

The Law as Παιδαγωγὸς εἰς Χριστὸν in Galatians III

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There are many things about St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians on which students of the Bible are quite generally in agreement. Only a few negative scholars of higher criticism, for example, deny the authorship of the letter by St. Paul. Ernest De Witt Burton comments on this: "For there is no other letter which has any better claim to be regarded as his work than Galatians itself."¹ He also writes: "Modern criticism as represented by scholars of all schools, with the few exceptions noted, ratifies the tradition of centuries that the letter to the Galatians was written, as it claims to have been, by Paul, the Christian apostle of the first century."² Bishop Lightfoot says: "The Epistle to the Galatians has escaped unchallenged amid the sweeping proscriptions of recent criticism. Its every sentence so completely reflects the life and character of the Apostle of the Gentiles that its genuineness has not been seriously questioned."³ Because it is obvious from the contents of the letter, there is also quite general agreement concerning the motive and purpose of it. Here, too, we shall let Burton speak: "The previous relations of the writer and his readers, the circumstances that led to the writing of the letter, the purpose for which it was written, these appear with great clearness in the letter itself."⁴ The letter was occasioned by the report that errorists, generally spoken of as Judaizers, had arisen in the Galatian churches, who were preaching a different gospel "than ye have received" (1:9), a legalistic gospel "which is not another" (1:7), and were at the same time undermining and discrediting Paul's authority as an apostle, all this apparently with considerable success (1:6; 3:1; 4:11).

Also in the matter of the structure of Galatians there is general agreement, again because its divisions are more obvious than in other epistles of the same writer. Lightfoot writes: "A rough analysis of the epistle separates it into three sections of two chapters each, the first couplet (i, ii) containing the personal or narrative portion, the second (iii, iv) the argumentative or doctrinal, and the third (v, vi) the hortatory or practical."⁵ While, however, there is general agreement on the aforementioned points, there are other matters relative to the Epistle to the Galatians on which there is considerable disagreement. One is the well-known question concerning the location in Galatia of the congregations addressed by Paul, and, coupled with this, the question concerning time and place of the writing of the letter. It would take us too far afield at this time to enter in on this question. A thorough study of the matter by the late Prof. Joh. P. Meyer appeared in the October 1941 number of our *Quarterly*.⁶ Suffice it to say that the present writer, after repeatedly considering a great amount of the material available on the subject, has not felt himself compelled to forsake his conviction that the congregations addressed were those founded, according to Acts, by Paul on his first missionary journey in the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia and revisited by him on his second journey, and that the letter was written sometime after this second visit, quite probably in Corinth. It is another matter whether or not one is ready to go as far as Ramsey, who writes: "With the Galatian question the date and authorship of Acts are bound up: the more I study, the more clearly I see that it is impossible to reconcile the 'North-Galatian theory' with the first-century origin and Lukan authorship of Acts; that theory involves so many incongruities and inconsistencies, as to force a cool intellect to the view that Acts is not a trustworthy contemporary authority."⁷

When it comes to interpreting the letter, Galatians presents a number of problems in the solution of which there is understandably a difference of opinion not necessarily affecting its doctrinal content. There is the

¹ Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), p. LXV.

² *Ibid.*, p. LXXI.

³ J.B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (1865, Reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House), p. 57.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. LIII.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁶ "Studies in Galatians," *Theol. Quartalschrift*, Oct. 1941, p. 241-259.

⁷ W.M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (1895, Reprint of Third Edition, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), p. XV.

question concerning the identity of “James, the Lord’s brother” (1:19), also the question whether Paul’s Jerusalem visit in chapter two (2:1–10) is the same as that of Acts 15, the so-called Jerusalem council. A real exegetical problem is presented by the words “Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one” (3:20).

Particularly much discussed and debated is the section, chapter 3:23 to 25, which speaks of the law as παιδαγωγός εἰς Χριστόν. The entire passage reads: Πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἐλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν ὑπὸ νόμον ἐφρουρούμεθα συγκλειόμενοι εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι. ὥστε ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγός ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν, ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν· ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς πίστεως οὐκέτι ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν ἐσμεν. “Moreover before this faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up unto the faith which should later be revealed. So then the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come we are no longer under a custodian.”⁸

In our discussion of this passage we shall: 1) review briefly the problem in the Galatian congregation; 2) offer an interpretation; 3) present some practical implications.

1. What had happened in the churches of Galatia since Paul had founded them? What was the “another gospel” to which some of the members of these churches were beginning to turn?

There can be no doubt that Paul had also in Galatia preached and taught what in First Corinthians he summed up as the basic and essential content of all his preaching: “For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (I Cor. 2:2). Thus he could in his salutation to the Galatians speak to them of “our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world” (1:4). He could also expect them to recognize as the substance of his message to them what he said to Peter at Antioch: “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Jesus Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (2:16). These words, which reflect the heart of all his preaching, clearly indicate that Paul had at no time neglected to preach also the law, as he does in this very letter to the Galatians. He had, however, preached the law as God intends it to be preached: as God’s holy and inviolable will demanding perfect holiness from man, in that it says to him: “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (2:10). Thus the law reveals to man how hopelessly he is lost in sin because “there is not a just man on earth that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Eccl. 7:20), and so establishes the truth already expressed in Psalm 143 and now applied by Paul: “By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (2:16).

That the law with its demands and threats was not in the least forgotten, slighted, or violated by God in His plan of redemption and thus in Paul’s gospel message, Paul also taught in no uncertain terms, as when he wrote to the Romans: “For God designed him [Christ] to be the means of expiating sin by his sacrificial death, effective through faith. God meant by this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had overlooked the sins of the past—to demonstrate his justice now in the present, showing that he is both himself just and justifies any man who puts his faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:25f.).⁹ Thus Paul could write to the Galatians: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (3:13), and to the Romans: “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10:4).

It is because the gospel presupposes man’s hopelessness and helplessness and presents Christ crucified as man’s only hope for salvation, that it has been and still is everywhere spoken against. Prof. Joh. Ph. Koehler has stated it well: “It is strange, but true: the only objection against the teaching of the cross of Christ is this that it does not leave to man the glory of being of some importance for his salvation. Hardly ever has an enemy of the Gospel said something against Jesus and His person. All praise His words and martyrdom. But people are incensed to hear that we are saved by the cross because by nature we are damned.”¹⁰ Galatia offered no exception to this attitude toward the gospel, nor did the gospel continue unopposed in the Christian congregations there. Not that it was simply and completely rejected or denied. If this had been the case, if the

⁸ “Galatians—A Trial Translation,” by Wisconsin Synod Committee on Bible Translation, *Theol. Quartalschrift*, July 1957, p. 209.

⁹ *The New English Bible* (Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 259.

¹⁰ Joh. Ph. Koehler, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*, translated from the German by E.E. Sauer (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1957), p. 138.

false teachers who had entered or had arisen in those congregations had in so many words put into question the gospel truth of the redemption of the world through Christ, they would have been more readily recognized for what they really were and so would hardly have had the success they did have. Instead they apparently consented to Paul's gospel message, its way of salvation through faith in Christ, but declared it as inadequate, and maintained that the Galatian Christians, besides believing in Christ, needed also to submit to and keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved. They taught as the "certain men" who, according to Acts 15, came to Antioch from Judaea and "taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Like the "Pharisees who believed," they, too, said "That it was needful to circumcise them [the Gentiles], and to command them to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15:5). Included in what the Judaizers demanded was also the observance of "days, and months, and times, and years" (4:10). No doubt the Judaizers pointed out to the Galatians that these things were still being observed in the Christian congregation in Jerusalem, where Peter, James, and John were serving as pillars, and that Paul, who had not been a disciple of Christ during His earthly ministry, was lacking in understanding of Christ's teachings. What these false teachers failed to tell the Galatians was that the Jerusalem Christians continued to observe customs and practices enjoined in the Mosaic Law, not as a legal burden, but as something they were now free to do or not to do, but which they would not impose upon the Gentiles (Acts 15:7–21), because, as Peter said: "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (Acts 15:11).

There are especially two features about the legalistic "gospel" of the Judaizers that made it so appealing and acceptable to the Galatians. One is, that it appealed to their reason and pride, in that it credited them with at least being able to contribute something to their salvation; the other, that it operated with the Word of God. The Law of Moses was God's law. God had instituted the Sabbath and the many other holy days, months, and seasons observed in the Old Testament. God had also instituted the rite of circumcision, and Paul was the last to depreciate its importance and value in the Old Testament economy. Speaking of Abraham, who was justified by faith alone while yet uncircumcised, he wrote to the Romans: "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed to them also" (Rom. 4:11). The Judaistic teaching would not have been nearly so misleading and dangerous to recently converted Gentiles had it, instead of using the Scriptures, operated with something completely foreign to them. It would appear that Paul had just this in mind when he wrote to the Galatians concerning the false teaching Judaizers and their insistence on circumcision: "Would that those who are troubling you would go so far as to castrate themselves!" (5:12, the writer's translation).

"Another gospel," or, as a number of translators more exactly render the Greek *ἕτερον*, "a different gospel"! Thus Paul (1:6) described the message of the Judaizers, but he was quick to add *ὁ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο*, "which is not another." Rightly so, for this was a legalistic "gospel," a gross mixture of law and gospel, which struck at the very heart of the true gospel of God's free grace in Christ and thus did not deserve to be called by that name.

2. It was to refute this soul-destroying error of the Judaizers and save the Galatian Christians who were being taken in by it from completely losing Christ and their salvation that Paul wrote his letter to them. True, he devoted the first two chapters, following his introduction, to defending his authority as an apostle on an absolute par with the Jerusalem apostles and acknowledged as such by them. But this seemingly personal part of the letter was really to serve no other purpose than to establish his message, both its refutation of error and its presentation of the truth, as not his, but Christ's, and thus God's. This justifies his strong denunciation: "But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed" (1:8, 9).¹¹

In dealing with the error of the Judaizers that observance of the Mosaic Law was a condition of salvation, Paul began by reminding the Galatians that they had received the Spirit and with Him all the

¹¹ *New American Standard Bible*, New Testament (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1963), p. 317.

blessings of salvation, not “by works of the law, but by the hearing of faith” (3:2). That this was God’s established way of justifying the sinner He demonstrated with the example of Abraham. Thus anyone who operated with the law for justification before God could not but end up under its curse, because the law demanded perfect obedience in every point, which no man could render. Nor was this necessary, since Christ has made perfect satisfaction to the law’s demands and “hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (3:13). The contention that the law was given after the promise and thus superseded and replaced it as the way of salvation Paul refuted by comparing God’s covenant of promise with a man’s last will and testament. As such a document, once made and legally confirmed, cannot be changed or annulled, so much more does God’s promise, made and confirmed to Abraham and his seed, stand, unchanged even by God’s law given 430 years later.

While Paul had thus, for all intents and purposes, seemingly taken care of the problem confronting the Galatian Christians, he was well aware of it that his opponents would very likely ask why God gave the law in the Old Testament if it was not to replace or at least supplement His way of salvation. He begins with the question: *Τί οὖν ὁ νόμος;* “Wherefore then serveth the law?” or, more literally, “Why then the law?” (3:19).¹² The immediate answer reads in the Greek: *τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη* (3:19). Some translate this as expressing purpose. Phillips has: “It was an addition made to underline the existence and extent of sin,”¹³ and The New English Bible: “It was added to make wrongdoing a legal offence.”¹⁴ This understanding of Paul’s words is further spelled out by Albert Barnes: “The meaning is, that the law was given to show the true nature of transgressions, or to show what was sin. It was not to reveal a way of justification, but it was to reveal the true nature of sin; to deter men from committing it; to declare its penalty; to convince men of it, and thus to be ‘ancillary’ to, and preparatory to, the word of redemption through the Redeemer. This is the true account of the law of God as given to apostate man, and this use of the law still exists.”¹⁵ This is all very true, and Paul comes to speak of this purpose of the law a few verses later, when he writes: “But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe” (3:22). What militates against understanding *τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν* of verse 19 as designating purpose is that, as Barnes correctly says, “this use of the law still exists,” whereas Paul’s subsequent words “till the seed should come to whom the promise was made,” would have to limit the extent of this purpose. John Brown’s reaction to Barnes’s view is, therefore, in place: “It is strange that so acute an interpreter did not see that the clause ‘till the seed should come,’ is quite inconsistent with this exegesis.”¹⁶ Prof. Koehler, too, remarks with reference to this clause: “Hence the Law of Moses is in force only for a specific time and therefore does not have independent significance. At the same time the remark about the seed implies that the Law exists only to help the Promise along.”¹⁷ While the improper preposition *χάριν* frequently denotes purpose, it is not infrequently used to introduce the cause for something¹⁸ and thus is correctly translated both by the King James Version and the Revised Standard Version of the Bible: “because of transgressions.” These made the introduction and giving of the law necessary, but Paul is quick to state that “it was added till the seed should come,” thus marking a God-intended limitation of time for its special function in God’s Old Testament economy.

It is of this special, temporary function of the law in the Old Testament that Paul comes to speak in the verses under consideration. The temporary nature of this function, in line with the words “till the seed should come,” is once more emphasized when Paul begins, “But before faith came, we were kept under the law,” and concludes the section, “But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.” For, regardless how

¹² *Revised Standard Version*, New Testament (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1946), p. 405; and others.

¹³ J.B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), p. 404.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 323.

¹⁵ Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament*, edited by Robert Frew. II Corinthians and Galatians (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 7th printing, 1965), p. 344.

¹⁶ John Brown, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians* (Evansville, Ind.: The Sovereign Grace Book Club, 1957), p. 149.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 94f.

¹⁸ *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (The University of Chicago Press, The Cambridge University Press, 1957) gives these two definitions: “1. indicating the goal; 2. indicating the reason.” Our passage, however, is listed under (1).

one understands the word “faith,” it must be obvious that whatever function is here ascribed to the law, it is pictured as limited in time.

But how is faith to be understood in these two clauses? There are those who insist that Paul means faith in the objective sense as *fides quae creditur*. One of these is Dr. Lenski, who writes: “It designates the *substance* of all justifying and saving faith in the hearts of believers” (emphasis ours).¹⁹ John Brown says it is “not the *act of believing*, but *the revelation itself*.”²⁰ Lightfoot comments: “The use of πίστις in these verses (vv. 22, 23, 25) links together its extreme uses, passing from one to the other, (1) Faith, the subjective state of the Christian, (2) *The* faith, the Gospel, the objective teaching, the system of which ‘faith’ is the leading feature.”²¹ Lightfoot here calls attention to the context. But the context—verses 24 and 26 ought to be included—would seem rather to suggest a uniform use of the word, which on the basis of verses 22, 24, and 26 would have to be the subjective sense. The Cremer-Koegel lexicon, which understands πίστις in this latter sense in all these verses, has this wide-sweeping observation: “To adopt the meaning *doctrina fidei* in the sense of a *fides quae creditur* is everywhere unnecessary.”²² It might appear that taking faith in the subjective sense would compel one to understand Paul as speaking in these verses of the time before and after the individual comes to believe in Christ as His Savior. Luther, in fact, commenting on these verses in his Galatians commentary, has a long dissertation on the service the law renders a person before he comes to faith, summing it up in the statement: “Therefore this custody under the Law should not be forever but should last only until faith.”²³ However, Luther is well aware of it that Paul is really speaking of a period in the history of God’s people, for he says a few paragraphs later, with reference to the words “shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed”: “Paul is referring to the time of fulfillment, when Christ came. But you should apply it not only to the time but also to feelings, for what happened historically and temporally when Christ came—namely, that He abrogated the Law and brought liberty and eternal life to light—this happens personally and spiritually every day in any Christian, in whom there are found the time of Law and the time of grace in alternation.”²⁴

Taking “faith” here, as the context strongly suggests, as *fides qua creditur* by no means rules out understanding Paul as speaking of the time “when Christ came.” The period from Moses to Christ, during which as at all times sinners were saved alone by faith in the Christ of God, was characterized by law, even as the period before Moses, by the absence of law.²⁵ Thus the period that was ushered in by the coming of Christ and saw the fulfilling of the law by Him in a special sense bears the characteristic of faith.²⁶ Prof. Koehler’s comments on this are to the point: “*But before faith came*, i.e., even (Koehler’s German *ehe das kam, dass man glaubt* hardly calls for an emphatic “even”) before people believed; before so much was made of faith; before the time which bears the signature of faith, the time of the New Testament. Before this time, hence, during the

¹⁹ R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians* (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1946), p. 178.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 171.

²¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 148.

²² *Biblich-theologisches Wörterbuch der Neutestamentlichen Gräzität*, von D. Dr. Herman Cremer, herausgegeben von D. Dr. Julius Koegel (Gotha, 1911), p. 893.

²³ *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 26: *Lectures on Galatians*, 1535. Translated by Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), p. 339.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

²⁵ Paul writes of the period before Moses, Romans 5:13f.: “For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.”

²⁶ Dr. Theodor Zahn comments on the opening clause of v. 23: “*Obwohl von dem Glauben Abr.’s and der Frommen überhaupt im A.T. und nach demselben von Pl nicht wenig gesagt wird (3, 6–9.11; Rm 4; Hb 11), wird doch hier und sofort wieder v. 25 vom Eintritt des Glaubens als einem geschichtlichen Ereignis gesprochen, welches der Zeit der Unterstellung Israels unter dem Gesetz gefolgt ist und ihr ein Ende gemacht hat, ähnlich wie von der Zeit vor Moses als einer gesetzlosen Zeit geredet wird (Rm 5, 13f., cf. Gl 3, 17–19), obwohl es seit Adam, Noah und Abr. nie völlig an jedem Gesetz gefehlt hat. Aber wie erst seit Moses das Gesetz das die Religion und die Religiosität massgebend Bestimmende geworden ist, so seit Christus der Glaube.*” *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, ausgelegt von D. Theodor Zahn, zweite Auflage (Leipzig, 1907), p. 182f.

time of the Old Testament, *we were kept under guard by the Law, shut up in order that faith should be revealed.* These words deal with the Jews of the Old Testament. They were kept under guard.”²⁷

“Kept under guard ... shut up,” this Old Testament function of the law is what Paul has in mind when in the next verse he calls it *παιδαγωγός ἡμῶν*. For the word *ὥστε* at the beginning of verse 24 may well be rendered “and so, thus, in this way.”²⁸ The word *παιδαγωγός* offers difficulty in translation, as the variety of words used in the New Testament translations testifies. Probably the least desirable is the word “schoolmaster” used in the King James Version. Others use “tutor,” “kind of tutor in charge of us,” “like a strict governess in charge of us,” “guardian,” “custodian.” A word that would include the last two ideas would seem to come closest to what Paul wants to express with *παιδαγωγός*. Luther’s *Zuchtmeister* is not bad, although it includes the idea of teaching. Literally the word means “boy-leader,” and to this the Arndt-Gingrich Greek-English Lexicon adds “the man, usually a slave, whose duty it was to conduct the boy or youth to and from school and to superintend his conduct generally; he was not a teacher (despite the present meaning of the derivative ‘pedagogue’ ...). When the young man became of age the *παιδαγωγός* was no longer needed.”²⁹ Of Paul’s use of the word with reference to the law this lexicon continues: “Paul evaluates the Mosaic Law as a *παιδαγωγός εἰς Χριστόν* Gal. 3:24. Humankind remains under its authority, *ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν* v. 25, until God declares, by sending His Son, that it has come of age.”³⁰ Paul’s use of the *γέγονεν* with *παιδαγωγός* can hardly be advanced against this interpretation. It is true, the Greek perfect commonly describes an action which, or the result of which, continues into the present. However, Prof. C.F.D. Moule states in a note: “It has been said that graphically Perfects can be described, some as a point followed by a line (.—), and some as a line followed by a point” (—.).³¹

Our interpretation assumes a temporal connotation for the preposition *εἰς*, both in verse 23 and 24.³² Thus the Revised Standard Version renders it: “until faith should be revealed ... until Christ came.” This temporal understanding would seem to be perfectly justified by the phrase “before faith came” (v. 23) and “But after that faith has come” (v. 25). Yet one can understand why Dr. Lenski and Prof. Koehler translated the *εἰς Χριστόν* “for Christ.”³³ Dr. Lenski points out that the ceremonial regulations of the law, which “served just as a slave-guardian did for the boy in his charge ... focused on Christ; they were full of types of Christ.... None of them had any meaning apart from Christ who was about to be revealed; all of them had served their historic purpose when Christ was revealed.”³⁴ Prof. Koehler, speaking of the law, writes: “It performs minor external services for the Gospel.... They have Christ as their goal.”³⁵

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 98.

²⁸ A.T. Robertson says: “This conjunction is merely *ὥς* and *τέ* = ‘and so.’ In Homer *ὥς* is both a demonstrative and a relative. Either idea may appear in *ὥστε*. A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, fifth edition (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., Hodder & Stoughton, 1931), p. 999.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 608.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 608.

³¹ C.F.D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 16.

³² The KJV translates it with “unto” in v. 23 and “to bring us unto Christ” in v. 24. This may have been prompted by the function of the *εἰς Χριστόν* as a “boy-leader,” but it is hardly correct to say that it is the function of the law, least of all the moral law, to bring us to Christ. Nor can Luther be called upon in support of this when he writes: “The sinner should know that the Law does not disclose sins and humble him to make him despair, but that the Law was instituted by God so that by its accusation and crushing it might drive him to Christ, the Savior and Comforter.” *Op. cit.*, p. 348.

³³ This comes close to Luther’s *auf Christum*, which for him, despite what else he says about it, has a temporal and temporary connotation. He writes: “Thus Paul says that the Law is nothing but a custodian. But he adds ‘until Christ came’ (German: ... *ein Zuchtmeister, des Zucht doch nicht länger, denn nur allein bis auf Christum wahren soll*). Thus he said above (v. 19): ‘The Law was added because of transgression, till the Offspring should come’; and (v. 22) ‘Scripture consigned all things to sin, that what was promised, etc.’; and (v. 23) ‘we were confined under the Law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed.’ Therefore the Law is not simply a custodian; it is a custodian ‘until Christ came.’ ” *Op. cit.*, p. 346.

³⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 182.

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 99f..

In this way both Lenski and Koehler prepare for the immediately following purpose clause, “that we might be justified by faith,” Prof. Koehler adding: “It is not the Law which preaches Christ. The Gospel does that. It is not the Law which educates man, but again only the Gospel. But the Law performs certain external menial services so that the Gospel may reach the hard heart of man, in order that man may be justified.”³⁶ Dr. Lenski, in keeping with his reference to the ceremonial regulations of the law, adds: “But this entire law ever pointed them to Christ, their Messiah, so that these Jews might believe in him as Abraham had believed and had been declared righteous as a result of faith.... This does not mean that the law worked faith and justification. The law never does that (v. 21b). But this we may say: as regulations all these were law, but all the types and figures in these regulations that referred to Christ were gospel.”³⁷ Whether or not one follows either one of these interpreters in rendering εἰς Χριστόν, there is no mistaking Paul’s telling us with the purpose clause that God’s purpose in dealing with His people of old, also in giving them the law as παιδαγωγός, ever was that they, and all after them, might be justified by faith in Christ.

Just what was the law’s function as παιδαγωγός εἰς Χριστόν that aided God in achieving this purpose? We need to take a closer look at two words in verse 23 to find our answer: ἐφρουρούμεθα and the immediately following συγκλειόμενοι. Φρουρέω (probably derived from προοράω ‘foresee’) means, according to the Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon: “1. *guard* ... 2. *hold in custody, confine*.” The second meaning is to be preferred in our passage, especially because of the phrase ὑπὸ νόμον “under the law.” The imperfect form presents this as a condition which obtained throughout the period spoken of. Συγκλείω, used also in verse 22, which literally means ‘to enclose something, e.g., fish in a net’ (so used in Luke 5:6), stresses the idea of confinement already contained in φρουρέω. Burton, commenting on ἐφρουρούμεθα, says: “... the participle συγκλειόμενοι compels us to understand it here of a restrictive guarding.”³⁸

Thus, as the attendant boy-leader was in charge of his master’s son, superintended his conduct, restrained and chastised him, and kept him from becoming involved with wicked boys, so the law was given to serve God’s people in the Old Testament, to keep them from sinful involvement with the nations about them and to help preserve them as bearers of the promise, the nation from whose midst the Savior was to come. Among those who describe this Old Testament service of the law none, in the opinion of this writer, expresses it better than John Brown: “The apostle is speaking of the design of the law in reference to the Jewish church or people as a body, and their situation under it. They were kept shut up under it. They were kept as under the care of a sentinel, they were shut up in a fortress, or confined within certain limits. They were kept from mingling with the rest of mankind, preserved a distinct people; and to gain this object, were subjected to many peculiar usages. The law was ‘the middle wall of partition’ which kept them distinct from the other nations of the world. The making one city the seat of religion, the laws with regard to food and ceremonial pollution, the institutions directly opposed to the prevailing customs of the surrounding nations, all these formed a more powerful barrier to commixture with the surrounding nations than any physical separation of mountains, or seas, or distance could have done.” Very properly he continues: “The apostle seems obviously to have intended to convey the accessory idea of *uneasy confinement*. Their state was necessary, and it was happy when compared with that of the heathen nations; but still it was a state of restriction and confinement, and in this point of view not desirable. This state, however, was never intended to be permanent. It was intended to serve a purpose, and when that purpose was served, it was intended to terminate.”³⁹

Yes, obviously Paul was picturing the state of the Old Testament church, while necessary and perfectly suited for that time, as something not in the least or ever to be desired or to be reinstated once it was terminated according to God’s design. This is why Paul concludes our section: “But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian” (RSV), and appeals to the Galatians in the very next verse: “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (3:26). That is also why he had at the very outset in this letter

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99f..

³⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 182f..

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 199.

³⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 172.

expressed his amazement that the Galatians were so soon turning away from Christ, who had called them, to that different “gospel,” and why he called them “foolish Galatians” (3:1) and asked them: “How can you revert to dead and sterile principles and consent to be under their power all over again?” (4:9, according to Phillips). Here the Galatians were enjoying a freedom from the law for which the believers of the Old Testament might well have envied them, and yet they seemed willing and ready to let themselves be placed back into a slavery under the law which the Old Testament believers felt as a burden. The admonition, with which Paul introduces the hortatory section of his letter, was very much in place: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (5:1). So also were the strong words which follow in place: “Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”⁴⁰

3. Since our passage about the law as *παιδαγωγὸς εἰς Χριστόν* refers to the state of the Old Testament church under the law, one might ask what relevance these words have for us and our time. Is not their value merely this, that they bring us some interesting historical information about the days before and immediately after Christ? To say this would mean to be oblivious to and ignorant of what is going on in the ecclesiastical world of today, all of which makes it most necessary to hear what Paul says here. We need to remember that Paul’s emphasis in the section under consideration, as elsewhere in this letter, is on the fact that God intended His church to be under the law for only a limited time, and that was until the fullness of time when He would send forth His Son “made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (4:4f.), full-fledged, mature sons who no longer need the law as *παιδαγωγὸς*. We need also to remember that this and more was said by Paul in support of his earnest but loving warning to all his readers, also those of today, not to let themselves be placed under the law again and thus be robbed of their precious freedom in Christ. Now, while there is continual talk about freedom in our day, also in and by the churches, so much of what is taught and advocated in the churches is nothing else than an effort, conscious or not, to bring men into slavery under the law, and so is a perversion and corruption of the gospel.

The criticism, or even indictment, that the churches are not concerning themselves enough with the physical side of man, the ever-growing movement to have the churches take the lead, at least a more active part, in promoting poverty programs, racial desegregation, open housing, and other social action, the frequently made claims that the gospel message of the cross is no longer, if ever it was, relevant to man’s needs, the increasing substitution of the social gospel for the gospel of the cross, what are these if not attempts to put the church of today under the law? And this spirit of the law is ever threatening to enter our churches and our work also. Because it so often appears as though the preaching of the unadulterated gospel fails to produce desired fruit, it is so easy to resort to other means to bring this about. Overemphasis on externals in the worship and life of the church, dependence on methods, in themselves good and useful, rather than on the power of the gospel to produce fruits of sanctification, also in the various aspects of Christian stewardship—these are some ways of confusing law and gospel against which all of us need to be warned and to be on guard.

We dare, of course, never neglect to preach the law, and in this we have not only the example of the author of Galatians, but also the perfect example of the Savior Himself, who taught the law in all its severity to show men their sins, who threatened stubborn, self-righteous sinners with the condemnation of the law, and who presented, as He did in the Sermon on the Mount, the law in its true spiritual sense as God’s guide line for a Christian life of sanctification. But when the preaching of the gospel is called for, as when we are dealing with penitent sinners or when we are exhorting the believer to a Christian life, we dare not in the least detract from its sweet comfort and its life-producing power by anything that only in a little way smacks of law. We must let the troubled, penitent sinner hear in clear and undistorted tones the sweet, unconditional invitation of the Savior: “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). We must let the full power of His encouraging words be felt by those who in faith and love are determined to follow His path of

⁴⁰ *New American Standard Bible*, New Testament, p. 322.

righteousness: “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

Because of the evil flesh that still clings to us we must tell ourselves, as Paul told the Galatians: “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (5:13f.). But lest we look to the law for the source of our love and strength to please God and keep His law, we need to be reminded of what Paul says in Romans (8:3f.) about the law’s inability to produce any good in us: “For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (RSV).

Thus it is characteristic of a Christian to render obedience to the law of God; yet he is not driven to such obedience, as one under the law, by the demands and threats of the law, or even by the reward it holds out to those who keep it, but he does this as a loving child of God who like Paul delights in the law of God after the inward man (Rom. 7:22). And so Luther correctly calls attention to what appears as a contradiction in the life of a Christian: “We are under the law and yet not under the law,” and goes on to explain, “i.e., though we live under the law, we nevertheless are not in subjection under the law, but remain free and unmoved by it. This occurs when I in faith live under the law and perform the works of the law voluntarily and with delight, not by coercion of the commandment or with the thought of being saved by works. On the contrary, I move entirely in the atmosphere of faith; through faith I have all I need, am rich and blessed. The works, however, I would do even though there were no law, with pleasure and with a happy, willing heart, yes, all that the law might ask of me, which formerly I could not do when I had no faith. But I do not rest on this, nor do I trust in my works, but my life flows entirely from faith. Thus I live under the law and yet am not under the law: for the works I do, I do not because the law demands them; no, I am free from the law through faith, which does not let itself be bound by any law or work. Faith, however, is by no means idle, but produces really good works; still it does not put its trust in the works, but alone in the grace of God, Galatians 2:20.”⁴¹

⁴¹ Taken from Chr. Eberle, *Luthers Episteln Auslegung* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Ev. Bücherstiftung, 1886), p. 11.