτίζετε) a brother or sister in a spirit of gentleness (ἐν πνεύματι πραΰτητος) when overtaken by a trespass (προλημφθῇ ἔν τινι παραπτώματι). Somehow, this echoes the appeal in 5:26 not to become self-conceited, provoke one another, or envy one another. Although Paul calls for setting aright someone in trespass, this is not to put him down, and it is not to be done in a severe manner but in a spirit of gentleness. At the same time, Paul alerts each[56] of the πνευματικοὶ to watch out lest any of them be tempted (σκοπῶν σεαυτὸν μὴ καὶ σὺ πειρασθῇς). One can see this shift to the singular as Paul's way of personalizing his warning, thus calling for personal responsibility. At the same time, it expresses Paul's conviction that even the spiritually mature can fall if they do not watch out. Now, even Paul allows for the possibility that the spiritually mature can be severe in their dealing with the erring brother or sister—this is why he asks them to do so in a gentle manner. Paul does not seem to be sarcastic or ironic, as some scholars hold, in referring to such people as πνευματικοὶ. If Paul already had a negative valuation of these people, he certainly would not appeal to them regarding such an important matter. Besides, as we have noted, Paul begins this section with a positive tone, addressing the Galatian believers intimately as ἀδελφοί, an address which is never sarcastic or ironical in Paul's letters.

Propelled by his point that anyone—even the spiritually mature—may fall into temptation, Paul exhorts in v. 2: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." The appeal is now addressed to all, in the assumption that all have burdens (βάρη) which can be shared with one another. It is a call against individualism and lack of concern for others which is often a sign of self-sufficiency or pride. This, again, is in line with Paul's earlier references against strife and

[56]Note the shift to the singular (σεαυτὸν μὴ καὶ σὺ πειρασθῇς).

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envy (cf. 5:15, 26). When each one considers others as competitors, no sharing can be had, and, therefore, no manifestation of love for one another which is one of Christ's two principal commandments. By their mutual sharing of life's loads, they fulfill the "law of Christ" (cf. ἀναπληρώσετε τὸν νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ [6:2]), which, given the various interpretations,[57] most likely refers to the Lord's commandment to love one another[58] (cf. Gal. 5:13; Rom. 12:10; 13:8; Jn. 13:34, 35; 15:12, 17).

Yet even as Paul exhorts against individualism and rivalry, he makes it clear in v. 4 that there is such a thing as a properly individual and personal task—that of examining one's own work: τὸ δὲ ἔργον ἑαυτοῦ δοκιμαζέτω ἕκαστος. Paul often sounds this call for personal scrutiny of one's work or achievement (ἔργον)[59] in his letters. This is something that one cannot expect others to share in. Next to God, who knows even the secrets of each individual (cf. 1 Cor. 4:5), only the person herself or himself knows best about her or his own life and work.

Paul then expresses the value (and consequence) of such individual or personal examination of one's work. And it is, in terms of finding ground for boasting, that it will come only from oneself and not from another. If the person finds anything worthy of what they have done, the joy or pride that they derive therefrom they owe only to themselves. Paul is not saying that it is for the purpose of finding a ground for boasting that each one is to probe or test their own work. In fact, Paul rejects in principle any act of boasting over one's own status or achievement;[60] the idea is simply that pride over one's work can only come from a person's own proper performance and testing and not

[57]For instance, as the Messianic Law (C. Dodd, W. Davies) or the "Zion Torah" (Stuhlmacher), or Christ's example of self-giving (Hays, Schürmann), or the law redefined by Christ (Barclay). For a more detailed presentation of the various interpretations, see Matera, *Galatians*, 219–220.

[58]Thus, Hansen, Bruce, Aquinas.

[59]Cf. 1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5, 7; Phil. 1:10; 1 Thess. 5:21.

[60]Cf., for instance, Rom. 3:27; 1 Cor. 1:29; 5:6; 2 Cor. 11:16.

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from another. Thus, it is personal responsibility that Paul encourages at this point.

We have thus tried to show that Paul's exhortation in 6:4 does not seem to be a separate call but that it does in fact flow from Paul's initial exhortation in 6:1. At the same time, we have tried to ascertain what precisely Paul is asking from the Galatians by this appeal. It is this: although one may expect the support of others in bearing life's burdens, in the end this does not eliminate one's personal responsibility for one's own life, especially in bearing burdens which cannot be shared with others. Paul appeals for mutual burden-sharing and not self-sufficiency. Rather than looking at oneself as better than others, or considering one's task or achievement to be better than that of others, Paul calls for a serious testing or proving of the real worth of oneself and one's work. For one may become so preoccupied with examining how others are doing and detecting faults in what they are doing as to forget that one's own work has been left unexamined and untested. This has to be done, for each one will have to answer not for another's life, another's load, but for one's own.

4.3 The motivation

Paul's appeal to a personal testing of one's work is grounded on the following statement in v. 5: ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον φορτίον βαστάσει. That this indeed functions as a ground or motivation is indicated by γὰρ.[61] But what is the meaning of this statement? Does it express an eschatological idea?

In terms of form, this statement has been considered a maxim or a gnomic saying.[62] Its resemblance to the appeal in v. 2 leads many to interpret it in the light of that verse. The most obvious point of difference which leads many to conclude that the two statements are

[61]Although H.-D. Betz (*Galatians*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], 303) thinks this is a simple connective and not necessarily causal in function.

[62]This view is championed by Betz. Others who also view it as a maxim include Bruce and Tarazi.

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contradictory (at least at first glance) is that while v. 2 calls for mutual assistance in the bearing of burdens, v. 5 states a principle: "each one is to bear [their] own load." This apparent contradiction has since been resolved or reconciled in various ways. The most common way has been to point out the fact that Paul is using two different terms in these verses. That is, while in v. 2 he calls for the mutual carrying of one another's βάρη (often rendered as "burdens"), in v. 5 he speaks of bearing one's own φορτίον (normally rendered as "load"). Authors have tried to distinguish between the two. For instance, Hendriksen speaks plainly of βάρη as burdens that should be carried jointly while referring to φορτίον as the load of responsibility that varies from individual to individual.[63] Betz speaks of φορτίον as "the daily struggle of life and is little different from βάρος ('burden') in Gal. 6,2."[64] Fung understands βάρη as "heavy loads that one finds unbearable and requires assistance in carrying" and φορτίον as the person's "own proper burden," like the traveler's own pack.[65] Accordingly, Fung says, "the reference is probably to the ineluctable duties of life that fall to each person, including answerability to God for one's own conduct and performance."[66]

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[63]Cf. W. Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Galatians* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), 234–235.

[64]Betz, *Galatians*, 304.

[65]R. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 291.

[66]Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 291. Fung then cites other interpretations of φορτίον in this context: C. Ellicott, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Longmans, Green, 1867), 127: "the particular *load* of sin and infirmities"; F. Rendall, "The Epistle to the Galatians," in W. Nicoll, ed., *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, 5 vols. 1897–1910 (repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 1961), 189: "conscious guilt and shame"; Burton, *Galatians*, 334: "weakness and sin"; G. Schrenk, "φορτίον," *TDNT*, Vol. 1, 555, n. 6: of "personal responsibility, i.e., of the decisions which have to be taken in the fight against temptations." In Fung's view, however, all these interpretations unduly restrict the meaning of the word (*The Epistle to the Galatians*, 291).

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Looking at these terms one at a time, on the one hand, βάρη (plural form of βάρος) appears only once in the whole Bible, although the singular form appears four times[67] and the cognates a few times in various forms.[68] Its distinctive nuance is almost totally negative,[69] expressing the idea of something as being "heavy," "oppressive," or "burdensome." This is reflected precisely in Paul's call to help one another in the carrying of such burdens. In our text in Galatians, it is not quite clear what these "burdens" are supposed to refer to. The singular form, however, is used to refer to a number of things in a clear way. In Mt. 20:12, βάρος refers clearly to the "burden of the day and the scorching heat," or, in Acts 15:28, to specific demands like abstaining from food offered to idols and from blood and what is strangled, and from unchastity (Acts 15:29).[70] The cognate adjectives qualify things like "commandments or laws" (e.g., Mt. 23:4),[71] "accusations" (e.g., Acts 25:7), and "wolves" (Acts 20:29; thus, "fierce wolves"). In our text, where the reference is not clear, βάρη most likely refers to grave problems or difficulties—psycho-emotional, spiritual, social, and even economic. Given the fact that βάρη (plural) occurs only within this text in the whole Bible, and that it is practically absent in its attested forms in other early Christian literature,[72] it may not be too farfetched to suppose that the Apostle's use of it here is another example of his creativity in coining words (or at least employing uncommon ones) to

[67]That is, Mt. 20:12; Acts 15:28; 2 Cor. 4:17; Rev. 2:24.

[68]In the New Testament, for example, as an adverb: βαρέως (Mt. 13:15; Acts 28:27); as an adjective: βαρέα (Mt. 23:4; Acts 25:7), βαρεῖαι (2 Cor. 10:10; 1 Jn. 5:3), βαρεῖς (Acts 20:29); as a verb: βαρείσθω (1 Tim. 5:16), βαρηθῶσιν (Lk. 21:34); as a noun in another form: βάρει (1 Thess. 2:7).

[69]With the exception of 2 Cor. 4:17 where it refers respectively to the "weight" (RSV) of glory that awaits believers.

[70]The other two occurrences of the singular noun refer to the "weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17) and "teaching" (Rev. 2:24).

[71]These commandments or laws are referred to by Matthew as φορτία βαρέα.

[72]Cf. Bauer, "βάρος," 133–134.

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get his message across—in this case, to underline the idea that ordinary or common "loads" (φορτία) can at times grow into "burdens" (βάρη) which are too much to bear alone such that one needs others to help carry them.

On the other hand, the other term, φορτίον, occurs, with its various forms, more frequently[73] than βάρη and its meaning ranges from material things like "cargo" (e.g., Acts 27:10) to "commandments or rules" (e.g., Lk. 11:46). The specific quality of this term seems to be that it is something "personal," one that cannot be passed on to another. Thus, it is the common term for referring to a person's "load" of responsibilities, duties, and roles which she or he has to carry out or fulfill. But, like βάρος, it can refer to things imposed upon a person from the outside or from other people as in the case of rules, commandments, or laws to observe. In short, our analysis and comparison of the two similar verses (v. 2 and v. 5) and of the corresponding related terms (βάρη and φορτίον) do not allow us to conclude whether or not Paul's statement in v. 5 has an eschatological reference. It seems expedient, therefore, to present and weigh the opinions of various scholars to shed further light on the matter.

There are two opinions on the matter. One holds that the meaning of the statement is non-eschatological; another, that the meaning is eschatological. For the first opinion, Betz is the most representative. As regards the interpretation of this verse, he says:

> There can be no doubt that Paul's maxim must be interpreted from within the context of gnomic literature. In these terms, "the load" would refer to the daily struggle of life and is little different from βάρος ("burden") in Gal. 6,2. The future tense is gnomic ("one must bear"), not eschatological. It does not point to the final judgment, but to the inevitable pressures of life: everybody has [their] load to bear, and [they] had better learn to bear it.[74]

[73]Five times: Mt. 23:4; Lk. 11:46 (2x); Mt. 11:30; Acts 27:10.

[74]Betz, *Galatians*, 304.

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In this connection, Betz reads the γὰρ that connects v. 4 and v. 5 as simply marking the addition of a similar statement.[75] "The form of the maxim presupposes that it can stand on its own, and sometimes γὰρ ('for') occurs in such maxims without any connection to a context."[76] Thus, rejecting the eschatological view, Betz holds, rather, that what Paul is espousing here is *autarkeia* or self-sufficiency, which, in this context, he says, means "bearing what one only can bear" or avoiding "taking on more than [what] one can handle."[77] Dunn, however, sees Betz's view as unsatisfactory, asserting that

> the complementary character of 6,2 indicates that the thought is not simply that of the philosophical ideal of *autarkeia*.… If, alternatively, the two words denoting "burden" are synonyms, and if there is thought of the burden of sin in the former … [then] part of the point here is that one should take responsibility for one's own sins, but be willing to interpret the failings of others in a generous spirit.[78]

Apart from this qualification, however, Dunn shares Betz's conclusion when he says that "it is less likely that the future tense looks to the final judgment, despite the parallel of Rom 14,12." Lagrange, for his part, rejects the view that sees a contradiction between v. 2 and v. 5 and the ensuing attempt to reconcile the two by positing the final judgment. For him, this judgment does not figure in the perspective, and the supposed contradiction is none other than "a cutting and paradoxical aspect about the matters which are presented. For it is precisely that each one has something to carry that they have to help one another."[79]

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[75]For which position he invokes Bauer, "γὰρ," 151.

[76]Betz, *Galatians*, 303.

[77]Betz, *Galatians*, 304. This principle, Betz adds, is the mark of the wise person. In this regard, he says further that "while the philosopher is made self-sufficient by philosophy, the Christian, according to Paul's theology, is made self-sufficient through the Christian faith and the guidance of the Spirit" (*Galatians*, 304).

[78]J. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrikson, 1993), 326.

[79]M.-J. Lagrange, *Saint Paul: Épître aux Galates* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1926),158.

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While the opinion of the first group has some validity, it seems preferable to go with those who opt for an eschatological reading. Accordingly, the "load" that each one is to bear is the load of facing the final personal reckoning before God. Matera holds that it is necessary to posit a reference to the final judgment here, otherwise the opposition (that he sees) between vv. 2 and 5 cannot be reconciled.[80] So, while noting Betz's construal that the future tense (βαστάσει) in v. 5 is gnomic,[81] he insists, rather, that

> the broader context of Paul's moral exhortation to the Galatians (see 5,21; 6,8–10) favors an eschatological interpretation. Understood in an eschatological sense, this final verse provides the Galatians with yet another reason for bearing one another's burdens. They should support the weaknesses and frailties of others because everyone has weaknesses and failures that will be brought to the judgment seat of God.[82]

Duncan, who sees the focus of this verse on the "load" of personal responsibility that each one has to carry, says that "nothing brings home to a [woman or man] the sense of individual responsibility more than the knowledge that the God who is [their] Saviour is also [their] Judge."[83] In the same vein, Aquinas holds that Paul is alluding here to the reward or punishment that will be rendered to each one upon judgment, making it function as the reason for avoiding pride which he censures in v. 3.[84] Bruce holds that what is in view here is one's responsibility before God, especially with reference to the account that each one must give before God's tribunal.[85]

Aside from the above arguments, we suppose that two other arguments can be added. The first is the fact that the appeal in v. 4 is

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[80]Matera, *Galatians*, 222.

[81]That is, equivalent to "one must bear."

[82]Matera, *Galatians*, 222.

[83]Duncan, *Galatians*, 182.

[84]Cf. Aquinas, *Commentary*, 192.

[85]Cf. Bruce, *Galatians*, 263.

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to a testing of one's own work (cf. τὸ δὲ ἔργον ἑαυτοῦ δοκιμαζέτω ἕκαστος). We recall how in 1 Corinthians 3 Paul calls on those who build God's structure to take care how they build (v. 10b), for there is an assigned day for the testing of one's works (v. 13). While the Corinthian text speaks of the task of testing not as the individual's responsibility but as that of the fire, the advice to build carefully does echo the need to test one's own work. And the need is precisely in view of the eschatological judgment that awaits each one's work. In our opinion, it is in this eschatological context that Paul's appeal in 6:4 is to be read. For why should each one ultimately test their own work if not in view of the fact that each person is answerable to some authority? And since there is no other authority that is expressed or implied in this context to whom the person is answerable, it can, ultimately, only be God (or Christ) who is the Judge. Thus, the one being addressed is to test her or his own work precisely because each one will have to bear the "load" of appearing before the judgment seat of God.

We believe that the second additional reason for an eschatological reading is hinted at by the future tense of the verb "to bear" (thus, βαστάσει). While Betz and Dunn do not see a particular significance to the future tense (see above), in our opinion Paul uses the future tense precisely to bring out the point that the testing he asks of each of the Galatian believers is in view of the final reckoning. The future tense is paired with the present tense of the third-person imperative (δοκιμαζέτω) to express the idea that a person needs to look at her or his present work in view of a future reckoning. A "gnomic" reading of the future tense does not quite explain why a person needs to test their own work. If Paul's point is merely to underline that each one has their own load to bear in this world, why would one need to test their work? Whereas it makes more sense to say that a person needs to test their own work in view of the "load" of the final judgment that they alone will have to bear. While φορτίον may not have been used elsewhere to refer to the final judgment, it is not impossible that a person such as Paul, who has a tendency for word-play and uses unusual terms[86] when called for, would have used the term in this sense.

[86]The presence of *hapax legomena* in Paul is not rare.

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Thus, it is more likely that Paul grounds his appeal in v. 4 to a personal testing of one's work on the idea that each person will have to be answerable for their own life (=they will have to bear their own load) before God on the day of final judgment. But Paul's purpose is not so much to instill or use fear to command obedience. He mentions it to remind the Galatians that there is a final reckoning that awaits each one; thus, while they can rely on others to help them carry life's burdens, there is the "load" of the final judgment which each one will have to "carry" on their own. And the best way to prepare for this now is precisely to test one's own work, for it is precisely one's own work (deeds) which will be tested (cf. 1 Cor. 3; Rom 2:5–6).

5. One Reaps What One Sows (6:7–8)

Following his appeal to a personal testing of one's own work (v. 4) on the ground that each one will have to bear her or his own load (v. 5), Paul issues another appeal in v. 6. Addressing anyone who is receiving instruction "in the word," he says, "Κοινωνείτω δὲ ὁ κατηχούμενος τὸν λόγον τῷ κατηχοῦντι ἐν πᾶσιν ἀγαθοῖς." In essence, it calls for reciprocity—a simple case of promoting social justice: they who receive instruction ought to share in turn "all the good things" with their instructor. This appeal to mutuality is then followed by a warning and an explanation (vv. 7–8). Paul says, "Μὴ πλανᾶσθε, θεὸς οὐ μυκτηρίζεται" (v. 7a). The warning alerts the audience against being lulled (cf. πλανᾶσθε) into the idea that they can make a fool (cf. μυκτηρίζεται) out of God. In what particular area they are being warned is not specified by the Apostle. In light of the motivation given—"for what one sows one reaps" (see below)—one can attempt a general formulation of the object of the warning: "Do not be lured into thinking that you can make a fool out of God by expecting to reap good things from evil deeds." However, many scholars see the warning here as connected to Paul's previous thought (see below).

Then, in the second part of the verse (v. 7b), Paul gives the explanation as to why the audience should not think they can mock

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God. It comes in the form of an agricultural proverb:[87] "what one sows one reaps." He then illustrates the truth of the message contained in the saying by giving an example employing the contrast of the flesh and the Spirit which he developed earlier (cf. 5:16–25): "For one who sows to one's own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (v. 8).

5.1 The meaning of the warning in context

Thus, we have in these verses a general warning (negative imperative) and a motivation. The motivation couched in the agricultural proverb points to the unmistakable justice of God who sees to it that what one "sows" is what one also "reaps." But Paul's warning has been seen not only as a general call but also as a caveat to a particular or concrete misdeed. Let us now present the various opinions as to what Paul's warning really points to in particular.

The most common view has been that vv. 7–8 continue the thought of v. 6.[88] The connection is then formulated in various ways. Burton, for instance, holds that v. 7 "serves primarily to enforce the exhortation of v. 6 by bringing the specific matter referred to under a great general law."[89] Burton thinks that the attitude of the Galatian believers toward their teachers mirrors their attitude toward life in general. That is to say, those of them who may be reluctant to learn from and support their teachers, and who prefer to spend the money for themselves, are sowing to their own flesh and will thereby reap corruption. On the other hand, those who are docile to the instruction provided and are willing to support their teachers are sowing to the Spirit, and in this way they reap eternal life.[90] Lightfoot sees vv. 7–8 as a warning against niggardly giving or withholding support from teachers by those taught:

[87]Thus, Betz, *Galatians*, 307.

[88]Among those who think so are Aquinas, Erasmus, Calvin, Burton, Matera, Lightfoot, Perkins, and Hendriksen.

[89]Burton, *Galatians*, 339.

[90]Burton, *Galatians*, 339.

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"Your niggardliness will find you out. You cannot cheat God by your fair professions. You cannot mock Him."[91] Along the same line, but less severe, is Aquinas's view that these verses serve "to forestall an excuse." Those who are taught may be doing evil but rationalize it by saying that they are only following the precept that they are to share with their teachers in everything. Since they can only imitate that which their teachers do, they end up copying them in doing their evil deeds. Another way they may rationalize their behavior is by feigning poverty: that they have nothing to share with their teachers.[92]

While vv. 7–8 may indeed be connected to v. 6, this connection may be a looser one than is supposed. Thus, Guthrie seems right in noting that the idea that those who refuse to support their teachers are comparable to those who mock God is too severe.[93] Paul's tone in v. 6 is more an appeal than a demand. Also, vv. 7–8 seem to relate to other statements aside from v. 6. Matera holds that "the eschatological coloring of Gal. 6,7–8 ('corruption,' 'eternal life') … [suggests] that these verses have more than v. 6 in view."[94] He then formulates their connection with the main theological point of the Apostle: "If the Galatians sow to their own flesh, that is, rely upon the mark of circumcision, they will reap corruption. But if they sow to the Spirit by relying upon Christ, they will reap eternal life."[95] The connection may even be more general: "God is not mocked. He does not permit anyone to make light of his gospel or of the exhortations that are

[91]J. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of Saint Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 218.

[92]Similarly, W. Perkins (*A Commentary on Galatians* [New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989], 480–481), who says that the ones instructed may use as an excuse the fact that they have a big family to support and argue that ministers are not members of the Levites, and are covetous and insatiable, anyway. Even Paul himself had to work.

[93]Cf. Guthrie, *Galatians*, 146.

[94]Matera, *Galatians*, 223.

[95]Matera, *Galatians*, 223.

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implied in it."[96] Or in the formulation of Tarazi: "Paul warns of dire consequences if anyone ignores his recommendations on how to implement the rule of love."[97]

Indeed, it seems best to take vv. 7–8 as flowing from all the preceding statements of the Apostle that pertain especially to the moral life of believers rather than from v. 6 alone. In v. 6, the appeal is made to a particular individual ("the one who is taught") regarding a specific thing ("to have fellowship with the instructor in all good things"). Whereas in vv. 7–8 we have a general formulaic warning,[98] in second person plural, with a general message (about God's conduct and about a general truth or law observable in nature). The dominant negative tone ("Do not be deceived; God is not mocked…") is intended to thwart any sense of false confidence or laxity so as to disregard or minimize Paul's appeals, be they the particular exhortations in vv. 1–6 or Paul's general call to "walk by the Spirit" and not "gratify the desires of the flesh" (5:16). Thus, the warning in v. 7 may be construed as relating to v. 6. The warning can also be seen as a general call to pay attention to one's manner of living—whether one is "walking according to the Spirit" or "walking according to the flesh." The reason is that one "reaps" exactly what one "sows." Let us now elaborate on this and see how it is an eschatological motivation.

5.2 The motivation

As we said, Paul's warning not to be lured into thinking that one can make a fool out of God is grounded on the proverbial truth that "one reaps what one sows." The regularity or the certainty of the functioning of this truth is not merely a law of nature. It is determined by God; as Paul asserts: "God is not mocked." Now the functioning of this truth can certainly be verified in this life, for throughout human history the

[96]Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Galatians*, 236.

[97]Tarazi, *Galatians*, 316.

[98]Occurring also in 1 Cor. 6:9; 15:33. The third person warning is rendered by Paul as Μηδεὶς ἑαυτὸν ἐξαπατάτω (1 Cor. 3:18).

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principle has always been at work: good deeds reap good fruits; bad deeds reap disastrous results. However, it seems that Paul focuses on the eschatological orientation of this saying when he employs it as a motivation in this context. That is to say, he may be referring more to an eschatological "harvest" that results from what people "sow" in this life. Verse 8 supports this reading, for it speaks of "corruption" (φθορά) as the harvest of "one sowing to one's own flesh" (ὁ σπείρων εἰς τὴν σάρκα ἑαυτοῦ) and of "eternal life" (ζωή αἰώνιον) as the harvest of "one sowing to the Spirit" (ὁ δὲ σπείρων εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα). By "corruption," Paul is not only referring to material decay or worldly destruction; as the opposite of eternal life, it is the forfeiting of this blessed life-without-end with God himself. God's Spirit, as we shall demonstrate later, is an eschatological gift, the guarantee and first fruits of the fullness of the eschatological harvest. Moreover, the idea of "harvest" has an eschatological sense here: either as the time of God's final judgment or as the result of that judgment. Tarazi expresses certainty that God's judgment is alluded to here. Taking Paul's warning as alerting to the "dire consequences" of ignoring the call to love, he adds, "At the last judgment, God himself will determine whether or not one has obeyed the dictates of love, and He will act accordingly."[99]

Thus, Paul's warning in v. 7 is grounded on the certain and unfailing outworking of God's retribution. No one can make a fool out of him. "Sowing to the flesh" (or "walking by the flesh") will reap "corruption" and "sowing to the Spirit" (or "walking by the Spirit") will reap "eternal life."

6. Perseverance in Well-Doing in View of the "Harvest" (6:9–10)

Having sounded the general warning of how divine retribution works (6:7–8), Paul ends with a general exhortation and a motivation in vv. 9–10. Continuing his previous appeal to "sowing to the Spirit" (cf. v. 8), he says,

[99]Tarazi, *Galatians*, 316.

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6:9 τὸ δὲ καλὸν ποιοῦντες μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν, καιρῷ γὰρ ἰδίῳ θερίσομεν μὴ ἐκλυόμενοι.

Paul calls for persistence or not growing weary (cf. μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν) in doing what is worthwhile or praiseworthy (cf. τὸ καλόν).[100] What should motivate (γὰρ) the Galatian audience is that, in due season, they shall reap if they do not give up (καιρῷ γὰρ ἰδίῳ θερίσομεν μὴ ἐκλυόμενοι). This firm conviction is based not on chance or the working of nature but on God's action (cf. v. 7). Paul assures the community that God will not let their perseverance in doing good prove unfruitful. Based on this firm conviction, Paul reiterates his call in a still wider perspective in v. 10:

6:10 Ἄρα οὖν ὡς καιρὸν ἔχομεν, ἐργαζώμεθα τὸ ἀγαθὸν πρὸς πάντας, μάλιστα δὲ πρὸς τοὺς οἰκείους τῆς πίστεως.

If sincere efforts at perseverance in doing good will not go wasted, then (ἄρα οὖν) every opportunity to do so that presents itself (cf. ὡς καιρὸν ἔχομεν) must be taken advantage of. The good (τὸ ἀγαθὸν) must be pursued (cf. ἐργαζώμεθα) and in a manner which includes everyone (πρὸς πάντας), although it goes without saying that it must begin with those whom believers share their faith with (cf. μάλιστα δὲ πρὸς τοὺς οἰκείους τῆς πίστεως). See below for elaboration.

6.1 The link with other appeals

Since v. 9 is linked to the preceding verse by δε and since the appeals in these two verses seem to wrap up the paraenetic section, it may be helpful to establish the connection they have with the rest of the appeals in this chapter. In this way, we will be able to understand better what the Apostle is really asking of the community through the appeals in vv. 9–10. In what follows, we shall try to relate these two verses first with the immediately preceding ones and then with the rest of the appeals.

[100]See Bauer, "καλός," 400, no. 2b.

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The link between vv. 9–10 and those immediately preceding them is provided by the agricultural proverb that is introduced in v. 7. The common thread lies particularly in the idea of "reaping" (a harvest) that is present in these verses. In the first place, Paul wants, by this agricultural proverb, to reinforce his warning in v. 7a against those who may think they can outsmart God.[101] They cannot fool God, Paul says, "for what one sows one reaps" (v. 7b). This is then reinforced in Paul's illustration—re-introducing the opposing ideas of the flesh and the Spirit—that sowing to the flesh reaps corruption while sowing to the Spirit reaps eternal life (v. 8). But while vv. 7–8 emphasize the certain correspondence between what one sows and what one reaps, Paul seems content to pick up the mere idea of "reaping from what one sows" and employ it as motivation for his ensuing appeal. As he says in v. 9, "Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap.…" Thus, it is the certainty of "reaping a harvest" (from what one "sows") that links vv. 9–10 with vv. 7–8.

On the other hand, vv. 9–10 can also be linked with the rest of the moral appeals. One way of establishing the connection is by taking Paul's appeal "to do good" as a summary of his particular exhortations. Thus, it sums up his appeal for fraternal correction (6:1), mutual burden-sharing (6:2), and the sharing of one's goods with one's instructor in the faith (6:6). Another way to establish the connection is to see Paul's call to "doing good" as a reformulation of his appeal to "walk by the Spirit" (5:16: πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε), be "led by the Spirit" (5:18: πνεύματι ἄγεσθε), or be "in harmony with the Spirit" (5:25: πνεύματι στοιχῶμεν). This means, in turn, that "to do good" is to allow the "fruit" of the Spirit to manifest in one's life. Lastly, the call "to do good" can also be seen as equivalent to Paul's call to be servants to one another through love (5:13). In all of this, what appears to be a call to pursue the philosophical ideal of doing what is right (τὸ καλόν) or what is good (τὸ ἀγαθόν) acquires a specific Christian character.

[101]The background for this warning or its precise target is not so clear. Some claim it is directed at those who refuse to support their instructors—what Paul purports to be asking in v. 6.

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6.2 The exhortation

Looking closely now at Paul's exhortation in v. 9, he asks the Galatian believers, along with himself, not to grow weary in doing good (τὸ δὲ καλὸν ποιοῦντες μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν). The call is not simply that the Galatians "do good"[102] but "not to lose heart" (cf. μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν)[103] in their pursuit of the good.[104] A similar call is also sounded in 1 Thess. 5:21, where Paul asks the Thessalonians to "hold fast to what is good" (τὸ καλὸν κατέχετε).[105] The latter does not imply a "weariness" on the part of the community, for it simply asks the community to "pursue" or "hold fast [to]"[106] (thus, not to let go of) what is good rather than pursue or hold fast to what is evil.

Occasioned by this particular appeal to the Galatians not to grow weary in well-doing, the question has been asked whether Paul's exhortation does not reflect some actual issue among the Galatians. That is to say, whether Paul's appeal is given precisely to inspire a community that has grown tired and discouraged in what they have been doing as Christians. Some scholars suppose that this is the case.[107] A number of suggestions have been offered as to the cause of the community's discouragement. For instance, J. Bligh supposes that it was the promotion of the collection project for Jerusalem that the Galatians had grown tired of.[108] Hendriksen thinks that the "weariness"

[102]Cf. Rom. 13:3c.

[103]Cf. 2 Cor. 4:1, 16. In Rom. 2:7, Paul speaks of "patience in well-doing."

[104]The same call is expressed by the author of 2 Thessalonians in 3:13. Cf., too, 1 Thess. 5:15.

[105]Cf. Rom. 12:9, although a different verb form, κολλώμενοι ("to hold on to"), is used.

[106]Or "keep pursuing," "keep holding fast," if we are to give the present tense (κατέχετε) the valence of "continuing in a certain action."

[107]For instance, Hendriksen, Bligh.

[108]Cf. J. Bligh, *Galatians: A Discussion of Paul's Epistle*, Householder Commentaries (London: St. Paul Publications, 1970), 485.

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might have come from the delay of the parousia which the Galatians were awaiting, or from not seeing concrete positive results in their task.[109] The general character of Paul's appeal, however, does not quite support the idea that he is referring in particular to finishing the collection for Jerusalem. Besides, Paul could have been more specific (as in Corinthians or Romans) if he indeed meant the collection, and especially if he saw that the community had grown tired of promoting it. Hendriksen's suggestion seems more probable, although there is no hint in this letter of a concern over the delay of the parousia or that the Galatians have grown weary from not seeing positive results in what they have been doing. It seems most likely, therefore, that Paul's exhortation is a general one, urging the community, as a leader normally does, to perseverance in whatever good they had been doing.

Having lifted up the spirits of his audience to well-doing by pointing to the bright prospect that awaits their perseverance, Paul concludes (ἄρα οὖν) his appeals by reiterating his general appeal in v. 10: Ἄρα οὖν ὡς καιρὸν ἔχομεν, ἐργαζώμεθα τὸ ἀγαθὸν πρὸς πάντας, μάλιστα δὲ πρὸς τοὺς οἰκείους τῆς πίστεως. Pitta[110] classifies this statement in the light of classical epistolary typology as being equivalent to the closing of a correspondence by wishing the good and the beautiful toward relatives and friends. Once again, a closer look at these verses reveals that they form a kind of *ABB'A'* pattern:

v. 9	τὸ δὲ καλὸν ποιοῦντες μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν,	*A*
	καιρῷ γὰρ ἰδίῳ θερίσομεν μὴ ἐκλυόμενοι.	*B*
v. 10	Ἄρα οὖν ὡς καιρὸν ἔχομεν,	*B'*
	ἐργαζώμεθα τὸ ἀγαθὸν πρὸς πάντας,	*A'*
	μάλιστα δὲ πρὸς τοὺς οἰκείους τῆς πίστεως.	

As one notes, the exhortations share common elements. First, there is a reference to "doing good," although the Greek expressions are different (v. 9: τὸ … καλὸν ποιοῦντες; v. 10: ἐργαζώμεθα τὸ ἀγαθὸν). Then, there is the time element expressed by the same Greek word

[109]Cf. Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Galatians*, 238.

[110]A. Pitta, *Lettera ai Galati* (Bologna: EDB, 1996), 388.

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καιρός. Lastly, there are conditions or circumstances that accompany both demanded tasks.

On the other hand, there are differences between the two exhortations. First of all, in v. 10 there is no longer the concern that the community is "losing heart" (cf. μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν). Paul simply exhorts them to "doing good." Secondly, whereas in v. 9 the time element points to the eschatological harvest that is certain to come, in v. 10 it refers to (or implies) a period of "planting" or "sowing." Lastly, whereas in the former the condition for the "harvest" is the community not "growing weary" or "losing heart," the requisite for the "planting" (their doing good) is that they do it to "everyone," although there is a particular call to do it toward their fellow believers.

Looking closely now at Paul's exhortation in v. 10, one finds, first of all, the time element connected with the appeal: ὡς καιρὸν ἔχομεν. Bligh says, "This may be a relic of the eschatological motive, which is also used in a rather perfunctory way, in Rom. 13,11–12.…"[111] But he adds right away that a phrase like that need not refer to the parousia and can "simply [be] a reminder that life is soon over (cf. Job 14,1), and [that] our few opportunities of doing good must be seized before they slip away."[112] Indeed, since this expression refers to the period of "sowing" (the time for doing good), it does not refer to the parousia. Of course, the parousia is its eschatological horizon, for "sowing" normally leads to the period of the "harvest." And since it does not deal with the parousia, it goes without saying that there is no question here of the nearness or remoteness of the parousia.[113] Moreover, Paul may be thinking of the more general period before the Lord's return rather than the period of one's lifetime as the time within which the good

[111]Bligh, *Galatians*, 486.

[112]Bligh, *Galatians*, 487.

[113]Lagrange, *Épître aux Galates*, 161. Whereas in Phil. 4:5, for instance, Paul clearly speaks of the nearness of the Lord's return: "The Lord is at hand."

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is to be done.[114] Besides, Paul may have meant that during this period before the Lord's return there are not just a "few opportunities for doing good" but countless occasions, each moment "an ever-present kairos."[115] Thus, while "the time for doing good … is limited by the eschatological horizon of the coming harvest,"[116] believers do have ample opportunities and ought therefore to take advantage of them.

Secondly, we find Paul's appeal to do good (ἐργαζώμεθα τὸ ἀγαθὸν). As we have noted, this is parallel to Paul's exhortation in v. 9 (τὸ δὲ καλὸν ποιοῦντες), although the focus of the appeal there is on not growing weary (μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν). Nonetheless, it may be asked if there is any significance in Paul's use of different expressions for each. A closer look at the occurrences of καλός and ἀγαθός (in their various forms) in Paul yields the observation that καλός is often the preferred term for expressing that which is "proper," "expedient," or "right"[117] while ἀγαθός is used for describing the nature of something as "good" as opposed to "evil." However, this does not seem to be an absolute mark of distinction as demonstrated by these two verses where the two terms virtually have the same meaning. Neither can one argue that a difference should exist because while Paul uses the verb ποιέω in v. 9, he has ἐργάζομαι in v. 10. Romans 7:19 and 13:3 show Paul using ποιέω with ἀγαθός. Thus, if there is any difference that one can find, it is in the specific action or deed that Paul asks for in each of the verses and not in the object. That is, while in v. 9 Paul asks the community (with himself) "not to grow weary" (μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν) in doing good, in v. 10 he unqualifiedly calls for the doing itself of "what is good" (ἐργαζώμεθα τὸ ἀγαθὸν). If one may look for another point

[114]Of course, individually, one can only do the good while one is still alive. But since Paul is addressing a general audience here and he believes that some of them may still be alive during the Lord's return, the temporal reference could be to the Lord's coming and not just to an individual's death.

[115]R. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1946), 310.

[116]Matera, *Galatians*, 223.

[117]Cf., for instance, 1 Cor. 7:1, 26; 2 Cor. 13:7; Rom. 14:21.

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of difference, it is in the idea that there are universal and particular beneficiaries or recipients ("all" and "especially the members of the household of the faith") of the good to be done as expressed in v. 10.

Thirdly, one finds the scope or extent of the recipients of the community's doing good. On the one hand, Paul says it is to be done πρὸς πάντας. In this regard, Dunn remarks:

> For all his sense of imminent eschatological denouement, Paul did not seek to encourage his churches to turn in upon themselves or to hide away from the world. On the contrary, his sense of mission to the wider community necessarily involved a considerable degree of interaction with that wider community.…[118]

This universal orientation is consonant with the principal theological message of the letter, namely, the universal offer of God's justification—that is, not only to those who observe the Mosaic law and practice circumcision but to everyone who believes in Jesus Christ (cf. 2:16; 3:11).

On the other hand, there is a special added call to do good μάλιστα δὲ πρὸς τοὺς οἰκείους τῆς πίστεως ("especially to the members of the household of faith"). There have been many ways of interpreting Paul's added appeal that the good to be done by the Galatian community should be directed "especially" (μάλιστα) to one's fellow believers. Some see it as a matter of course. That is to say, the needs of the brothers and sisters in the faith are the ones we feel and see in the most immediate way; thus, "they have a first call upon us and our energy."[119] Others explain it as Paul's style and sense of realism. Betz, for example, says it is "a typical Pauline paradox. It is not intended to revoke the preceding high-flung universalism, but to direct the attention of the readers to the concrete historical reality of the Christian community."[120] Guthrie holds that by this "the Apostle wishes to press home a specific application of this principle (i.e., the

[118]Dunn, *Galatians*, 332.

[119]Lenski, *The Interpretation*, 311.

[120]Betz, *Galatians*, 311.

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universal principle). Responsibility towards other Christians is greater than those towards other people generally."[121] Along the same line, Ebeling says the specific provision "does not exclude the universality of being available [to] others. But instead of stopping at a wide range of vague possibilities, one must respond to the demands where one's life has its concrete locus."[122]

While the above suggestions illumine Paul's statement, they do not quite address the particular Galatian situation. Two attempts at an explanation along this line can be mentioned. One is an explanation from a social-historical perspective. Some think that by this preferential clause Paul was alluding to the collection project for the poor brethren in Jerusalem.[123] However, Bruce seems right in saying that while "this principle is illustrated in the Jerusalem relief fund … it is outrunning the evidence to see a specific reference to that fund in this paragraph."[124] Others, on the other hand, seek to explain the provision from a wider socialhistorical perspective. Morris, for instance, says that showing particular preference for the members of the household of the faith

> had a great significance in the first-century Roman empire. Christians were often poor and they could not expect help from the non-Christian state. Rather the opposite. The state did not want people to be Christians and it placed all sorts of obstacles in the way of believers. Helping the poor was a duty taken very seriously in the early church.[125]

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[121]Guthrie, *Galatians*, 148.

[122]G. Ebeling, *The Truth of the Gospel: An Exposition of Galatians*, trans. D. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 261.

[123]Cf. L. Hurtado, "The Jerusalem Collection and the Book of Galatians," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 5 (1979): 46–62.

[124]Bruce, *Galatians*, 266. Also Dunn (*Galatians*, 333), who, while allowing for the possibility of a reference to the collection as espoused by Hurtado, says that "it is hardly evident from the text."

[125]Morris, *Galatians*, 184. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 298–299. Also Hendriksen, *A Commentary on Galatians*, 239.

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In the same vein, Burton holds that the preferential treatment was necessary because in cases of famine or distress, former pagans who had become Christians could not count on the help of their unconverted pagan neighbors. As such, if they were not helped by their fellow Christians, they would be worse off than their pagan neighbors. Besides, he adds, non-Christian members of the community would naturally expect the Christians to show their love to one another. "If, therefore, a Christian were left in distress this would be even more to the discredit of the new religion than if a non-Christian went hungry."[126] Duncan, however, deems unnecessary Burton's limitation to merely physical needs the general "good" that Paul wanted shown to all.[127] He then offers his own construal of the special provision: "One is not likely to do good to all others if one does not do it in the first place to those of one's own household."[128]

The other attempt at explaining the "preferential clause" is espoused by Tarazi who focuses on the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the Galatian community. Maintaining that Paul had the specific situation of the Galatian community in mind, Tarazi first notes how Paul's precept from the universal to the particular (scope) is the reverse of the sequence found in l Thess. 5:15. In the Thessalonian text, Paul asks the community to "always seek to do good to one another and to all." Tarazi then explains that the Galatian sequence

> can only be understood against the actual background of the divisions in the Galatian communities.… Because of that situation, Paul first stated the general principle of loving all people, and then applied it "especially" to the situation at hand which was his major concern at the time of writing.[129]

In this connection, he also views Paul's reference to the "members of the household of faith" as an effort "to stress once again the truth

[126]Burton, *Galatians*, 346–347.

[127]Duncan, *Galatians*, 187.

[128]Duncan, *Galatians*, 187.

[129]Duncan, *Galatians*, 187.

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he has been fighting for throughout regarding the oneness of the messianic community."[130] In other words, he says that "by using this expression, Paul is again appealing … for full and perfect unity through love between Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians, especially those quarrelling about circumcision and the Law."[131] In the words of another writer,

> That [the Galatians] should behave towards one another as members of the one family is the central feature of an identity which is characterized earlier in the letter, as far as outsiders were concerned, as rooted in kinship with God and Abraham.[132]

Tarazi's view seems more to the point than the previous one. Paul's main concern in this letter is not the collection or socio-economic problems but Jewish and Gentile Christian relations exemplified in the efforts of the Judaizers to impose circumcision on the Gentile group.

6.3 The eschatological motivation

Paul's call in v. 9 to perseverance in doing good or right is motivated by the prospect of a "harvest" (cf. θερίσομεν) "in due season" (καιρῷ ἰδίῳ). By referring to a "harvest" or "reaping," Paul expresses his conviction that God rewards those who are faithful to their tasks. But Paul insists that the condition for "reaping the harvest of their labors" is their "not giving up" or "not growing faint" (μὴ ἐκλυόμενοι), which reiterates or corresponds to the idea of "not growing weary" (μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν) expressed in Paul's exhortation in v. 9.

If we are to grant the supposition that Paul's appeal reflects an actual condition of discouragement or weariness on the part of the Galatians, then we can see some analogy between their case and the Corinthians as reflected in 1 Corinthians 15. In the face of the claim of some that there is no resurrection of the dead, the Corinthians

[130]Duncan, *Galatians*, 187.

[131]Duncan, *Galatians*, 187.

[132]P. Esler, *Galatians* (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), 233–234.

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seemed to have been drawn to the loose lifestyle of those who negate the resurrection,[133] for which Paul warns and exhorts: "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals.' Come to your right mind and sin no more" (1 Cor. 15:33–34). However, since the root cause of this moral laxity seems to be their yielding to the persuasion of those who negate the resurrection, Paul argues in great detail how their belief in the resurrection rests on solid ground and how his own life is nourished by this truth and belief. Accordingly, he exhorts the community at the end of the chapter: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." Thus, while the contexts are different, the appeals are analogous in their call to perseverance and determination in the pursuit of the communities' Christian task, nourished by the hope and certainty that their labor will yield "fruit" which, in the case of the Galatians, is expressed earlier in v. 8 as eternal life and, for the Corinthians, as the resurrection to a glorified body. Thus, as Paul presents the hope of resurrection as motivation for the Corinthians to be steadfast and to progress in the work of the Lord, so here in Galatians he presents the prospect of "reaping in due season" to motivate a community that has perhaps grown tired.

Thus, in v. 9, there is a clear use of the prospect of the "harvest" of eternal life as the motivation for perseverance in well-doing. The ensuing appeal in v. 10 to "do good to all but especially to the members of the household of the faith" may also be seen as motivated by the same.[134]

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[133]Who, as a consequence of their belief that the dead are not raised, might have promoted the hedonistic principle associated with the "unwise": "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

[134]Hansen (*Galatians*, 196–197) sees in Paul's reference to the family of believers an added motivation:

> Paul motivates perseverance in service to one another by reminding us that we are part of a great family.… These great truths about the family of believers should motivate us to keep on doing good to our

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> Because of the certainty of the result of their efforts (v. 9b), therefore (ἄρα οὖν), the Galatians are exhorted, whenever they have opportunity, to do good to their fellow [neighbors] in general, but with special care for the welfare of their fellow-Christians.[135]

It may be asked, however, why Paul still has to point to the coming harvest to motivate the community. Is not "the good" itself enough motivation for doing it?[136] Does this imply that Paul thinks the idea of "reward" would be more convincing? This may be answered, first of all, by the fact that Paul does exhort believers now and then to pursue the philosophical ideals of his day—the good, the beautiful, the true, etc.—as if they were goals in themselves (cf. Phil. 1:10; esp. 4:8). Of course, these are to be pursued not only as philosophical ideals but also as God's will and their Christian task. In the Galatian context, however, Paul had to deal with what was most likely an actual issue, namely, signs of growing fatigue in the community's pursuit of what is good or right. The community may have expected some result or reward for their labor but which they could not see coming. Thus, Paul reminds them that performance of their Christian tasks, no matter how tiring and devoid of rewards these may seem to be at present, will eventually yield fruit "in its proper time" (καιρῷ ἰδίῳ). In other words, Paul speaks of a "harvest" or "reward" not as an invented tactic that would motivate the community to persevere in their tasks. He wanted to correct a misconception which was gaining hold in the community that perhaps there is no reward for one's labors. Instead, Paul reassures them here that there is a time indeed for gathering the fruits of their

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> brothers and sisters in Christ. We belong to one another in one family, since we belong to Christ.

While this is indeed a good motivation Christians ought to have and may be extrapolated from Paul's statement, it is not formally (grammatically) used as such in his appeal, for Paul only says "Let us do good to all, and especially to the members of the household of the faith" without adding any explanation along the lines of *precisely because they are our brothers and sisters in faith*.

[135]Burton, *Galatians*, 345.

[136]As Lenski himself wonders (*The Interpretation*, 309–310).

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endurance in well-doing. However, since only God knows when this will happen (that is, when the final reckoning is), Paul says simply, but honestly, that it will come "in its own time."

That Paul uses the motivation of the "eschatological harvest" as part of his conviction of how God responds to human initiative and not as a manipulation using the ideas of reward or punishment as coercive weapons finds support in context. On the one hand, there is no elaboration on the "harvest" at all. Paul could have made his statement more forceful by painting a very attractive picture of what this harvest would be, say, in terms of eternal life, but he does not do so. On the other hand, although the setting or occasion of this eschatological harvest is the final judgment, there is no explicit mention of this event. There is no mention of a punishment for failing to persevere in doing good. This is because Paul's concern is simply to encourage the Galatian community to persevere in the good that they are doing, and to remind them, in case they do grow weary, that they will reap a harvest in due time. This is rooted in his conviction and knowledge of how God acts toward his faithful ones.

7. Living in the "New Creation" (6:15)

While the practical appeals in this letter (which are succinct and mostly proverbial) formally end in 6:10, Paul hints at another important concept which, as we shall demonstrate, has something to do with our theme. This important concept is that of the "new creation," the καινὴ κτίσις in 6:15.[137]

[137]The idea or theme of the "new creation" in Paul requires a separate and more thorough study. For studies done on this theme in Paul, see, for instance, C. Bouyer, "KAINH KITΣIΣ (2 Cor. 5,17; Gal. 6,15)," in *Studium Paulinorum Congressus Internationalis Catholicus 1961*, Vol. 1, Analecta Biblica 17–18 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1963), 487–490; Vollenweider, *Freiheit als neue Schöpfung*, 310–311; U. Mell, *Neue Schöpfung: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche und exegetische Studie zu einem soteriologischen Grundsatz paulinischer Theologie* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1989), esp. 284, 298ff; G. Schneider, *Neuschöpfung oder Wiederkehr? Eine Untersuchung zum Geschichtsbild der Bibel* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1961), esp. 74–76; P. Stuhlmacher,

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7.1 The implied appeal

As we have just said, Paul's concrete appeals end in 6:10. In v. 11, Paul begins the conclusion of this letter. In this concluding section (vv. 11ff), Paul reasserts his main argument. But even as he does this, one cannot miss the hortatory intent implied in his discourse. For Paul has been effectively appealing to the Galatians all along not to submit again to slavery by receiving circumcision (cf. 5:lff). Paul insists that the Galatians not allow themselves to be lured back into thinking that they need to do the works of the law and be circumcised to be put right with God. The theme, then, is more properly soteriological than moral. Nonetheless, this soteriological issue has moral implications. This is shown, for instance, in Paul's criticizing those who practice circumcision because they themselves do not keep the law (cf. v. 13). What they are after is "glorying in the flesh," that is, finding a reason for boasting in the circumcision that they demand on the Gentiles. Whereas Paul reminds the Galatians that in nothing else can one glory but the cross of Christ. And this means for them embracing the same cross or suffering persecution for its sake—something these "Judaizers" are avoiding (cf. v. 12). It is in this light that Paul declares in v. 15: "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but a new creation."

Thus, while there is no formal imperative in this section (6:11–16),[138] Paul's explanatory statements in vv. 12–14 clearly imply the appeal: "Do not allow yourselves to be compelled to be circumcised with the mentality of those who are forcing you." That there is indeed a hortatory intent in these final verses is also hinted at by the prayer-wish in v. 16: "Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon

"Erwägungen zum ontologischen Charakter der kainê ktisis bei Paulus," *Evangelische Theologie* 27 (1967): 1–35; A. Vögtle, *Das Neue Testament und die Zukunft des Kosmos* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1970), 178–183; B. Chilton, "Galatians 6:15: A Call to Freedom before God," *Expository Times* 89 (1977–78): 311–313.

[138]Except if one fixes the sub-unit up to v. 17, as Matera does (cf. Matera, "The Culmination," 79–91), where Paul makes a final appeal to be left at peace: "Henceforth let no one trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus."

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the Israel of God." The Galatians are urged to be guided by this rule in their actions. The "rule" according to which the "Israel of God" is to "walk" (that is, to conduct themselves) is that what matters is not the presence nor the absence of the physical mark of circurncision but a "new creation." Let us now examine this concept in more detail.

7.2 The motivation

The implied appeal in these last verses ("Do not submit to circumcision.") may be seen as ultimately grounded on Paul's statement that οὔτε γὰρ περιτομή τί ἐστιν οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ καινὴ κτίσις. One can mention as motivation the fact that those who practice circumcision only want to make a show of it or only to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ, or the fact that the promoters do not themselves keep the law (vv. 12–13). But all this is summed up in Paul's solemn declaration (v. 15): οὔτε γὰρ περιτομή τί ἐστιν οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ καινὴ κτίσις. For the Apostle, having or not having the physical mark of circumcision is not what is of ultimate value but καινὴ κτίσις. By setting aside the usual boundary markers of circumcision or uncircumcision—markers separating Jews and Gentiles, those considered the people of God and those who are not—and replacing these with the idea of the "new creation," Paul is affirming at the same time that this concept has an eschatological character. And it is on this concept that Paul grounds his implied appeal against submitting to circumcision. In what follows, we shall tackle what Paul could have meant by this expression in this context, how it is an eschatological concept, and how it functions as motivation in this case.

7.2.1. *The meaning of* καινὴ κτίσις *in 6:15*. Paul introduces the concept of καινὴ κτίσις in 6:15 abruptly or without any previous reference. And he does not elaborate on its meaning. Yet one cannot doubt the importance of the concept for him. If such an indispensable and distinctive mark as circumcision (at least for the Jews) is declared to be of no value in relation to the "new creation," then this latter idea is of utmost significance. Indeed, Paul's affirmation in 6:15 is of utmost significance in this letter. Pitta is right in affirming that "through this antithetical affirmation, Paul seems to be synthesizing his (own) gospel

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in Galatians."[139] Or Longenecker, who says that in this verse one finds "the nub of Paul's purpose in writing Galatians and the focal point of his subscription.…"[140] Holding this verse to be a maxim used by Paul, he says further that "we may assume that Paul uses it to climax all of his arguments and exhortations in 1:6–5:12 with respect to the Judaizing threat."[141] At the same time, Longenecker also holds that this statement "serves to reinforce the parallel passage (Gal. 5:6) in which Paul summarizes his early Christian teaching."[142]

There are a number of ways in which the idea of the "new creation" in this letter has been understood. Some relate its meaning to the new life in the Spirit.[143] And rightly so, for in this letter Paul describes the life of freedom in Christ in terms of life in the Spirit. It is "through the Spirit, by faith, (that) we wait for the hope of righteousness" (5:5). Walking by the Spirit means to be freed from the clutches of the flesh (5:16–17), being led by it means not to be under the law (5:18), and living in its power effects the production of its "fruit" in various manifestations (5:22–23). Thus, as Longenecker puts it, the Spirit is the context in which "life now 'in Christ' is to be lived … not in the context of laws."[144] Bruce says that the "new creation" is "life in Christ,"

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[139]Pitta, *Lettera ai Galati*, 401: "Paul seems to synthesize his own gospel in Galatians through this antithetical affirmation." Pitta further says:

> This represents … the epiphomena or the concluding fundamental sentence of the Letter to the Galatians: the accent does not fall on justification by faith put in opposition to works nor on circumcision or uncircumcision but on sonship in Christ through which one belongs to the new creation (*Lettera ai Galati*, 401).

[140]Longenecker, *Galatians*, 295.

[141]Longenecker, *Galatians*, 296.

[142]Cf. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 296.

[143]For example, Ridderbos, Betz, Bruce.

[144]Longenecker, *Galatians*, 296.

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the fullness of which "belongs to the future, but to those in Christ it is already realized through the Spirit."[145]

Still others speak of the "new creation" in terms of a new relationship with God. Hansen, who sees "the reality of life in this new creation … [as] a theme of the entire letter," speaks of believers as having a

> new relationship with God: we are no longer slaves; we are his children and are free to address him by the Spirit as Father, Abba (4,6). We have a new relationship with one another: we are no longer imprisoned and divided by racial, social or gender barriers; we are now free and one in Christ (3,28).[146]

The above suggestions illumine the meaning of the "new creation" idea. However, for a more thorough understanding of what Paul could have meant by this idea, let us look at the various parts of the letter. The idea that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of value and that what counts is a new creation summarizes Paul's message in this letter. We can gather its various explicitations from the letter itself. We would then have an idea of what Paul means by the expression "new creation" and why it is that Paul attaches such value to it. The best way to start is by considering the immediate context where this expression is employed, that is, vv. 12ff. Since these verses, as we said, summarize Paul's main points, these give the clue as to what ideas are pertinent to Paul's statement on the "new creation." Looking at the immediate context of 6:12ff, one notes that Paul puts the idea of "new creation" in opposition to what his opponents in Galatia (that is, those who want to force the Galatians to be circumcised) hold as valuable or to how they are behaving. Paul does not want the Galatians to embrace what his opponents hold as important or follow their inappropriate behavior. Instead, he points out to them that what is of value is a "new creation."

The first thing that Paul says of his opponents is that they "want to make a good showing in the flesh" (θέλουσιν εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκί [v. 12]).

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[145]Bruce, *Galatians*, 273.

[146]Hansen, *Galatians*, 200.

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That is, they want people to be circumcised and take pride in having them accept this external mark. However, Paul reveals that their lone (μόνον) purpose for compelling the Galatians to be circumcised is to avoid being "persecuted for the cross of Christ" (τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ μὴ διώκωνται). Secondly, while these people are circumcised and force others to receive the mark, they themselves do not keep the law (v. 13a). This is a gross show of inconsistency since for the Jew to be circumcised also implies observance of the law. This just goes to show, indeed, that the only purpose why they want the Galatians circumcised is "that they may glory in (their) flesh" (ἵνα ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ σαρκὶ καυχήσωνται [v. 13b]). Against this outlook, Paul declares what for him is his only source of glory: the cross of Christ, by which he says, ἐμοὶ κόσμος ἐσταύρωται κἀγὼ κόσμῳ (v. 14b). But it is not as if Paul condemns those who push for circumcision in order to support uncircumcision. For him, the presence or absence of the external sign is not what determines what is of importance. As he expresses it in v. 15, only a καινὴ κτίσις matters.

Thus, Paul destroys any position that extols either the presence or absence of the physical mark of circumcision. Of course, it is primarily against those who push for circumcision that he addresses himself. He condemns them for making circumcision the source of their glorying instead of the cross of Christ, for wanting to avoid persecutions instead of being willing to embrace them. Their attitude and behavior reveal that they have not yet become a "new creation."

Now, where in the body of the letter itself do we find expressions describing what it is to be a "new creation"? We can find them in at least two affirmations of Paul: a) that in Christ Jesus we are no longer under a custodian or slaves but all daughters and sons of God and heirs (3:23–26, 29; 4:1–7); thus, differences in ethnic affiliation, social-economic status, and gender no longer hold as criteria for regarding people; and b) that what is of value is not circumcision nor uncircumcision but πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη (5:6).

The first affirmation declares that to have faith in God or in Christ Jesus is to be liberated from the clutches of the law as the means of justification and salvation. Abraham was justified through his faith in

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God (3:6ff). Through faith in Christ, believers also receive justification (cf. 3:24). Whereas before Christ came they were practically slaves and the law served as their custodian (παιδαγωγὸς [3:24–25]), now that Christ has come, faith in him has made them daughters and sons of God and, therefore, heirs (3:26, 29); indeed, they put on Christ when they were baptized into him (3:27). All, therefore, who believe in Christ and are baptized into him are one in Christ Jesus (3:28). For Paul, being one in Christ means no longer considering ethnic affiliations (Jew or Greek), social or economic status (slave or free), or gender (male or female). By this, Paul means not so much that these distinctions no longer exist but that they can no longer be used to discriminate against people or to determine the value or worth of human beings. In Christ Jesus, each one is of equal dignity, the dignity of a daughter or son of God. This is the new status of believers whatever their background may be. This outlook that Paul wants the Galatians to appropriate for themselves echoes that of 2 Cor. 5:16ff, where Paul declares that to be a "new creation" is to have a new outlook, a new way of seeing things. It is to regard things and persons no longer from a human point of view but, by implication, from God's point of view. This all-inclusive, non-discriminating attitude and outlook is contrary to that of the proponents of circumcision who used the external mark of circumcision as a boundary marker and a criterion for evaluating the status of a person before God.

The second affirmation which illumines what Paul means by "new creation" is found in 5:6. Here Paul says, ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὔτε περιτομή τι ἰσχύει οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη. The first thing that one notes in this statement is, of course, its similarity with the verse we are presently studying (6:15). As in 6:15, Paul dismisses any claim to value as regards circumcision or uncircumcision. Again, while the formulation rejects both boundary statuses (circumcision and uncircumcision), the context shows that it is, in fact, primarily the proponents of circumcision that Paul is addressing. Now, rejecting circumcision or uncircumcision as being "of any avail," Paul extols instead the value of πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη. All throughout this letter Paul argues for the role of faith in Jesus Christ as the means by which one is justified before God (2:16; cf. 2:21; 3:24).

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As Paul says in 5:5, "For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness." The external mark of circumcision does not guarantee being justified before God; it is one's faith in Christ Jesus that does so. This is what is of real value. Now, Paul adds that the faith that justifies is one that δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη. While Paul is not engaged primarily in a polemic against those who promote faith against or without love, his qualification is important for understanding what he means by faith in Christ. By such a qualification, Paul asserts that faith is not just something theoretical, a passive mental assent to some truth, but active and operative in ἀγάπη. In a couple of verses later, he reiterates this by saying that the freedom the Galatians have attained in Christ should be used not as an occasion for the flesh but for loving service to one another (cf. 5:13–14). And in the light of Paul's warnings in 5:15 and his exhortation in 5:26, this faith active in love means the cessation of all fighting and jealousy that seem to have been present among the Galatian believers. To exhibit such faith which is shown concretely in love is to be a "new creation" for Paul. Thus, against those who push for circumcision (and also those who are for uncircumcision), Paul declares that what is of real value is "faith working itself through love." What is of real worth is not the possession or non-possession of the external mark of circumcision but a faith that is active in love.

Thus, we have tried to put flesh on Paul's solemn declaration in 6:15 that what counts for anything is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision but a new creation. A "new creation" in the context of this letter means having one's glory not in the physical mark of circumcision but in the cross of Christ; not in avoiding persecutions but in being crucified with Christ; not in using the standards of this world (ethnic affiliation, socio-economic status, or gender) to evaluate people but in treating everyone as a daugher or son of God; and in relying not on circumcision as the source of righteousness but on faith in Jesus Christ, a faith which is active in love.

7.2.2. *The "new creation" as eschatological motivation*. From what we have gathered about the aspects of the new creation idea, it is clear that it is an eschatological concept. Even the very expression itself tells us so: a new creation signifies the passing away of that which is *old*, that

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is, of that which has been touched by sin and the flesh, of something that is this-worldly. In its place, a new reality emerges: something that has been renewed by the Spirit of God, one that is no longer subject to the forces of sin and the flesh and, thus, a reality that belongs to the life to come. In terms of this letter, one can see that the aspects of the "new creation" we have identified represent realities of the next life, for they are opposed to the values of this world. This world values external manifestations and glories in external appearance (e.g., circumcision or uncircumcision). It exalts a life of pleasure or a life devoid of persecutions. It evaluates people according to human standards of ethnic affiliation, socio-economic status, gender, and so on. It relies on its own forces as a means of salvation, and promotes self-interests rather than the interests of others.

It is on this eschatological reality of the new creation, then, that Paul grounds his final implied appeal in the closing verses of the letter. He urges the Galatian believers not to allow themselves to be forced into receiving circumcision. In the first place, they should see that even those who promote circumcision have questionable motives and are not good examples of moral behavior. But most of all, they are to resist the temptation to receive circumcision because in the end it is not circumcision (or uncircumcision) that matters but, as Paul says, καινὴ κτίσις, a reality (a "creation" or "creature") that is grounded in the person of Jesus Christ through faith in him, a reality that is transformed by the Spirit of God.

Yet who manifests or embodies "new creation" more immediately but the Galatians themselves? They have become a "new creation" and this is what Paul has been trying to tell them all along. They have received this privileged eschatological status for they have listened to the only Gospel brought to them by Paul and have come to believe in Jesus Christ. They have been freed from the "elemental spirits of the universe" and have come to know God (4:9). By their faith in Jesus Christ, they have passed from being under the custody of the law or from being practically slaves to being daughters and sons of God and heirs according to promise (3:26, 29). In Christ, they have become free

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(cf. 5:1a). Paul, then, points to this privileged status as he urges them not to go back again to the yoke of slavery (cf. 5:1b).

8. Summary-Conclusion: Eschatological Motivations in Galatians

While Paul does not deal extensively with day-to-day moral issues in this letter—focusing as he was on a particular religious concern—his exposition on the "truth of the gospel" (2:5, 14) has revealed important ethical implications. Particularly, we have seen some of the most important eschatological ideas which Paul employs to motivate the Galatian community to moral life. One of these is the eschatological freedom that Christ has won for believers. Paul appeals to this freedom to exhort the community to hold fast to it and never allow themselves again to submit to a "yoke of slavery" (5:1). This means to stop considering circumcision and observance of the law as the means for their justification. This also means no longer turning back "to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits…" (4:9). Instead, they are to embrace only Christ and have faith in him.

Another eschatological idea that Paul employs as motivation is the action of the (Holy) Spirit. Paul reminds the Galatian believers how they received the Spirit "by hearing with faith" (3:2). Thus, they are now living in its power. It is the source of their spiritual strength; it is what nourishes their Christian faith in the midst of a world still touched by sin and working in the flesh. Accordingly, Paul says that since we live by the Spirit, let us also follow the lead of the Spirit. It one thing to have the Spirit as our source of life, or to be living in its realm; it is another to (decide to) conform to the manner of life expected of those who live in that realm. And Paul asks the Galatian believers precisely to live in harmony with who they are—those who are living by the Spirit. If they do so, then the "fruit" of the Spirit will manifest in their lives, that is, the power of the Spirit will allow them to manifest love, joy, peace, and other eschatological virtues.

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Moreover, we also find that Paul recalls the justice of God against those who live according to the flesh and think that they can get away with it (i.e., reap good fruit out of it). A person reaps what they sow and there is no way one can reverse this divine law. At the final judgment, everyone will receive that which they have worked for in this life.

Still another eschatological motivation that we find in this letter is the reference to the eschatological harvest. Paul, wrapping up his particular appeals in the last chapter (6), exhorts the community not to grow weary in doing good. The Apostle either observed signs of discouragement on the part of the community who expected an earlier return of the Lord or was simply encouraging them to continue in the good they were doing. In either case, he points to the prospect of "reaping a harvest in due season," which in the previous verse he identified as "eternal life." The context makes it clear, however, that this "harvest" is not a right they can demand as a reward for their labor. As it is God who makes possible the "harvest" from what is "sown," so it is God who decides to give the "harvest" to those who persevere in doing good. But the Christian knows that God will do so, and so she or he waits in hope and confidence. So the motivation, ultimately, is not the reward *per se*, since this is only to be awaited in hope, but the knowledge that God is trustworthy and that he does not fail those who are faithful to him.

Lastly, we have seen the use of the eschatological idea of καινὴ κτίσις as motivation. In his last attempt to persuade the Galatians not to be compelled to receive circumcision, Paul appeals to the maxim-principle that "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but a new creation." This involves, on the one hand, rejecting the proponents of circumcision and what they stood for. For while they are themselves circumcised, they do not live out what it means since Paul says that they do not themselves obey the law. They merely want to glory in the flesh. Moreover, Paul reveals that their keeping to circumcision (and rejecting Christ) betrays their unwillingness to suffer persecution and to be crucified with Christ.

On the other hand, to be a new creation involves changing the way people are to be regarded. In Christ Jesus all are one; thus, there is no

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more discriminating against people in terms of their ethnic affiliation, socio-economic status, or gender. All are daughters and sons of God and heirs according to the Abrahamic promise. Moreover, to be a new creation is not to rely on circumcision and observance of the law as the means for attaining righteousness but to submit oneself to God through faith in Jesus Christ, a faith which works through love. All these aspects of the new creation are already among the Galatians since they have come to believe in Jesus Christ. All they need to do is to continue to walk according to the "rule" of the "new creation."

Looking at the eschatological motivations in this letter as a whole, one notes the primacy of warrants over sanctions. Specifically, Paul grounds his appeals firmly on the eschatological status of the Galatian believers—the eschatological freedom which Christ has won for them, the fact that they have the Spirit and are living in its realm, and the fact that they are a "new creation." It is true that Paul warns of the danger of forfeiting the Kingdom on the part of those who live according to the flesh and do its "works" (5:21b), but this is not used as a formal motivation in this letter. Paul mentions it to remind those who may persist in "walking according to the flesh." In the same way, the warning against making a fool out of God, motivated by the fact that one reaps what one sows, is not only a means to sow fear and thus command obedience but also a reminder of how God deals with human actions (cf. 6:7–8). On the other hand, it is also true that Paul points to the prospect of an eschatological harvest in order to exhort the community not to grow weary in doing good (6:9), but this is not a device used by the Apostle merely to "buy" the obedience of the community. It expresses the Apostle's conviction of how God responds to human initiative. And the eschatological harvest that awaits the persevering believer is not presented as a compensation for her or his efforts. It is God's show of generosity and approval toward those who persevere in well-doing.

The fact that Paul employs eschatological warrants more than sanctions (as he does in other letters) also shows that it is through dialogue and reasoned arguments that he wants the community to obey his appeals and not through threats of punishments nor through cheap

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promises of eternal rewards. Paul helps to remind them who they are and, therefore, how to act in accord with this status. He appeals to the community on the basis of the "indicatives" of what God has done in their lives: the freedom that Christ has won for them, the fact that they have the Spirit and are now living under its realm, and the fact that they are now a "new creation."

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