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A table of contents for *The Evangelical Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_evangelical_quarterly.php

Christian Stettler

Paul, the Law and Judgement by Works¹

Dr Stettler has been pursuing research in Cambridge and has just moved back to Switzerland as Oberassistent for New Testament at the Faculty of Theology, University of Zurich.

Key words: Paul, law/Torah, last judgement, eschatology, soteriology

Paul's teaching on the law has been highly debated ever since E. P. Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1977), so far without generally accepted conclusions. In this article, fresh light is shed on three aspects of Paul's view of the law by analyzing Paul's statements about the criteria of the eschatological judgement by works. The three aspects are (1) in what respect the Mosaic law is of ongoing validity for the conduct of the church despite Christ being the 'end' of the law (Rom. 10:4); (2) whether Jewish Christians are still obliged to keep the whole Torah; and (3) to what extent the moral knowledge of Gentiles (Rom. 1:18–32) corresponds to the Torah.

For Paul, the last judgement is a judgement by works (Rom. 2:9–10).² This is true also for believers (2 Cor. 5:10). Whereas without Christ humankind is subject to condemnation because of its sinfulness (Rom. 1:18–3:20), there is no condemnation for those who trust in the risen Christ and whose sins are forgiven on account of his atoning death (Rom. 8:1, 31–34). Forgiveness is not only available for pre-conversion sins, but, as the extensive parenthesis of Paul's letters shows, sin is still a reality in the lives of Christians and forgiveness is continually offered for it (cf. Gal. 6:1; 2 Cor. 2:5–11). Christians, too, need to repent from their sins and 'complete their sanctification' (2 Cor. 7:1). Paul repeatedly warns those who remain in sin that by doing so

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2 I present detailed arguments for the following short survey in a monograph.

they will lose their salvation (e.g. 1 Cor. 10:1-12).³ In the case of unrepentance, a sinner needs to be excluded from the congregation in order to be brought to repentance (1 Cor. 5:1-5).⁴ When Paul speaks of salvation 'as through fire' (1 Cor. 3:15), he does not mean salvation in spite of unforgiven sins. Rather he refers to those already saved by faith in Christ. Judgement by works means for them that their *obedience* is measured, not their disobedience. Rewards will be given according to one's *positive* work, one's contribution to the upbuilding of the church (1 Cor. 3:8, 12-15; 4:5 etc.).⁵

Now what are the criteria by which the works of a person are measured in the last judgement? What is counted as sin, and what is the expected obedience? These criteria reveal the standards by which God expects a person to live in his or her lifetime. 2 Corinthians 5:10 makes it clear that the judgement will test whether the works a Christian has done in this life are 'good' or 'bad'. Their reward will be according to their deeds. Similarly, according to Romans 2:9-10, which is not limited to Christians, the issue at stake in judgement is whether a person's deeds were 'good' or 'bad'. However, these texts do not tell us what the criteria will be for deciding what is good or bad. These criteria seem to be presupposed, but not mentioned. We are left with some clues from their contexts. According to Romans 2:8, evil deeds equal disobedience to the truth and obedience to injustice, which are rooted in self-seeking. In the Old Testament, truth and justice are often closely connected with the Torah (cf. Ps. 19:8, 10 and throughout in Ps. 119). Is the Torah the criterion of judgement? 2 Corinthians 5:9 defines 'good' works as what 'pleases the Lord', i.e. Jesus, who is also the judge (v. 10). We can, therefore, conclude that his example and his teaching will be the standard in judgement. But what is the relationship between the example and teaching of Jesus and the Torah of Moses? Are there different criteria for the judgement of Christians, unbelieving Jews and unbelieving Gentiles, or will they all be judged according to the same criterion? In order to find an answer, we will first look at the passages that mention various material criteria for judgement without explicitly referring to the Torah.

3 The means of 'staying in' the new covenant is forgiveness, not obedience. Nevertheless, *remaining in disobedience* excludes from the covenant. On the loss of salvation see also below section I.

4 Since sinners will not inherit the kingdom of God (see section I.2), 1 Corinthians 5:5 can hardly mean salvation without repentance.

5 1 Corinthians 3:15 reinforces that salvation is by faith even in the extreme (hypothetical?) case someone has failed to show positive fruit. The 'loss' experienced in the judgement probably means a lack of reward (cf. v. 14), not punishment.

I. Material criteria of judgement without explicit reference to the Torah

1. Standing the test in the race and in the battle against the 'flesh'

One criterion that can be clearly made out in Paul is whether or not Christians 'stand the test' in their battle against the 'flesh'. According to 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 the Christian life resembles a race or a competition. In order to get a crown, Christians have to run or fight accordingly (v. 24). That means that, like a competitor, they have to abstain from everything that takes up their energy and hinders their chance of success. Paul refers to himself as an example: he does not run aimlessly and does not fight like a man beating the air (v. 26), but fights his own 'body' and subdues it (v. 27).

According to Romans 6:6; 7:18-24 the 'body' or the 'flesh'⁶ is the origin of covetous desires. The mind set on the 'flesh' is hostile to God: it cannot obey the law of God or please God (Rom. 8:7-8). According to Paul, Christians can still be influenced by the flesh as long as they live on earth. Flesh and Spirit are still in conflict with each other (Gal. 5:17), but the power of the spirit prevails. If Christians walk by the power of the Holy Spirit, they will on no account fulfil the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16),⁷ sin will not be their master (Rom. 6:14); by the help of the Spirit they can 'put to death the misdeeds of the body' (Rom. 8:12-13). This conflict between Spirit and flesh is ultimately about eternal life or death. Walking 'according to the flesh' leads to death, walking 'according to the Spirit' leads to life (Rom. 6:21-22; 7:5; 8:6, 12-13; Gal. 6:8).

From this it follows that when Paul speaks of 'failing the test' in 1 Corinthians 9:27, he means loss of salvation: if he gave in to the desires of his body, instead of living by the power of the Spirit, (eternal) death would be the consequence.⁸

Philippians 3:12-17 makes this even clearer: the all important point is that Christians do not move backwards in any way, but continue in the race and do not lose sight of their goal. Paul himself, as a model for all Christians (v. 17), forgets what lies behind him and stretches forward (v. 13), running towards the goal which is the 'prize' to which God has called the Christians (v. 14). The context shows that

6 'Body' and 'flesh' are synonyms in Romans 6:6, 12; 7:18, 23-4; 8:9-10, 13.

7 Here $\text{ὁ} \mu\eta$ with the aorist subjunctive expresses a promise (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* [Exeter: Paternoster, 1982], 243).

8 So also T. R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1993), 187; *pace* A. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000) 716-7.

the prize consists in participation in the resurrection of the dead and glorification of the body at the return of Jesus (vv. 11, 20–21). The way in which the race is run is decisive for one's eternal destiny, as vv 18–19 show: whoever does not pursue the race, but seeks earthly things instead, will have to face the negative consequences. What the metaphor of the race implies is firstly expressed in v. 16: 'Only let us hold true to what we have attained'. To be found running means that Christians are not to regress from that which they have received from God, both in respect to their knowledge of God and in respect to their obedience.⁹ They must not be found backsliding by striving for earthly things or by living 'according to the flesh'. Secondly, this metaphor also implies moving forwards in one's obedience of faith. This is illustrated best by Paul's prayers for his churches that they may keep on *growing* in love (1 Thes. 4:1, 10; 2 Thes. 1:3; cf. Phil. 1:25). According to Philippians 1:6, 9–11, the 'good work' God has begun in the Philippian Christians is not yet complete; rather, their love is to become more and more abundant, along with their ability to judge what is the will of God, so that at the *parousia* they may present themselves pure and blameless, rich in the fruit of justice.

2. Sins that exclude from the kingdom of God

There are several passages that deal with the 'evil' that leads to a person's exclusion from the kingdom of God, that is, to condemnation in judgement. One of them is 1 Corinthians 6:9–10: 'Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers – none of these will inherit the kingdom of God'. Six of these ten vices are already found in 5:10–11. These sins are examples of 'wickedness' and 'evil' (5:8; opposite terms: 'sincerity' and 'truth'); the person who does them is 'evil' (5:13) and 'unrighteous' (6:9). All these sins may be seen as transgressions of the Torah of Moses.¹⁰ But why single out just these sins of all the sins forbidden by the Torah? 6:12 gives us a hint by stating that all the sins that lead to exclusion from the kingdom of God describe behaviour that 'does not benefit' or dominates oneself.¹¹ In 1 Corinthians

9 Cf. G. D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 360, n. 36.

10 See B. S. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture and Ethics* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 69–70, 119–20. Only one term is missing in the LXX: 'the greedy'. But it is closely connected with 'robbers' (*ibid.*, 69 with n. 39).

11 Sin dominates and enslaves the unregenerate, see e.g. Romans 6:12, 14, 17, 20; 7:14–20. Many commentaries understand v. 12b more specifically as an allusion to becoming one with a prostitute (vv. 15–18).

10:23–24 (cf. v. 33), this category is taken up again and paralleled to 'building one another up' and 'seeking the good of one's neighbour'. According to 1 Corinthians 8:1, what builds up is *love*. Therefore all these categories are but different ways of describing the love of one's neighbour. It is love that abhors evil and holds fast to what is good (Rom. 12:9).

1 Corinthians 5:10–11; 6:9 further denounces idolatry. Idolatry can be seen as a transgression of the commandment to love YHWH exclusively, hence as a transgression of the second part of the double commandment.¹² Admittedly Paul unlike Jesus never explicitly states the double commandment as such, but mentions only the commandment to love one's neighbour. But he does make it clear that the exclusive veneration of the one and only God, the God of Israel, is fundamental for Christians (cf. 1 Thes. 1:9–10; Rom. 1:19–21, 23, 25). That for him this means nothing else than to *love* God goes without saying, if we consider that Paul as a Jew was familiar with the *Shema*, which was central to Jewish theology and liturgy and if we look at Paul's designation of Christians as those 'who love God' (Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 2:9; 8:3; 16:22). It is, therefore, fully warranted to say that for Paul the vices listed in the passages above are violations of the double commandment of love.

Galatians 5:13–21 contains an explicit reference to the love commandment. According to v. 21, those who do the works of the flesh listed in vv. 19–21 will not inherit the kingdom of God. Paul mentions 'fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these'. These works of the flesh stand in absolute contrast to the fruit the Spirit brings forth in believers, against which 'there is no law' (vv. 22–23); this fruit is first and foremost love (v. 22), and love fulfils the whole law (vv. 13–14). All this confirms that the works of the flesh are manifold transgressions of the double commandment of love.

In the disputed letters, Ephesians 5:3–5 also lists sins which exclude from the kingdom of God: 'fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed, . . . obscene, silly, and vulgar talk . . . no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy, that is, an idolater'. The person who commits them has no share in the kingdom (v. 5), but as a 'child of disobedience' will have to face God's wrath in judgement (v. 6). These 'works of darkness' are 'unfruitful' (v. 11), opposed to the

12 See G. Wenham, 'Law and the Legal System in the Old Testament', in B. Kaye and G. Wenham, eds., *Law, Morality and the Bible* (Leicester: IVP, 1978), 29–31.

'works of light', which consist of goodness, righteousness, and truth (v. 9). In this passage, the reference to love is even clearer: According to 5:2 Christians are to 'walk in love' thus imitating the Messiah who 'loved us and gave himself up for us'. The sins mentioned stand in contrast to this love. *The love commandment and the example of Jesus do not exclude each another as criteria for judgement by works.* Jesus, the Messiah, is the standard for the 'good works' of Christians: doing good means to love as he loved us (cf. Col. 3:13). This idea of imitating Christ is also found in the undisputed letters (Rom. 15:3; 1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 2:5–11; and Gal. 2:20 interpreted by 5:14).

Summarising this point, one can say that the sins which exclude from the kingdom of God stand in direct opposition both to the commandment to love one's neighbour (which fulfils the Torah) and to the exclusive love of YHWH. In Ephesians this is complemented by the model of Jesus as a third component. However, Paul does not leave it with a general reference to unloving behaviour; rather, he lists specific sins, which represent trespasses against certain commandments of the Torah. We still need to investigate in what respect the Torah of Moses figures as a criterion of judgement according to Paul's teaching.

3. God's judicial dealings with Israel in the past

Before we do so, let us look at a third criterion for judgement: God's judicial dealings with Israel in the past. In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul warns the Corinthians that if they do not 'please God' they might perish as Israel did in the wilderness (v. 5), by 'desiring evil' (v. 6), 'being idolaters' (v. 7), 'indulging in sexual immorality' (v. 8), 'putting the Lord to the test' (v. 9) or 'grumbling' (v. 10). All these sins of Israel are taken from the Torah's narratives about Israel's journey through the wilderness, which recount YHWH's judgement on these sins. The bans on idolatry and sexual immorality are also to be found in the decalogue and other lists of commandments in the Torah; the other sins mentioned can be understood as violations of trust in the Lord.¹³ Trust in God, like love for God, fear of God and obedience to God, is an expression of 'covenant allegiance'.¹⁴ In vv. 14–22 Paul applies his general discourse to the participation of Corinthian Christians in idol worship, warning them not to provoke the Lord's jealousy, i.e.

13 Cf. Num. 14:11 and T. D. Alexander, *From Paradise to Promised Land* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 150–4.

14 See D. C. T. Sheriffs, 'Faith', in: T. D. Alexander and D. W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, Ill., and Leicester: IVP, 2003); 284 (281–285).

his judgement (v. 22). That YHWH responds to idolatry by jealousy is stated in the second of the ten commandments (Ex. 20:5). In Deuteronomy 32:13-31, a passage standing behind 1 Corinthians 10:1-22,¹⁵ wrath and jealousy are explicitly paralleled.

In 1 Corinthians 10 Israel's sin and YHWH's judgement in the past demonstrate the criteria according to which the church is going to be judged. *Israel's sin consists in violation of God's commandments and of trust in him.* The events of Israel's history are examples ('types') for the people of the new covenant, for their admonition (vv. 6, 11).

4. Attitude towards the church

A further criterion of judgement will be a person's behaviour towards the church. According to Paul, those who ruin the church will be condemned (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 11:29; cf. 2 Cor. 11:15). The reason for their condemnation is that their behaviour is opposed to the 'upbuilding' of the church (1 Cor. 3:9-12) and therefore ultimately to the love commandment (cf. 1 Cor 8:1), as well as the fact that the church is the holy temple in which the Spirit of God dwells (1 Cor. 3:16-17). Consequently, one's attitude towards God's holy church is a further criterion according to which the judgement by works will be carried out. In a similar way in the Old Testament, the attitude of Gentile nations towards Israel, the people of the covenant, plays an important part in the judgement,¹⁶ since God's people represent God himself, and also in Matthew 25:31-46 (cf. 10:40-42) the attitude of the 'nations' towards the 'least of the brothers (and sisters)' of Jesus, i.e. his followers, who represent Jesus.¹⁷ Consequently, love for God expresses itself also in love for his people who represent him.

II. The Torah of Moses as criterion of judgement

In which way does the Torah of Moses, according to Paul, serve as a criterion for judgement? According to Romans 2:12, Gentiles who have sinned without knowing the Torah of Moses (*ἀνόμως*) will perish without accusation by the revealed Torah (*ἀνόμως*)¹⁸, while Jews who have sinned as members of the people of God who have been

15 See R. H. Bell, *Provoked to jealousy* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 251-5.

16 Cf. Genesis 12:3; 27:29; Isaiah 47:6; Jeremiah 50:17-8; 51:24; Ezekiel 25:6, 8, 12, 15; 28:24, 26; 29:6-9; 35:5, 10-15; Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; Joel 3:2, 19; Obadiah 10 (I owe these references to Professor O. P. Robertson).

17 See D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28* (Dallas, Texas: Word, 1995), 744-5.

18 So G. Bornkamm, 'Gesetz und Natur', in id., *Studien zu Antike und Urchristentum* (München: Kaiser, 2nd ed. 1963), 100 (93-118).

endowed with the Torah (ἐν νόμῳ), will be judged 'by the Torah'. The Jews know God's will through the Torah; the Gentiles know from creation God's righteous requirement (δικαίωμα), according to which all who practise sin and give approval to those who sin, deserve to die (1:32).¹⁹ It follows that Gentiles and Jews alike, if they sin, have no excuse in judgement, due to the revelation of God's will, which they have received in different ways (1:20; 2:1).

What, then, is the content of this will of God for Jews and Gentiles respectively? Let us first consider in which way the Torah figures as a criterion for judgement on the Jews.

1. The character of the Jew's failure to keep the Torah

In Romans 2:1-5, 17-24 Paul has in mind Jews who possess the revelation of God's will in the written form of the Torah of Moses. They know it and feel called to teach others the light of the Torah. They condemn Gentiles for committing the sins listed in 1:21-31. Paul now accuses them of doing these very things. This cannot be a matter of gross misrepresentation, because that would render Paul's whole argument inconclusive. On the other hand, it cannot be a general statement about the Jewish people as a whole where there are occasional cases of murder, adultery and idolatry,²⁰ because 2:1 shows that Paul is indeed thinking of 'everybody who judges', meaning every Jew, who feels superior to the Gentiles due to his knowledge and practice of the Torah. By no means does Paul intend to say that every Jew commits adultery, murder or temple robbery in actual fact. It would have been very easy to disprove such a claim.²¹ Rather he must be alluding to something his *Christian* readers in Rome would have understood immediately and would not have called into question, namely an intensified (or internalised or spiritualised) meaning of the Torah, by which its validity is extended to words and thoughts as well as actual deeds.²² This intensification is already found in texts like Pss. 50 and 51 in the Old Testament, and later in some parts of early Judaism (e.g. 1QS, John the Baptist, 4 Ezra). It reaches its cli-

19 'Those who practice such things' refers back to the previously mentioned sins. This means that the Gentiles know not only the fact of retribution, but also its *criterion* (contra R. H. Bell, *No One Seeks for God* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998], 61).

20 Contra T. R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1998), 134; Bell, *No One*, 191.

21 So also Schreiner, *Romans*, 133.

22 So e.g. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London: Black, 1957), 56-7, C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans Vol. 1* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1985), 169.

max in the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount. That Paul shares this intensified view of the Torah is shown in Romans 7:7–25 where he quotes the tenth commandment of the decalogue, the prohibition of covetous desire, as *the* commandment (which Adam had already received), and refers to covetous desire as the root of all sin.²³ In this sense Paul is right in saying that each and every member of the Jewish people is guilty of murder, adultery, or idolatry,²⁴ even if he or she shows a sincere willingness to fulfil the Torah and may fulfil it as far as actual deeds are concerned.

2. Fulfilling the Torah without keeping all of it

Paul not only teaches an intensified view of Torah but also that the fulfilment of the law which God requires in judgement does not include all the commandments of the Torah in a literal way. In v. 14 Paul speaks of Gentiles, who 'by nature' (φύσει) do not have the law,²⁵ but who do 'the things of the law', i.e. what the law requires. This implies that for Paul there can be a fulfilment of the law without the 'physical' possession of the law, without the 'letter' (cf. vv. 27, 29). This can happen if the 'work of the law', that which the law commands, is written on the heart (v. 15). In this way, certain Gentiles 'are a law to themselves' (v. 14) if their actions are in accordance with the Torah. Deciding whether Paul is thinking of the natural revelation to the Gentiles through the sapiential order of creation (cf. Rom. 1:18–32),²⁶ or whether he is thinking of Gentile *Christians*, on whose hearts the Torah has been inscribed by the Holy Spirit (cf. 2:25–29; Je. 31:31–34),²⁷ is not essential for our purposes.²⁸ What is

23 This has precedents in early Jewish traditions, see P. Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1994), 106–7.

24 'Temple robbery' here denotes a kind of *idolatry* and therefore cannot possibly relate to the Temple in Jerusalem. Desiring the treasures of Gentile temples or making a profit in connection with Gentile temples might be in view (cf. Dt. 7:25–6).

25 'By nature' is most probably connected with 'do not possess the law', not with 'do what the law requires' (so too Cranfield, *Romans I*, 156–7). This reading is supported by v. 20 (the written Torah is the 'embodiment' of knowledge and truth), vv. 27, 29 (the Jews possess the 'letter' of the Torah) and vv. 25–29 and 8:1–10 (the requirements of the Torah cannot be fulfilled 'by nature', but only through the Holy Spirit).

26 So G. Bornkamm, "The Revelation of God's Wrath" in id., *Early Christian Experience* (London: SCM, 1969), 68, n. 52 (47–70): 'The intention of the passage is only to prove that God's law is known to the whole world . . . and that therefore his judgment falls upon a responsible mankind'.

27 So Cranfield, *Romans I*, 155–63.

28 For a summary of the discussion see Schreiner, *Romans*, 119–24.

essential is that he talks about *uncircumcised* Gentiles who nevertheless do 'the things of the law'. *The things of the law* and *the work of the law* must therefore mean a fulfilment of the Torah which does not include the requirement of circumcision; this implies that it cannot be a literal fulfilment of the 'letter' of the Torah, because there physical circumcision plays a decisive part.²⁹ This is confirmed by vv. 26–27, where Paul again mentions the fulfilment of the Torah by Gentiles. Paul here speaks explicitly of 'those who are physically uncircumcised', but who 'keep the just requirements of the law' and 'fulfil the law'. Their uncircumcision 'will be regarded as circumcision' in the final judgement (v. 26).³⁰ Then they will condemn those who are physically circumcised but who break the law (v. 27). Paul seems to have in mind a *complete* fulfilment of the Torah (τὸν νόμον τελεῖν) without fulfilling the commandment of physical circumcision – 'a shocking statement from a Jew'.³¹ In the same way, in 1 Corinthians 7:19 he can talk about 'keeping the commandments of God' while explicitly excluding circumcision from it. Romans 2:28–29 show how this is to be understood: Paul actually speaks of Gentile *Christians*, who were inwardly circumcised by receiving the Holy Spirit. It follows that in his statements about fulfilling the Torah, he has in mind the eschatological fulfilment of the Torah, in the time of salvation, the time of the Holy Spirit. It is a fulfilment which can only be brought about by those people (Jews and Gentiles) who have received forgiveness of their sins by faith in the crucified and risen Messiah and who have the requirement of the Torah written on their hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is a fulfilment of the Torah according to prophecies like Je. 31:31–34 and Ezk. 36:26–27. Those who have received the Holy Spirit no longer seek to act according to the 'letter' of the Torah, i.e. its 613 commandments. They now practise the will of God as it has been revealed in the Torah and been put into force by the Messiah when he came. This will of God seizes the entire human being, aiming at the centre of a person's personality, the 'heart' (v. 29, cf. Mt. 5:21–48; 15:1–20 and parallels). God's will was revealed in the Torah of Moses in a binding form, so that all who have the revelation of the Torah are obliged to obey it and will be judged according to the Torah (vv. 12, 27). Physical circumcision is but a symbol of this obedience,

29 According to Gn. 17:10–14, one cannot belong to God's people without being circumcised; whoever is not circumcised, has broken the covenant and is to be 'cut off' from the chosen people (eschatologically interpreted in Jub. 15:26).

30 See Schreiner, *Romans*, 141.

31 Schreiner, *Lau*, 155.

which is the circumcision of the heart (vv. 25, 27-29).³² However, possessing and knowing the code of the law in its written form and being physically circumcised does not by itself lead to a fulfilment of the Torah, as long as the heart has not been renewed but is still hardened (cf. vv. 1-5, 17-24, 27).

3. Torah, sin and justification³³

It is obvious that Paul writes Romans 2 from a Christian perspective, not from a pre-Christian one. His conversion near Damascus brought about a radically new and different evaluation of the Torah.³⁴ Now he regarded his understanding of the Torah before turning to Christ as a reading with a veil on his heart,³⁵ that is, at that time he read the Torah with a hardened heart, unable to understand it in the sense God had intended it. In Paul's view the same is still true of all Jews who do not believe in Jesus (2 Cor. 3:14-15). 'Only through Christ', that is, by turning to the Lord and by the gift of the Spirit, will this veil be removed (vv. 14, 16). Those who have received the Spirit can now behold the glory of the Lord, which has hitherto been hidden from them (vv. 17-18).

Through the revelation of Christ by which Paul, a persecutor of the church of God and an enemy of God, was accepted by the crucified and risen Lord, he came to understand that God justifies through Jesus, the Messiah. He further understood that this justification can only be received by faith in Jesus and his salvific work. This means that the eschatological salvific righteousness of God, which had been announced especially by (Deutero-)Isaiah, is not a reward for those who have fulfilled the law. Rather, it 'has been manifested apart from the law' (Rom. 3:21a). This was contrary to the view widely held in Judaism in Paul's day that eschatological salvation would only be

32 See Schreiner, *Law*, 166. This symbolic significance of circumcision is already present in the Torah itself, see G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50* (Dallas, Texas: Word, 1994), 23-4.

33 The following section weaves together passages from different contexts and letters of Paul. This is justified by recent rhetorical analysis which shows that Paul's teaching about the law and justification is consistent throughout the manifold contexts, see L. Thurén, *Derhetorizing Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

34 What follows differs in some points from the 'New Perspective on Paul' and follows the recent criticism by P. Stuhlmacher and D. A. Hagner, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2001); S. Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002); S. J. Gathercole, *Where is Boasting?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

35 On the 'veil' see S. Vollenweider, *Freiheit als neue Schöpfung* (Götingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 275-8.

granted to those who obeyed the Torah.³⁶ At the same time Paul's eyes were opened to the fact that the Torah and the Prophets bore witness to God's righteousness (Rom. 3:21b). It follows that the Torah is not a means to achieve eschatological salvation, but it bears witness to that salvation. The Holy Scriptures state why the promise of life for all who do the Torah (Lv. 18:5; alluded to in Rom. 7:10; 10:5; and Gal. 3:12) cannot become a reality: no-one can achieve righteousness through the Torah, because the weakness of the flesh and the dominion of sin prevent anyone from doing so (Rom. 3:9-20³⁷; 7:7-25; 8:3a etc.). Even though the Torah does reveal God's will, being therefore 'holy, just and good' (Rom. 7:12), 'spiritual' (v. 14) and aiming at eternal life (v. 10), and even though the Torah ought to be kept by the people of God (cf. Rom. 13:8-10), due to the dominion of sin it has, in actual fact, not brought about life. All it could do was to point out the sins of Israel and to imprison Israel under the curse³⁸, until the time of sonship had come (Rom. 5:20; Gal. 3:19-4:7). God's promise to Abraham that through his offspring all the nations would one day be blessed (i.e. they would receive righteousness by faith just as Abraham did, cf. Rom. 4) was made before the giving of the law at Mount Sinai and was not nullified by the latter (Gal. 3:6-29).

Through the coming of the Messiah into history, the time of salvation, the time of promise, has dawned: it is the time of sonship, of faith, and of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:3; Gal. 3:23-26; 4:4-6). Christ was without sin (2 Cor. 5:21), fully obedient to the Father (Rom. 5:19; Phil. 2:6-11). Through his sacrificial death on the cross on our behalf (Rom. 3:25; 5:6-21; 2 Cor. 5:14-21), the Son of God bore the Torah's curse on all trespasses (Gal. 3:13). He thus effected the eschatological atonement, which alone can provide a righteousness that enables people to stand the test in the final judgement and to inherit the kingdom of God (Rom. 3:21-26). Therefore Paul came to see that God had in fact postponed his judgement of the sins committed before the coming of Jesus and had passed over them (Rom.

36 This view was widely held in the different 'Judaisms' of the Second Temple period, see e.g. M. A. Elliott, *The Survivors of Israel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000); D. A. Carson, P. T. O'Brien and M. A. Seifrid, *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Vol. I* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001). Several Jewish groups taught *perfect* obedience to the Torah, see R. N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (Dallas, Texas: Word, 1990), 227.

37 In Romans 3:19-20 'law' probably denotes the Holy Scriptures of Israel, not only the Pentateuch (Schreiner, *Romans*, 168; Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 55).

38 See Bell, *No One*, 246, 253, 263; H.-J. Eckstein, *Der Begriff Synneidesis bei Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 193, 253-4.

3:25–26);³⁹ this implies that the atonement granted through the Torah could not really cleanse from sins and grant righteousness.

4. *The ongoing validity of the Mosaic Torah in the New Covenant*⁴⁰

From the fact that Paul interpreted the death of Jesus in sacrificial terms,⁴¹ regarding it as *the* eschatological sacrifice of atonement which could not be surpassed by anything, we can deduce that he considered the sacrificial cult of the Old Testament as a type pointing to Jesus. Furthermore, he could apply cultic, priestly and temple language also to the Church or to individual Christians and their lifestyle and to his own ministry (e.g. Rom. 12:1; 15:16; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16).

Paul also interprets the purity regulations of the Torah in a typological way: 'The Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit', so that no food is unclean 'in itself' (Rom. 14:17, 14). This is a strong indication that Paul must have regarded the purity laws concerning food and drink (and other matters of bodily purity and priestly holiness) as types representing the purity and holiness of the Church (cf. 2 Cor. 7:1 and the frequent references to the Church being holy). The same is also true of the commandments concerning festive days. They, too, are models of Christ and the eschatological existence of the redeemed (1 Cor. 5:7–8; cf. Col. 2:16–17).

Paul can also apply to the church those commandments of the Torah dealing with the civil order of the Old Testament theocracy (1 Cor. 5:2, 13; 2 Cor. 13:1; cf. 1 Cor. 9:9–10), though not without them first undergoing a transformation. For example, the church of Jesus no longer carries out the capital punishment to which the commandment 'purge the evil from your midst' refers (Dt. 17:7, 12; 21:21; 22:21), instead the church delivers the evildoer to Satan that the offender might be purged (1 Cor. 5:5). It is in this sense that the so-called 'civil law'⁴² of the Torah also applies to the church,⁴³ because it is true in general that whatever happened to Israel in the old covenant and whatever they were told by God in the Holy Scriptures, was meant to be a 'type' of the church of the new covenant or was

39 *διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν* (v. 25) can only be translated 'because he had passed over', not 'by passing over', since *διὰ* with accusative means 'because of, for the sake of', not 'through, by means of', as sometimes translated.

40 On the following cf. Schreiner, *Law*, 160–77.

41 Romans 3:25; 8:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21 (see Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 57–61, 119–20).

42 For a discussion of this problematic term see Schreiner, *Law*, 176–7.

43 See Schreiner, *Law*, 167.

meant to teach and admonish them (1 Cor. 10:6, 11; cf. Rom. 4:23–24; 15:4; 1 Cor. 9:9–10).

At first sight, this looks like the traditional view, held by many theologians from the thirteenth century onwards, that Jesus fulfilled the so-called cultic Torah as well as the civil laws of the Torah, so that these aspects of the Torah are no longer valid for Christians. At the same time the 'moral' or 'ethical' Torah is said to be still in force for the Christian church without having undergone any change.⁴⁴

Under closer consideration, this view proves to be inaccurate.⁴⁵ Not only is the civil law still valid for the church, though in a transformed way, but we have also seen that according to Paul the 'ethical' or 'moral' requirements of the Torah apply to Christians in an intensified (or internalised or spiritualised) sense. The Torah is written onto their hearts; because of this transformation of the hearts the 'ethical' Torah not only comprises outward actions, which can lead to 'praise from people' (Rom. 2:29)⁴⁶, but aims at the heart, that 'which is hidden'. That also the hidden things of the heart are subject to God's final judgement is taught by both Paul and Jesus (Rom. 2:16, 28–29; cf. Mt. 10:26 par). For this, people will receive God's praise (Rom. 2:29).

Therefore, the coming of the Messiah means the 'end of the Torah' (Rom. 10:4) not only because he has put an end to the time of seclusion under the Torah, to the time of its curse and the passing over of former sins, but also because through him the time has come in which the 'types' of the Torah are being fulfilled.

5. Love as fulfilment of the Torah

The centre of the will of God, which seizes people from within, is the love commandment in the Torah. In it, 'the whole law', all its 'commandments . . . are summed up'; love is the 'fulfilment of the law':

44 The *trias* of civil, ceremonial and moral law was introduced by William of Auxerre and William of Auvergne and became influential through Thomas Aquinas (see A. Peters, 'Gesetz: 3. Dogmatisch', *EKL* 2 [3rd ed. 1989], 144 [143–99]); it was taken up in the *Westminster Confession*, 19.3–5; recently e.g. Schreiner, *Law*, 160–178; id., *Romans*, 122, 139.

45 The following thoughts have been stimulated by discussions with Professor Morna D. Hooker (Cambridge), Professor Scott J. Hafemann (Wheaton, Ill.) and Todd A. Wilson (Cambridge). I am most grateful to them.

46 This is by no means the original intention of the Torah – Deuteronomy stresses the importance of obedience from one's heart again and again – but it is misunderstood in this way because of hard-heartedness. God's revealed will is *one*, it is expressed equally in the Torah and through the Messiah, but in actual fact it is misunderstood without the Spirit of the Messiah.

'whoever loves others has fulfilled the law' (Rom. 13:8–10; Gal. 5:14). Therefore, Paul can equally say, 'Neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but *keeping the commandments of God*' (1 Cor. 7:19), and, 'In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only *faith working through love*' (Gal. 5:6). The 'fruit of the Spirit', that life the Holy Spirit brings forth in those who believe, is first of all love (cf. Gal. 5:13 with 5:22–23, where love is mentioned first; similarly Col. 3:12–14). Love is what Christians are to pursue (1 Cor. 14:1), what they owe one another (Rom. 13:8). Love means to serve one another (Gal. 5:13), to build one another up, to not seek one's own advantage, and to count others more significant than oneself (1 Cor. 8:1; 10:23–24; Phil. 2:3–4). Love does no wrong to a neighbour, therefore it fulfils the prohibitions of the decalogue (Rom. 13:9–10) and is the counterpart to the 'works of the flesh', which exclude from the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19–21; cf. 1 Cor. 13:4–6 and the passages mentioned above in section I.2).

Paul's teaching that love is the centre of the Christian life and that the love commandment summarises the Torah, not only shows similarities to other early Jewish examples,⁴⁷ but most of all, it goes back to the teaching of Jesus. Like Jesus, Paul can put other commandments of the Torah side by side with the love commandment in order to illustrate and interpret it. Hence, the love commandment does not *replace* the other commandments of the Torah; it rather summarises and fulfils them.⁴⁸ But the other side of the coin is that, in Jesus and Paul alike, the love commandment is also the criterion for deciding which of the other commandments the eschatological people of God have to 'fulfil' *by actually doing them*, i.e. which of the other commandments continue to have practical relevance: all those commandments which illustrate the commandment of love, that is, all those commandments which concern human relationships, continue to be valid.⁴⁹ Paul can sometimes quote these commandments in his exhortations to the Church. In the same way, he can allude to logia of Jesus as to absolutely binding commandments (ἐπιταγή, ἐντολή, παραγγέλλειν, διατάσσειν – 1 Cor. 7:10, 25; 9:14; 14:37); he can even refer to them as to the 'law of Christ', the 'Torah of the Messiah'

47 See G. Theissen and A. Merz, *The Historical Jesus* (London: SCM, 1998), 384–9; M. Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches* (Edinburgh: Clark, 2000), 3.

48 So too C. E. B. Cranfield, 'St. Paul and the Law', *SJT* 17 (1964), 66–7 (43–68); Schreiner, *Law*, 149–50.

49 A. Schlatter, *The History of the Christ* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1997), 214; Bockmuehl 9–10.

(Gal. 6:2; cf. 1 Cor. 9:21).⁵⁰ Furthermore, as we have seen in section I.2 above, Paul points to the example of the Messiah in his earthly life, an example he himself strives to follow. By doing so, he himself becomes a model for the rest of the church (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17).

This life of fulfilling the Torah by love, in obedience to the 'Torah of the Messiah' and in harmony with Jesus' example, is what Paul calls 'life in the Spirit'. *The Spirit* is the decisive factor in the fulfilment of the law by the eschatological people of God. According to Romans 8:3, the law without the Spirit is incapable of leading to obedience, because it is weakened by the flesh (and by sin, which is active in the flesh; cf. Rom. 7:7–25 and section II.c above). However, the 'just requirement of the law' is fulfilled by the power of the Holy Spirit in those who have received him (Rom. 8:4; cf. 8:9–11, 14). For this very purpose the Son of God was sent (Rom. 8:3).

The Spirit is not only the *power* who enables believers to live this life, but also the *guide* who guides them within their hearts (Rom. 8:2–17; Gal. 5:16–25). The Spirit of the Messiah helps them to apply the will of God as it is revealed in the Torah and the teaching of Jesus to specific situations. This is exactly what we find in the admonitions of Paul's letters: they are but applications of the Torah (of the Messiah) to specific situations.⁵¹

For Paul, the Torah of YHWH, the teaching of the Messiah Jesus,

50 See P. Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments Vol. 1* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2nd ed. 1997), 379–80; further references in G. Stanton, 'The Law of Christ', in id. and D. F. Ford, *Reading Texts, Seeking Wisdom* (London: SCM, 2003), 179–181 (169–184). Schreiner, *Law*, 159, notes that here the two catchwords of Galatians 5:14 are repeated: 'law' and 'fulfil'. 'The connection between these two texts suggests that the one who fulfils the law of Christ also fulfils the Old Testament law, which is summed up in the law of love.' Some scholars hold the view that the 'Law of Christ' is not the teaching of Jesus, but the example of his self-giving sacrifice (so Eckstein 250–1; further titles in Schreiner, *Law*, 159). However, the one does not exclude the other; in his self-giving sacrifice, Jesus fulfils his own Torah in an exemplary way (Mk. 10:41–45; Jh. 13). Therefore Paul can cite Jesus tradition as an ethical authority and he can call upon the Church to imitate Christ. For Stanton, the phrase means not the teaching of Christ, but 'the law of Moses interpreted by Christ, with the "love commandment" . . . as its essence' and as 'fulfilled by Christ in his own self-giving love' (*op. cit.*, 172). But the opposition of the teaching of Christ and his interpretation and fulfilment of the law seem to me to be hardly warranted.

51 M. Thompson has shown this for Romans 12–15 (*Clothed with Christ* [Sheffield: JSOT, 1991]) and D. Wenham more broadly for the whole of Paul's letters (*Paul – Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995]). The fact that Paul rarely cites the Torah or Jesus tradition explicitly, does not contradict this view. The same can be found in parenthetic sections of apocalyptic writings that clearly presuppose the Mosaic Torah (C. Münchow, *Ethik und Eschatologie*: [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981], 40).

his example, and guidance by his Spirit are not a compilation of different elements. They are one and the same. It is the Messiah who brings about the time of salvation, who brings the Torah to its eschatological fulfilment and takes away the veil which covers the hearts of the Jews when reading the Torah (2 Cor. 3:14). According to 1 Corinthians 1:30; 8:6 (cf. Col. 1:15–17), Jesus is the personification and revelation of God's Wisdom. Since the Mosaic Torah, too, is identified with God's Wisdom (cf. Dt. 4:6; Ps. 19; Sir. 24, esp. v. 23; Bar. 3:9–4:4), Jesus is the full and final revelation of God and his will and therefore interprets and completes the Old Testament Torah.⁵² He teaches the church to regard love as the centre and fulfilment of the Torah. In his self-giving life and death he himself fulfilled the love commandment to the utmost point (Rom. 5:8; Phil. 2:5–11), and through the Holy Spirit who is but his own presence in those who believe (2 Cor. 3:17) he teaches and enables his church to obey.

III. The Torah and the judgement of Jews

According to Romans 2:27 those Gentiles who are physically uncircumcised, but 'fulfil the law', will judge those Jews who were physically circumcised and possessed the 'letter' of the law, but who did not fulfil the obligations of the Torah. As we have seen, these Gentiles are Gentile Christians, who do the law as a result of the law having been inscribed on their hearts by the Holy Spirit.⁵³ As we have also seen, 'the things of the law' (v. 14), 'the work of the law' (v. 15), and 'the just requirements of the law' (v. 26; singular in Rom. 8:4⁵⁴), as well as 'the commandments of God' (1 Cor. 7:19; cf. Rom. 13:9) all mean the same thing: They all refer to the Torah of Moses as it has been interpreted and fulfilled in its true meaning by the Messiah. Hence they mean an active doing of the Torah as it is summarized by the commandment to love God and one's neighbour, or, as Paul can also put it, an active doing of all those commandments that interpret the double commandment of love. This doing of the Torah begins in the heart, with its hidden motives and desires, and is concerned not just with outward deeds. It is an all-embracing fulfilment of the will

52 See M. D. Hooker, 'Christ: The "End" of the Law', in D. E. Aune et al., eds., *Neotestamentica and Philonica* [Leiden: Brill, 2003], 139–42 [126–46]; id., 'Where is Wisdom to be Found?', in Ford and Stanton 116–128 and my *Der Kolosserhymnus* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000], 146).

53 That the Christians will judge the world is also said in 1 Corinthians 6:2.

54 On semantic differences between singular and plural in these instances see Schreiner, *Law*, 152–155; id., *Romans*, 140.

of God without limits. This is the criterion for judgement also for those Jews who do not believe in Jesus. Through the gift of the Torah and through their circumcision, they are under a special obligation to do the 'things of the Torah'.

Does this imply that the Jews, by being called to believe in Jesus as their Messiah, are at the same time freed from observing the Torah of Moses in its literal sense? Are they now to obey the Torah as interpreted and fulfilled by the Messiah, but no longer obliged to follow the 613 commandments of the Law? Some scholars hold the view that this is only true for Gentile Christians, whereas Jewish Christians (and therefore Paul himself) continue to be obliged to keep the whole of the Torah.⁵⁵ Their arguments are as follows: The Jewish Christians had come to faith while already circumcised. Paul advised everyone to remain in the condition in which he was called, thus Jewish Christians should not have their circumcision removed by surgery (1 Cor. 7:17–20). Since one's circumcision obliges a person to keep the whole Torah (Gal. 5:3)⁵⁶ this remained the case for Jews who came to believe in Jesus.

Now Paul is very clear that not only Gentile Christians, but also Jewish Christians are no longer 'under the law' (Rom. 6:14–5; 1 Cor. 9:20; Gal. 3:23–25; 4:5, 21; 5:18), that is, they are no longer obliged to keep all the 613 commandments and therefore are no longer under the curse of the Torah (Gal. 3:13).⁵⁷ Paul himself is 'not under the law' (1 Cor. 9:20).⁵⁸ The question whether one should have one's circumcision removed by surgery could only arise because circumcision was irrelevant for Jewish Christians ('circumcision is nothing', 1 Cor. 7:19). Paul could adapt his lifestyle to the Gentiles he wanted to win for Christ (1 Cor. 9:21) only because he was free from observing the Torah. *It follows that the Torah serves as criterion for judgment on Jewish Christians only in its fulfilled messianic sense. This is also true for all other Jews who live after the coming of the Messiah, because God will not judge them apart from their calling to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. For them, too,*

55 Bockmuehl 170–2 (mentions further supporters of this view).

56 I am grateful to Dr M. Bockmuehl (Cambridge) for bringing this passage to my attention.

57 See Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988), 205–9.

58 Cf. Westerholm 206: 'Paul . . . means that, in order not to offend those obligated to observe the statutes of the law of God, he himself acted as though he were bound by the same duty, though in fact, he insists, he is not. As a Christian, he has been freed from an obligation which applied to Jews under the old dispensation, that of observing the demands of the law.'

a new stage in salvation history has come.

Galatians 5:3 seems to contradict this view, especially if *peritome/nwl* is translated '(everyone) who is circumcised' rather than '(everyone) who has himself circumcised'. Then in fact every Jewish Christian would be obliged to keep the whole law. But the context of this verse shows that Paul is warning the Gentile Christians in Galatia not to be circumcised (v. 2).⁵⁹ Thus in v. 3, too, Paul talks about Christians who voluntarily submit to circumcision. V. 6 shows that Jewish Christians who had been circumcised as infants are free from observing all the 613 commandments; like the Gentile Christians they are obliged to love. According to Acts 16:3, Paul circumcised his half-Jewish disciple Timothy who, in Jewish eyes, was a Jew, not a Gentile,⁶⁰ for the sake of his missionary purposes;⁶¹ this exactly fits 1 Corinthians 9:20 and the passages in which Paul admonishes Christians for love's sake not to offend others.⁶² In Antioch, Peter and the other Jewish Christians initially 'lived like Gentiles' (Gal. 2:[11-]14). In Palestine, however, the Jewish Christians continued to observe the whole Torah (Acts 21:20). The main reason why they could not think of doing otherwise might have been the constant threat of persecution by observant fellow Jews; it is quite likely that this was the reason for James' intervention in Antioch, too (Gal. 2:12).⁶³

IV. The Torah and judgement of unbelieving Gentiles

Does what has been said so far apply only to Jews and Christians, who know the Torah in its revealed form, but not to unbelieving Gentiles? Will they be judged according to a different criterion?

According to Romans 1:32 the Gentiles know God's 'just requirement' (*δικαίωμα*) from his revelation in nature (see vv. 19-21). Paul uses this same expression in Romans 2:26 and 8:4 for the fulfilment of the 'requirement(s) of the law' in the believers through the Spirit.

59 The Galatian Gentile Christians have obviously not yet been circumcised, see R. N. Longenecker 226; J. D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Black, 1993), 264.

60 R. Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte Vol. 2* (Zürich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1986), 97.

61 '[I]t was absolutely essential to give him good standing in the eyes of the Jews among whom he would be working' (I. H. Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles* [Leicester: IVP, 1980], 260). Luke does not portray Paul as an observant Jew (*contra* J. Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998], 412).

62 To 'win' and 'save' others (1 Cor 9:20-23) is motivated by love, as is shown by the frame of chapters 8-9 in 8:1 and 10:23-11:1 (cf. Vollenweider 214-7).

63 See my 'Jesus and the Purity of the Heart', *JTS* 2004 (forthcoming)

There is no reason why in Romans 1:32 he should refer to something different in content. In fact, this is supported by Romans 2:14–15, where Paul speaks about Gentiles who do ‘the things of the law’ and ‘the work of the law’. Hence, according to Romans 1:32 the unbelieving Gentiles know the will of God, as it was revealed in the Torah and finally installed through the teaching and work of Jesus and the sending of the Spirit. They know their obligation to do ‘what ought to be done’ (cf. 1:28); in Phil 4:8 Paul can apply similar language to the conduct of Christians. ‘What ought to be done’ means a conduct that is characterised by respect for one’s neighbour, ultimately by love for one’s neighbour, as shown by the vices listed in vv. 26–31 which stand for perversions of love. Love of God is demanded from Gentiles insofar as they ‘know God’, that is ‘his eternal power and divine nature’, through creation and therefore owe gratitude and honor (vv. 20–21, 23, 25). At least in this sense the double love commandment is valid also for them, hence they are without excuse in judgement (v. 20).

Therefore, in judgement, the same criterion that is valid for Jews and Christians will also be applied to Gentiles who do not believe in Jesus. This criterion is the ‘just requirement’ of God, which can be perceived by Gentiles in creation and which was revealed to Israel, emphasised by Jesus, the Messiah, in his teaching, demonstrated in his giving himself up for humanity, and inscribed on the hearts of believers by the Spirit. The criterion consists of the commandments of the Mosaic Torah as interpreted by the Messiah for the new covenant. They are summarized in the double love commandment. Because the Messiah Jesus is the mediator of creation (1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15–7), his Torah and his example are the cosmic law that orders the works of creation and can be perceived in them.⁶⁴

The Old Testament and the Jesus tradition contain analogies to this thought: the Noachide commandments (Gn. 9:1–7 and its Jewish interpretations), the commandments concerning the ‘resident aliens’ in Lv. 17–18, the wisdom literature, and the oracles against the nations in the prophets all presuppose a similar knowledge of the ethical requirements of God among the Gentiles,⁶⁵ and Matthew 25:31–46 illustrates that the commandment of love will function as *the* criterion in judgement on ‘all the nations’ (v. 32).

64 In Paul’s view Jesus takes the place the Torah occupies in early Jewish ‘Torah ontology’. Therefore *he* is the Word and the Torah through which God created the world (see above n. 51 and my *Kolosserrhymnus*, 133–65).

65 See Bockmuehl 150–62.

V. Conclusion

The different criteria of judgement that are mentioned in Paul all point to the same pattern. The same criterion (or set of criteria) applies (1) to the judgement of believers (whether Jewish or Gentile) and to that of (2) unbelieving Jews and (3) unbelieving Gentiles: the will of God as expressed in creation and in the Torah of Moses, as interpreted and reinforced by the teaching and example of Jesus and as summarised in the double commandment of love. All of these are not mutually exclusive, but ultimately one and the same. Closely connected to this is the criterion of trust in God, which is an expression of 'covenant allegiance' as is love for God. Love for God expresses itself also in a loving attitude towards his people in which he is represented.

This has several implications for Paul's understanding of the law: (1) The law of Moses continues to be valid in the new covenant, not according to its 'letter', but in a fulfilled sense – fulfilled by the coming and self-sacrifice of the Messiah, by the creation of the people of the new covenant through Christ's atoning death and the gift of his Spirit, and by the fruit which the Spirit brings forth in believers in actual deeds. It is in this transformed way that the whole Torah continues to be in force. Thus some traditional reformation perspectives need correction. (2) Jewish Christians are no longer obliged to keep the Torah in a literal sense, e.g. they are no longer required to keep the purity regulations literally. Rather, as is the case with Gentile Christians, they are obliged to obey (in the power of the Holy Spirit) all those commandments which interpret the love commandment, i.e. which pertain to the relationship with God and one's neighbour. Through the transformation of believers' hearts these commandments take on intensified force, i.e. they comprise the thoughts of the hearts as well as outward deeds. (3) The moral knowledge of unbelieving Gentiles corresponds to this revealed will of God since it is the character of Christ, the mediator of creation, that can be seen in the created works.

Abstract

This article seeks to shed new light on Paul's teaching on the Torah. It does so by analyzing Paul's different statements about the criteria of judgement by works. The result of this study is that it is the same criterion that applies to Jews and Gentiles, believers and unbelievers, namely the Torah as interpreted and fulfilled by the Messiah Jesus, practised by believers in the power of the Holy Spirit, and summarised in the double commandment of love. Thus the whole Torah is still valid in the time of the new covenant, but in a wholly transformed way.