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For Our Good Always

*Studies on the Message and Influence of
Deuteronomy
in Honor of Daniel I. Block*

Edited by

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Paul's Reading of Deuteronomy

Law and Grace

DOUGLAS MOO

The book of Deuteronomy has had a significant influence on the letters of Paul. Quotations are the most obvious evidence of this impact. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 13 times:¹

- Rom 7:7 = Deut 5:21 (and/or Exod 20:17)
- Rom 10:6–8 = Deut 30:11–14
- Rom 10:19 = Deut 32:21
- Rom 11:8 = Deut 29:3 (2:4 LXX; mixed with Isa 29:10)
- Rom 12:19 = Deut 32:35
- Rom 13:9 = Deut 5:17–21 (and/or Exod 20:13–17)
- Rom 15:10 = Deut 32:43
- 1 Cor 9:9 = Deut 25:4
- 2 Cor 13:1 = Deut 19:15
- Gal 3:10 = Deut 27:26
- Gal 3:13 = Deut 21:23
- Eph 6:2–3 = Deut 5:16 (and/or Exod 20:12)
- 1 Tim 5:18 = Deut 25:4

Only Isaiah (22 times) and the Psalms (19 times) are quoted by Paul more often; Genesis is tied with Deuteronomy at 13. The 13 quotations can be grouped into four categories.

Author's Note: I offer this essay to my friend and colleague, Dan Block. He will not agree with everything in this essay (indeed, I fear that he may not agree with much of it!), but I trust that he will forgive me for my overly Pauline reading of his beloved Deuteronomy.

1. Paul marks 11 of these as quotations by using an introductory formula. The two without such an introductory formula—the references to the Decalogue in Rom 13:9 and to the “two or three witnesses” principle in 2 Cor 13:1—are clearly intended to be quotations (although it is impossible to know whether, in Rom 13:9, Paul depends on Exodus or Deuteronomy, on both, or on neither [if he quotes from memory]). See E. E. Ellis, *Paul and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957) 150–54; R. N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 108–11; D.-A. Koch, *Die Schrift bei Paulus: Untersuchungen Zur Verwendung Und Zum Verständnis Der Schrift Bei Paulus* (BHT 69; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1986) 33. These scholars, and others, come up with different numbers because of the inherent subjectivity in identifying quotations (as opposed to allusions) and because of the difficulty of how to count combination quotations.

(1) Paul cites commandments from Deuteronomy as relevant in some way to the conduct of Christians. He quotes three times from the Decalogue (Deut 5:16 in Eph 6:2–3; Deut 5:17–21 in Rom 13:9; Deut 5:21 in Rom 7:7); he twice applies the “don’t muzzle the ox” command from Deut 25:4 to the support of Christian ministers (1 Cor 9:9 and 1 Tim 5:18); and he cites the “two or three witnesses” requirement from Deut 19:15 as a warning to the Corinthians (2 Cor 13:1).²

(2) Paul cites the Lord’s claim that he is the one who “avenges” (Deut 32:35a) to ground his exhortation to believers to refrain from taking revenge (Rom 12:19).

(3) Paul uses the declaration in Deut 21:33 that a curse falls on executed criminals whose bodies are “hung on a tree” to elaborate his claim that on the cross Christ took on himself “the curse of the law” (Gal 3:13).

(4) Paul cites three passages from Deuteronomy to support his particular reading of the history of salvation. He repeats the warning about violating any of the commandments in Deuteronomy (Deut 27:26) to warn believers about seeking justification by means of “the works of the law” (Gal 3:10); he uses language from Moses’ claim about the “nearness” of God’s law to describe his own gospel message (Deut 30:11–14 in Rom 10:6–8); and he uses language from “the Song of Moses” (or, as Dan Block would prefer, “the Song of Yahweh”) to characterize his own day, when the “nations” (or “Gentiles”) have joined with Israel in rejoicing in God’s faithfulness (Deut 32:43 in Rom 15:10³).

Paul therefore quotes Deuteronomy for parenetical, theological (in the service of parenesis), christological, and salvation-historical purposes—a breadth of usage that testifies further to the influence of Deuteronomy on his theology and teaching.

2. The way in which Paul considers these commandments to be relevant to his Christian audience is quite disputed. For an overview of my view, see D. J. Moo, “Jesus and the Authority of the Mosaic Law,” *JSNT* 20 (1984) 3–49; idem, “The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View,” in *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian: Five Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993) 319–76. You may contrast this with the view of this volume’s honoree in D. I. Block, “Preaching Old Testament Law to New Testament Christians,” in idem, *The Gospel According to Moses: Theological and Ethical Reflections on the Book of Deuteronomy* [Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012] 104–36; first published in *Hiphil (Scandinavian Evangelical E-Journal)* 3 (2006) 1–24, and subsequently published in three parts in *Ministry* 78.5 (2006) 5–11; 78.7 (2006) 12–16; 78.9 (2006) 15–18.

3. This is not the place to enter into the difficult textual issues in Deut 32:43. Paul, at least—as is his habit—quotes the LXX. For a helpful assessment of the textual problem that views Paul’s quotation as deriving from the most original textual tradition, see D. I. Block, “Text Critical Issues in Deuteronomy 32:43,” in idem, *How I Love Your Torah, O LORD! Studies in the Book of Deuteronomy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011) 185–88.

Although not as obvious, the many allusions to Deuteronomy that Paul weaves into his own teaching are also important indicators of his concern with this book. But perhaps even more important, though more difficult to pin down, is the impact of Deuteronomy's overall theological perspective on Paul's understanding of salvation history and its culmination in Christ.⁴

In this essay, I will focus on two of Paul's quotations of Deuteronomy—Deut 27:26 in Gal 3:10 and Deut 30:12–14 in Rom 10:6–8. The analyses of these Pauline passages will demonstrate this larger contextual reading of Deuteronomy as a whole.

*Deuteronomy 27:26 in Galatians 3:10*⁵

Paul's quotation of Deut 27:26 comes toward the beginning of the great central argument of Galatians (3:1–5:12). This argument is framed by two passages of rebuke and exhortation (3:1–6, 5:1–12). In 2:15–21, which is a key transitional passage between the opening section and this central section of the letter, Paul briefly delineates the gospel. This next part of the letter is a prolonged defense of that gospel. Especially important in this defense is the key distinction that Paul first introduces in 2:16: "works of the law" vs. "Christ faith." This antithesis is a thread that weaves together the disparate subjects of this part of the letter. In the opening passage, in which Paul sets the tone for the argument to follow, he confronts his readers with this fundamental issue: did they experience the Spirit by "the works of the law" or by "the hearing that accompanies faith" (3:2, 5)? This contrast, stated with several different combinations ("law," "doing" vs. "faith," "believing," "[Jesus] Christ faith") surfaces repeatedly in the argument that follows.

Narrowing our focus one more step brings us to Gal 3:7–29, a discrete section that is bracketed by a concern to show that the Abrahamic promise was intended all along to include Gentiles, a situation that has come to pass "in Christ." At the same time, and with equal importance, Paul continues to develop the key contrast he introduced in 2:16 and which becomes the basis for his exhortation in 3:1–6: "works of the law"/"law" vs. "Christ faith" as the means of becoming the sons of Abraham. Having expounded the positive side of this antithesis in 3:7–9 (one is justified and receives the Abrahamic blessing by faith),

4. See, for the influence on Paul of "the Deuteronomic view of Israel's history," J. M. Scott, "Paul's Use of Deuteronomic Tradition," *JBL* 112 (1993) 645–65.

5. The section that follows is built heavily on my treatment of this text in my forthcoming commentary on Galatians (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013 [forthcoming]).

Paul turns in 3:10–14 to the negative side (those who seek to relate to God by works of the law/law are under a curse). It is at this point that Paul quotes Deut 27:26.

The γάρ ‘for’ suggests that Gal 3:10 explains an implied negative counterpart to v. 9: “those who are of faith” inherit the Abrahamic blessing *and not “those who are of works of the law”* because. . . .⁶ Specifically, Paul claims, Ὅσοι . . . ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσὶν, ὑπὸ κατάραν εἰσὶν: “as many as are out of the works of the law, are under a curse.”⁷ The word ὅσοι, in contrast to οἱ [ἐκ πίστεως] in v. 9, expresses “an element of ‘uncertainty’ or ‘potentiality’ regarding the membership” of this group.⁸ Paul is, in effect, warning the Galatians about joining this group. To be “under a curse” is to be under God’s judgment for failure to live up to his covenant requirements. Reference to “curse,” and especially to the blessing/cursing contrast, draws attention to Deuteronomy 27–30, where Moses sets before the people of Israel the alternatives of blessing for covenant faithfulness and cursing for unfaithfulness (19 of the 48 LXX references to ἐπικατάρατος ‘cursed’ occur in these chapters; and six of the 46 references to κατάρα ‘curse’). It is no surprise, then, that Paul quotes from these chapters in Gal 3:10b. His base text is clearly Deut 27:26, the climax and summary of a series of curses for various sins. Paul’s version of the text differs slightly from both the LXX and the MT.⁹

MT	LXX	Paul
אָרור אִשׁר לֹא־יִקִּים אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה־הַזֹּאת לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתָם	ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ὃς οὐκ ἐμμενεῖ ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς λόγοις τοῦ νόμου τούτου τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτοῦς	ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ὃς οὐκ ἐμμένει πᾶσιν τοῖς γεγραμμένοις ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τοῦ νόμου τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτά
“Cursed be the one who does not uphold the words of this law to do them”	“Cursed be every person who does not remain in all the words of this law to do them”	“Cursed be <u>everyone</u> who does not <u>remain in</u> <u>all that is written in the</u> <u>book of the law to do</u> <u>them</u> ”

The differences between Paul’s wording and the LXX are minor: he omits LXX ἄνθρωπος (which has no explicit Hebrew equivalent), drops

6. F. Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief* (5th ed.; HTKNT 9; Freiburg: Herder, 1988) 223.
7. Quotations from Scripture, unless indicated otherwise, are my own translation.
8. C. D. Stanley, “‘Under a Curse’: A Fresh Reading of Galatians 3:10–14,” *NTS* 36 (1990) 498.
9. Single underline indicates divergence from the Hebrew; double underline from the Greek; dotted underline from both.

the ἐν after ἐμμενεῖ, substitutes τοῖς γεγραμμένοις ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ for τοῖς λόγοις, and uses the neuter plural αὐτά in place of the masculine plural αὐτούς. The importance of doing everything written in this law/book of this law is repeatedly stressed in Deuteronomy:¹⁰

- Deut 28:61: "The LORD will also bring on you every kind of sickness and disaster not recorded in this Book of the Law, until you are destroyed."
- Deut 29:20[21]: "The LORD will single them out from all the tribes of Israel for disaster, according to all the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law."
- Deut 29:26[27]: "Therefore the LORD anger burned against this land, so that he brought on it all the curses written in this book."
- Deut 30:10: "if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul . . ."¹¹

Of possible interpretive significance is one key difference between the MT, on the one hand, and both the LXX and Paul on the other: the occurrence of πάντων ("all") in the Greek. However, because similar passages in the MT of Deuteronomy have an "all" (e.g., Deut 6:24), it is likely again that Paul (or the LXX before him) have simply assimilated the wording of Deut 27:26 to these other texts.¹² On the whole, then, the textual differences probably have no interpretive significance.¹³

While obviously citing Deut 27:26, then, there is every reason to suspect that Paul views this verse as an expression of a key theological thrust of Deuteronomy: that continued enjoyment of the blessing of God in the land of Israel is dependent on the people's faithful obedience to the law of Moses, while a failure to do that law would result in curse and exclusion from the land. Paul connects this quotation to his claim in the first part of the verse with a γάρ 'for', showing that this quotation explains or grounds that claim. How to understand the logical relationship between the two parts of the verse is quite controversial. And a

10. U. Heckel, *Der Segen im Neuen Testament* (WUNT 2.15; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002) 129.

11. On this theme in Deuteronomy, see M. Noth, *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966).

12. Note also that the *Sam. Tg.*, *Lev. Rab.* 25, and *y. Soṭah* 21d include a comparable word in their quotations of this verse.

13. Contra, e.g., Koch, *Die Schrift*, 120, 164; C. D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Techniques in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* (SNTSMS 69; Cambridge: University Press, 1992) 239; R. Hays, "Galatians," *NIB* 11:258.

decision about this matter is important, because the verse is a kind of linchpin in the argument of Galatians 3. Its interpretation determines—and, perhaps, more often, is determined by—the nature of the larger argument that Paul is making in these verses.

The problem created by this verse is a well-known one, identified as long ago as Luther: the quotation in the second part of the verse seems to prove just the opposite of what Paul says in the first part of the verse.¹⁴ Deut 27:26 encourages people to obey the law as a means of avoiding the curse. Yet Paul claims that it is just those people who are bound up with law who suffer that curse. An initial response to this problem is to note that Paul refers not to people who are doing the law but to people who are “out of works of the law” (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου). As the parallel with “those who are out of faith” (οἱ ἐκ πίστεως) in Gal 3:9 (and cf. vv. 7, 8, 11, 12) suggests, the phrase refers not to those who “do the law” but to those who are somehow identified with the law. This identification with the law has usually been taken to refer to people who, as Aquinas put it, “trust in the works of the Law and believe that they are made just by them.”¹⁵ The ἐξ would then have the instrumental force that it appears to have in parallel texts (2:16; 3:2, 5), and the ὅσοι would have the rhetorical effect of warning the Galatians about taking this step. On this reading of the initial clause, the quotation functions as the statement of a principle that explains why the curse comes on such people: *everything* that is written in the law must be done if the curse is to be avoided.

But one more logical step is necessary if this principle is to ground Paul’s claim: the assumption that no one can, in fact, do *everything* that is written in the law. Put in the form of a syllogism, the logic of Gal 3:10 would then look like this:

Only those who do everything written in the law will escape the curse (v. 10b);

No one can do everything written in the law (assumed);

Therefore: No one who depends on doing the law will escape the curse (v. 10a).

This way of making Paul’s argument work has been the traditional approach to this verse and continues to be held by a significant number of interpreters.¹⁶ But a rival interpretation has gained considerable

14. *Lectures on Galatians* 1535, Chapters 1–4 (Luther’s Works 26; Saint Louis: Concordia, 1963) 252.

15. See J. Riches, *Galatians through the Centuries* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008) 173.

16. Among older interpreters: Ambrosiaster, who comments on 3:10, “The commandments are so great that it is impossible to keep them” (cf. G. Bray, *Ambrosiaster*:

support in recent years.¹⁷ Rather than being an implicit statement of a principle, Paul's quotation, according to these scholars, is historically oriented. The text serves to summarize the state of Israel as a people in Paul's day: under a curse because of persistent covenant disobedience. Advocates of this interpretation argue that "those who are out of the works of the law" refers to people "whose identity is derived from works of the Law"¹⁸: the ἐξ would then function as it does in 2:12, where τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς means "belonging to the group of people who are circumcised."¹⁹ Paul would then be reminding the Galatian Gentiles of the unfortunate situation of Israel before God as a means of warning them not to join Israel by undertaking "works of the law." Should the Galatians identify with Israel by taking on the distinctive "markers" of Judaism—"the works of the law"—they would fall under the curse

Commentaries on Galatians-Philemon [Ancient Christian Texts; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009] 16). Chrysostom is explicit about this in his comments on 3:10: "... here again he establishes his point by a text which concisely states both points: that no man has fulfilled the Law (wherefore they are under the curse), and, that Faith justifies" (*Comm. Gal.*, on 3:10 [NPNF 13:26]). See also comments on 2:17, 19; 3:2, 12; 5:2. See also, e.g., Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* 1535, Chapters 1–4, 253; J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations* (7th ed.; London: MacMillan and Co., 1881) 137; E. de W. Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921) 164. Among more recent scholars, see especially T. R. Schreiner, "Is Perfect Obedience to the Law Possible? A Re-examination of Galatians 3:10," *JETS* 27 (1984) 151–60; and see also, e.g., F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 159; Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief*, 224–26; R. N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas: Word, 1990) 117–18; H. Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought: A Contribution to the Development of Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1984) 18–19; B. W. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham's God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998) 134–42; G. Waters, *The End of Deuteronomy in the Epistles of Paul* (WUNT 2:221; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 93–100; S. Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 139–52.

17. In fact, several alternative explanations have been put forward, but the two above are the most popular and the most likely. However, I should briefly mention the view of J. Dunn, which has its starting point in his interpretation of "works of the law" in terms of a law-doing distinctive to Judaism and thus inherently antagonistic to Gentiles. It is, then, those who insist on maintaining these Jewish boundary markers who are missing the true intent and purpose of God's law to include Gentiles. They do not "remain in the law" as re-configured in Paul's interpretation and thus fall under the curse (esp. J. D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993] 171–73; cf. also J. R. Wisdom, *Blessing for the Nations and the Curse of the Law* [WUNT 2.113; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001]).

18. Hays, "Galatians," 258.

19. See, e.g., T. D. Gordon, "Abraham and Sinai Contrasted in Galatians 3:6–14," in *The Law is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant* (ed. B. D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko and D. VanDrunen; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2009) 240–58.

that hangs over Israel.²⁰ This interpretation fits neatly into the more narrativial reading of Paul's argument in this part of Galatians that has gained support in recent years. Yet I think there are good reasons for preferring the "traditional" view—although modified a bit in terms of the more historical approach.²¹

Particularly important is the much-debated phrase, "works of the law." While I cannot develop the argument here, this phrase is a general way of referring to "doing" the law. It does not mean identification with the law or the possession of the law: the "works" in the phrase is significant.²² In this context, moreover, it is just this "doing" that Paul emphasizes, both in the quotation—what is written in the book of the law is to be done (τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτά) and in Gal 3:12—"the one who *does* [the commandments] will live by them" (Lev 18:5; my emphasis).²³ The same emphasis is found in 5:3: "Now I testify again to every man who wants to be circumcised that he is obligated *to do* the whole law" (again, my emphasis). While the "law" in view is, of course, the law of Moses, and much of Paul's argument in Galatians rests on the contrast between the era of the law and the era of fulfillment in Christ,²⁴ this verse, in its context, suggests that Paul is also concerned with the fundamental

20. See esp. Stanley, "Under a Curse," 481–511; J. M. Scott, "'For as Many as Are of Works of the Law Are under a Curse' (Galatians 3:10)," in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. C. A. Evans and J. M. Sanders; JSNTSup 83; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) 187–221; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1993) 141–48; cf. also Hays, "Galatians," 258; F. Thielman, *From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul's View of the Law in Galatians and Romans* (NovTSup 61; Leiden: Brill, 1989) 66–69; J. P. Braswell, "'The Blessing of Abraham'" Versus 'The Curse of the Law': Another Look at Gal 3:10–13," *WTJ* 53 (1991) 74–76; A. Caneday, "'Redeemed from the Curse of the Law': The Use of Deut 21:22–23 in Gal 3:13," *TJ* 10 (1989) 192–95; W. Dumbrell, "Abraham and the Abrahamic Covenant in Galatians 3:1–14," in *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul's Mission in Honour of P. T. O'Brien* (ed. P. Bolt and M. Thompson; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000) 23–25, 27–29; and, in modified form, D. I. Starling, *Not My People: Gentiles as Exiles in Pauline Hermeneutics* (BZNW 184; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011) 49–52.

21. For many of the points I make below, see esp. Schreiner, "Is Perfect Obedience to the Law Possible?"; *ibid.*, "Paul and Perfect Obedience to the Law: An Evaluation of the View of E. P. Sanders," *WTJ* 47 (1985) 257–66.

22. See D. J. Moo, "'Law,' 'Works of the Law,' and Legalism in Paul," *WTJ* 45 (1983) 73–100.

23. M. Silva, *Interpreting Galatians: Explorations in Exegetical Method* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001) 259–60; A. A. Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001) 151–53; R. H. Gundry, "Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul," *Bib* 66 (1985) 15–32.

24. Dumbrell ("Abraham," 23–25), therefore, suggests that the implied premise in Paul's argument is: "since the era of the Mosaic covenant has now ended." Because the coming of Christ had ended the covenant and its associated provisions for atonement,

issue of “doing.” A simple claim that Christ has superseded the law may be adequate for Paul’s purposes; but we might expect him to push farther and ask why it was necessary for Christ to supersede the law. In other words, while much of Paul’s argument in this letter could be summarized as “doing is wrong because (and when) it is tied to an outmoded law,” Paul here suggests that he has moved to a deeper and more universal issue: “doing is wrong because a doing that is adequate to please God is impossible.” This argument, central to Reformation soteriology, is, I think, present in our text. Another reason to prefer the traditional interpretation is the text that Paul quotes. There are many OT texts, even some from Deuteronomy 27–30 (e.g., 29:26[27]) that refer more clearly and obviously to the curse that fell on Israel. Paul, instead, selects a text that focuses on individuals—“everyone who” (πᾶς ὅς)—and on their consistent obedience—“remain . . . to do” (ἐμμένει . . . ποιῆσαι).²⁵ The quotation serves perfectly as a way of reminding the Galatian Christians of a central principle in the law: that blessing and cursing depend on doing.²⁶

A major objection to this traditional interpretation is the need to assume a critical point: the impossibility of fulfilling the law. Not only must we assume this step in the logic, but the assumption is one, it is argued, that neither Paul’s argument in Galatians nor his Jewish milieu can justify. The first point to make in response to this objection is that both views require that a central element in the argument be assumed: the inability to fulfill the law on the traditional view and identification with Israel on the revisionist view. Nevertheless, revisionists argue that the assumption they make is much more likely than what is required in the traditional view. For the idea that humans could not do the law perfectly was not, it is argued, a common teaching in the Judaism of Paul’s day; nor does Paul clearly teach it anywhere else. How could he then assume that his readers would infer it?

In fact, the assumption is not nearly as unlikely as it might appear. If the Galatian Christians had even a cursory acquaintance with the OT, they would readily have assumed this point. The failure of the Israelites

identification with that covenant by means of “the works of the law” inevitably puts a person under the curse.

25. The infinitive ποιῆσαι might indicate result but should probably be taken closely with ἐμμένει in a single verbal idea: “keep on doing” (NET); or, better, “remain in by doing.”

26. On the theology and significance of blessing and cursing in Deuteronomy 27–30, see esp. Waters, *The End of Deuteronomy*, 29–77, who questions whether a single clear perspective can be read from these chapters.

to “confirm” the covenant God made with them by obeying the law is clearly predicted within Deuteronomy itself (31:14–29) and becomes the leitmotif of Israel’s history. God sends his people into exile because “[a]ll Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you” (Dan 9:11). This history reveals, then, innate human failure to remain consistently oriented toward God and his law, a situation to be remedied only by God’s intervention to transform human beings, replacing the “heart of stone” with a “heart of flesh” and sending his Spirit to enable his people to produce the obedience that he expects (Ezek 36:24–28). It is precisely this innate human inability to do God’s law that Paul himself elaborates in Rom 7:14–25: the Jew is in despair because he or she is unable to “do” the good law of God that God gave Israel. The law cannot bring the life it promises (7:10) because it “was weakened by the flesh” (8:3).²⁷ Granted, then, the massive OT witness to the problem of human inability to do the law, a viewpoint that Paul explicitly takes over in his other letters, it is hardly an arbitrary “reading into” this passage in Galatians to think that Paul assumes it here.

Nor does Paul’s Jewish context render such an assumption improbable. There is considerable confusion about just what the Jewish view was and how it might relate to Paul’s argument. Sanders’s summary of the Jewish viewpoint may be taken as representative: “the law is not too difficult to be satisfactorily fulfilled; nevertheless more or less everybody sins at some time or other . . . ; but God has appointed means of atonement which are available to all.”²⁸ As Sanders notes, the Jewish view was *not* that human beings could perfectly “do” the law, in the sense of successfully obeying all its commandments. Jewish claims that the law could be “done” mean, in effect, that a Jew can be viewed as being free of condemnation for inevitable transgressions by taking advantage of the provision for forgiveness via sacrifice included in that same law (and it is possible that this is what Paul means when he claims that, as a Jew, he was “faultless” with respect to the “righteousness based on the law” [Phil 3:6]).

Against this Jewish background, there are two ways to understand Paul’s language about the need to do all the law. First, he might mean that the requirement to undertake the whole law involves not only obedience to the commandments in general but also reliance on the law’s provisions for atonement via sacrifice. The general reference to “doing all the law” in Gal 5:4 could have this sense. But 3:10, especially granted

27. For this reading of Romans 7, see D. J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 442–51.

28. E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983) 28.

the context in Deuteronomy from which Paul draws this language, is less susceptible to such a meaning. And, of course, it is well known that Paul generally ignores, for whatever reason, provisions for sacrifice and worship in his discussion of the law.

The second interpretation is, then, more likely: Paul assumes that the sacrifice of Christ has rendered the OT provisions for atonement null and void (see Gal 1:4; 3:1, 13). The fact that Paul never touches on this matter in Galatians suggests that the definitive nature of Christ's atoning sacrifice was common ground with his opponents. In the time after Christ, then, one is faced with two, and only two, options: find justification in Christ by faith; or find justification through the law, a justification that can now, apart from the provision of sacrifice, be secured only by doing "all" the law.²⁹

My reading of Paul's appeal to Deut 27:26 in Gal 3:10 has important implications for the wider argument of the letter. Many recent interpreters, especially (though not exclusively) those associated with the "new perspective," argue that Paul's polemic against the law in Galatians is entirely salvation-historical and sociological. The Galatian Gentiles are not to put themselves under the law because the era of the law has ended and because the law, given to Israel as her own covenant document, excludes Gentiles. The former point is no doubt an important part of Paul's argument in Galatians. Yet the logic I have argued for in Gal 3:10 suggests that, while not as evident in Galatians as in Romans, the underlying anthropology of human inability to do the law is also present in Galatians.³⁰ "Works of the law," like any other human "work," always fall short of what God expects of his creatures,

29. See esp. A. A. Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001) 215–22; and also T. Laato, "Paul's Anthropological Considerations: Two Problems," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism, Vol. 2: The Paradoxes of Paul* (ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O'Brien, and M. A. Seifrid; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004) 343–46.

30. This is the critical issue in assessing the ultimate theological significance of the argument in Galatians. This point is recognized by, among others, B. Matlock and A. A. Das. Matlock says, "... the question it [the New Perspective] brings, particularly to Paul's Epistles to the Galatians and Romans, concerns Paul's overall argumentative context: is there, in Paul, a principled contrast between 'doing' (the law) and 'believing' (the gospel), or is the contrast between an 'exclusive' (a Jewish law) and an 'inclusive' (a universally accessible faith) approach to God's saving prerogatives?" (*Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul: Paul's Interpreters and the Rhetoric of Criticism* [JSNTSup 127; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996] 436). And Das claims: "The perceived overemphasis on the boundary-marking 'works of the Law' has become the most prominent defining feature of this 'new perspective' on Paul. The pivotal question, then, is whether Paul's critique of the 'works of the Law' is limited to their boundary-marking function or whether his critique is articulated also in terms of human accomplishment" ("Paul and Works of Obedience in Second Temple Judaism: Romans 4:4–5 as a 'New Perspective' Case Study," *CBQ* 71 [2009] 796).

leaving incorporation into Christ by faith as the only means of achieving righteousness. This way of reading the logic of Galatians follows a long line of interpreters—a line, it should be emphasized, that extends beyond the Reformers to at least as far as Chrysostom, who regularly introduces this point about human inability into his homilies on Galatians. S. Westerholm puts the point well: “The fundamental question addressed by Galatians thus is not ‘What is wrong with Judaism (or the Sinaitic law)?’ but ‘What is wrong with humanity that Judaism (and the Sinaitic law) cannot remedy?’”³¹ A distinction between human doing and human believing, while not the focus in the letter, does underlie the argument of Galatians.

Deuteronomy 30:11–14 in Romans 10:6–8

The debate over Paul’s application of Deut 27:26 in Gal 3:10 pales in comparison with the tempest that rages over his use of language from Deut 30:11–14 in Rom 10:6–8. In Deut 30:11–14, Moses proclaims the “nearness” of God’s law as a means of exhorting the people to obey it. Paul appears to force these verses from Deuteronomy to mean virtually the opposite of what they appear to be saying: he applies them to Christ and the gospel, *in contrast to the law*. The passage is therefore regularly cited as one of the most extreme examples of the NT authors’ forceful and arbitrary squeezing of the OT into the mold of the gospel.³²

Paul’s appeal to Deut 30:11–14 comes in the midst of a passage (Rom 9:30–10:13) that has at its heart a contrast between two kinds of ‘righteousness’ (δικαιοσύνη):

1. “the righteousness based on faith” versus “the law of righteousness” (9:30–31);
2. “the righteousness of God” versus “their own righteousness” (10:3);
3. “the righteousness based on the law” versus “the righteousness based on faith” (10:5–6).

In the wider context (9:30–10:21) Paul offers an explanation for the surprising turn in salvation history: Gentiles, who were “not a people”

31. S. Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The ‘Lutheran’ Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) 381; see also, esp. M. Silva, “Faith Versus Works of the Law in Galatians,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, Vol. 2: *The Paradoxes of Paul*, 217–48; Gundry, “Grace,” 15–32; Kim, *New Perspective*, 61–75.

32. R. Hays opens his innovative and influential book on Paul’s hermeneutics with this text, citing it as a particularly clear instance of Paul’s hermeneutical freedom (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989] 1–5); see also R. N. Longenecker, *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul’s Most Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011) 239.

are becoming the people of God while only a remnant of Israel is being saved (9:24–29). In the first phase of his argument in chapters 9–11 (9:6b–29), Paul traces this state of affairs to the sovereign determination of God. In 9:30–10:21, by contrast, he argues that the failure of Israel to respond to God's grace in the gospel is at fault. The manifestation of God's eschatological righteousness in Christ has been met by Gentiles with faith but by Israel (generally) with disobedience and unbelief. Gentiles are being included in God's true spiritual people because they have embraced the eschatological revelation of God's righteousness in Christ, a righteousness that is now available to anyone who believes (10:4b, 11–13). Most Jews, on the other hand, are finding themselves outside this true people of God because they are wrongly preoccupied with another, false, kind of righteousness. They have persisted in seeking to work out their relationship with God through the law (9:31; 10:3, 5) and the works it demands (9:32a; 10:5). They have therefore missed the true focus of salvation history, "stumbling" over Jesus Christ (9:32b–33), the embodiment of God's righteousness (10:3), climax (τέλος) of the law (10:4), and focus of God's word of grace in the new age of redemptive history (10:6–8).³³

Rom 10:5–13 exposit the final words of v. 4: "so that there might be righteousness for everyone who believes."³⁴ Paul begins by citing Scripture to explain the connection between righteousness and faith. He cites Lev 18:5: "the person who does these things will find life through them" (ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς).³⁵ These words capture

33. In this passage, Paul's criticism of the Jews with respect to the law is mainly salvation-historical: they have failed to see that its era has come to an end. (Contrast Paul's earlier treatment of the Jews [Rom 2:1–3:20], which focuses on their inability to fulfill the law because he is there looking at the situation before Christ; cf. U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* [3 vols.; EKKNT; Neukirchen/Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1978–81] 2.102.) But this is not Paul's only basis for criticism of the Jews in these verses (contra, e.g., Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, 37–38). Paul also makes clear that Israel's failure to perceive the shift of salvation history in Christ is bound up with her myopic preoccupation with the law and its works. Criticism of the Jews for "legalism," the attempt to secure a relationship with God through doing the law, is part and parcel of this text (cf. T. R. Schreiner, "Israel's Failure to Attain Righteousness in Romans 9:30–10:3," *TJ* 12 [1991] 215–20; T. Laato, *Paulus und das Judentum: Anthropologische Erwägungen* [Abo: Abo Academy, 1991] 250–54; R. H. Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy: The Origin and Purpose of the Jealousy Motif in Romans 9–11* [WUNT 2.63; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994] 187–91).

34. See particularly C. T. Rhyne, *Faith Establishes the Law* (SBLDS 55; Chico, CA: Scholars, 1981) 110–11; cf. also F. W. Maier, *Israel in der Heilsgeschichte nach Röm 9–11* (BZ 12.11/12; Münster: Aschendorff, 1929) 467; E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 284.

35. Paul, as usual, follows the LXX, introducing minor stylistic changes required by his taking the clause out of its context. The LXX straightforwardly translates the Hebrew in Lev 18:5 (אשר יעשה אתם האדם וחי בהם).

a central role of the law as it is presented in the Pentateuch: by obeying its commandments, people may find “life,” peaceful, secure, and bountiful existence in the land of promise.³⁶ The verse is cited in this sense regularly in later parts of the OT and in Judaism (Ezek 20:11, 13, 21; Neh 9:29; CD 3:14–16; 4Q266; Philo, *Prelim. Studies* 86–87; LAB 23:10; *Pss. Sol.* 14:1–2; and cf. Luke 10:28).³⁷ As in Gal 3:12, then (where Paul cites the same verse), the quotation of Lev 18:5 touches on what, for Paul at least, is fundamental to the law of Moses: it is something to be “done”; it demands “works.”³⁸ Any “righteousness,” then, that is derived from the law will be a righteousness that is based on human doing. Such a righteousness, as Paul has already shown (Rom 9:31–32a, 10:3), is a phantom righteousness, for it cannot bring a person into relationship with a holy God.

If the Jews would only see the message of the OT as Paul sees it, they would recognize that the OT itself proclaims the indispensability of faith—the very message that Paul and the other apostles are preaching. This is the point that Paul is making by means of his references to Deut 30:12–14 in Rom 10:6–8. But what are we to make of this appeal to Scripture? Is Paul’s interpretation a simple *tour de force* by which he arbitrarily reads faith and the gospel into a text that has nothing to do with them? Let us first see how Paul integrates references to Deuteronomy into his argument (see table, p. 403). The δέ at the beginning of v. 6 is adversative: as the context makes clear, “the righteousness of

36. The כ before הם ‘them’ (e.g., “the decrees and the laws”) is instrumental (“by them”) not locative (“in them”). See, e.g., G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 253; P. M. Sprinkle, *Law and Life: The Interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and in Paul* (WUNT 2:241; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 28–34; contra, e.g., W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “The Book of Leviticus” in *NIB* 1:1125; *ibid.*, “Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: ‘Do This and You Shall Live (Eternally?),’” *JETS* 14 (1971) 19–28; N. Chibici-Revneanu, “Leben im Gesetz: Die paulinische Interpretation von Lev 18:5 (Gal 3:12; Röm 10:5),” *NovT* 50 (2008) 105–19.

37. S. J. Gathercole (“Torah, Life, and Salvation: Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and the New Testament,” in *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New* [ed. C. A. Evans; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004] 126–45) and Sprinkle (*Law and Life*, 34–130) have shown that most of these texts (the only clear exception being the Philo passage) interpret the verse as a soteriological promise. Note also rabbinic texts such as *t. Shabb.* 15.17: “The commands were given only that men should live through them, not that men should die through them” (cf. E. E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* [2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1979] 1:424–26). Both Targum Onkelos and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan paraphrase the Hebrew with the language of “eternal life.”

38. I bypass here the question of the appropriateness of rendering Hebrew תורה by Greek νόμος. The NT authors, at least, choose not to “correct” the LXX at this point, suggesting that they do not find anything fundamentally inappropriate about the lexical equivalence.

Romans 10	MT	LXX
<p>(6) But the righteousness that is by faith says:</p> <p>Do not say in your heart (μὴ εἴπῃς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου) "Who will ascend into heaven?"</p> <p>(τίς ἀναβήσεται εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν;)</p> <p>that is, to bring Christ down</p> <p>(7) or, "Who will <u>go down into the abyss</u>?" (τίς καταβήσεται εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον)</p> <p>that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.</p> <p>(8) But what does it say?</p> <p>The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart, (ἐγγὺς σου τὸ ῥῆμά ἐστιν ἐν τῷ στόματί σου καὶ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου),</p> <p>that is the word of faith that we are preaching.</p>	<p>Deut 9:4 After the Lord your God has driven them out before you, do not say in your heart (אל-תאמר בלבבך) "The Lord has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness"</p> <p>Deut 30:11–14 For this commandment, that I am commanding you today, is not too difficult for you or too far. It is not in heaven as though you should say "Who will go up for us to heaven to bring it to us (מי יעלה-לנו השמימה) so that we might hear it and do it?" And it is not beyond the sea as though you should say</p> <p>"Who will go across for us to the other side of the sea (מי יעבר-לנו אל-עבר הים) ([Ps 107:26a They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths (יעלו שמים ירדו תהומות)]</p> <p>and bring it to us so that we might hear it and do it?"</p> <p>For the word is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart (כי-קרוב אליך הדבר מאד בפֿיך ובלבבך)</p> <p>that you might do it.</p> <p>(t. Neof.: Neither is the law beyond the great sea that one may say: would that we had one like the prophet Jonah who would descend into the depths of the Great Sea and bring it up for us.)</p>	<p>Deut 9:4</p> <p>μὴ εἴπῃς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου</p> <p>τίς ἀναβήσεται ἡμῖν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν</p> <p>τίς διαπεράσει ἡμῖν εἰς τὸ πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης</p> <p>[Ps 106:26 ἀναβαίνουσιν ἕως τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ καταβαίνουσιν ἕως τῶν ἄβυσσων]</p> <p>ἔστιν σου ἐγγὺς τὸ ῥῆμα σφόδρα ἐν τῷ στόματί σου καὶ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου</p>

the law" (v. 5) stands in contrast to the "righteousness of faith."³⁹ Paul follows the biblical pattern of personifying activities and concepts that are closely related to God by claiming that the "righteousness of faith speaks."⁴⁰ As the chart above reveals, Paul's introductory warning, "Do not say in your heart," is taken from Deut 9:4. These words gain particular force in light of the context from which Paul takes them. In Deut 9:4–6 Moses warns the people of Israel that when they have taken possession of the land into which God is bringing them, they must not think that they have earned it because of "their own righteousness." Paul therefore adds implicit biblical support to his criticism of the Israel of his day for its pursuit of their own righteousness (Rom 10:5 with Deut 9:4). Following the introductory allusion to Deut 9:4 are three quotations from Deut 30:12–14, each with its accompanying interpretation. These interpretations are introduced with the phrase "that is" (τοῦτ' ἔστιν), which some think Paul uses to signal his intention to pursue a "peshet"-style exegesis, the mode of interpretation typical of the DSS community (the Greek phrase is similar to the familiar interpretive gloss in the scrolls, פֶּשֶׁר 'its interpretation [is]').⁴¹ But this connection is not clear.⁴²

The first selection from Deuteronomy 30 is the question "Who will ascend into heaven?" These words are taken from a larger question in

39. A few scholars think the $\delta\epsilon$ indicates continuity between vv. 5 and 6, either in the sense that "the one who does these things" in v. 5 is Christ, whose obedience provides the foundation for the righteousness of faith (K. Barth, *CD* II.2, 245; A. J. Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World: An Exegetical Study in Aspects of Paul's Teaching* [Kampen: Kok, 1964] 103–5; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [vol. 2; ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979] 521; W. S. Campbell, "Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10:4," *Studia Biblica* III [1978] 77–78; M. Barth, *The People of God* [JSNTSup 5; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983] 39) or in the sense that the true "doing" of the law is nothing but faith (G. E. Howard, "Christ the End of the Law: The Meaning of Romans 10:4ff.," *JBL* 88 [1969] 333–36; D. P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum?* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980] 66–68; F. Flückiger, "Christus, des Gesetzes τέλος," *TZ* 11 [1955] 153–57; R. Bring, *Christus und das Gesetz* [Leiden: Brill, 1969] 54; R. Badenas, *Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10:4 in Pauline Perspective* [JSNTSup 10; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985] 120–25; N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 245).

40. Wisdom (Prov 8:21–36); the Word (Isa 55:10–11). For similar personifications of "righteousness," see Ps 85:10–13 and Isa 45:8. As J. D. G. Dunn notes, this last verse might be significant for Paul since he has perhaps alluded to Isa 45:9 in Rom 9:20–21 (*Romans* 9–11 [WBC 38B; Waco, TX: Word, 1989] 602).

41. The word is found frequently in 1QpHab and 1QpNah; for the connection with Romans, see, e.g., E. Lohse, *Der Brief an die Römer* (KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003) 294.

42. The Greek phrase τοῦτ' ἔστιν is widely used in the LXX, Philo, and the NT to introduce an explanation; there is little reason to think that it deliberately echoes the DSS (see esp. M. A. Seifrid, "Paul's Approach to the Old Testament in Rom 10:6–8," *TJ* 6 [1985] 29–34; Koch, *Die Schrift*, 229–30).

Deuteronomy that denies any need to go into heaven to gain access to God's law so that the people might obey it. Paul applies it to Christ. Some interpreters think that Paul is asking about the need to bring the ascended Christ down,⁴³ but it is more likely that he refers to the incarnation.⁴⁴ Christ has already come down from heaven and taken on human flesh in order to redeem humans; no one has to go into heaven to bring him down. God, from his side, has acted to make himself and his will for his people known; his people now have no excuse for not responding.

Paul's second use of Deuteronomy 30 language comes in Rom 10:7 and is quite parallel to the first. Again Paul asks a question, "Who will descend into the deep?" and adds a christological explanation: "that is, to bring Christ up from the dead." If Paul's quotation in v. 6, however, straightforwardly followed the text of Deuteronomy, this second quotation differs significantly: Deut 30:13 asks about "crossing the sea." This difference has led some scholars to think that Paul may here be quoting Ps 107:26 rather than Deut 30:13.⁴⁵ But this is unlikely, since Paul's language is generally parallel to that of Deuteronomy and since it is sandwiched between two other references to Deuteronomy 30. In fact, the "sea" and the "abyss" were somewhat interchangeable concepts in the OT and in Judaism;⁴⁶ and some Aramaic paraphrases of the

43. E.g., O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (5th ed.; KEKNT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955), 328; Käsemann, *Romans*, 288; Dunn, *Romans* 9–11, 605; T. Holland, *Romans: The Divine Marriage. A Biblical Theological Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011) 348–49.

44. This is the interpretation of most church fathers; and see also, among modern interpreters, J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (vol. 2; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 53; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (HNTC; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1957) 199; J. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1993) 590; N. T. Wright, "Romans," *NIB* 10:663. The sequence "come down" (v. 6) and "go up" (v. 7) reflects the common early Christian kerymatic sequence of Christ's incarnation and resurrection (see Phil 2:6–11, 1 Tim 3:16; and cf. E. Schweizer, "Zur Herkunft der Präexistenzvorstellung bei Paulus," *EvT* 19 [1959] 67–68).

45. See, e.g., Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 590. Ps 107:26 refers to those whom God has redeemed from trouble (cf. v. 2): "They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their calamity" (see the chart above).

46. In the LXX, ἄβυσσος almost always translates תהום, which usually refers to the deep places of the sea (BDB), but which in later Judaism was also used of the depths of the earth and the place where evil spirits are confined (J. Jeremias, *TDNT* 1:9). On the equivalence of the terms, see esp. J. Heller, "Himmel- und Höllenfahrt nach Römer 10, 6–7," *EvT* 32 (1972) 482; on similar rabbinic traditions, see A. M. Goldberg, "Torah aus der Unterwelt? Eine Bemerkung zu Röm 10,6–7," *BZ* 14 (1970) 127–31. In the NT, "abyss" refers to the place where (evil) spirits dwell and are confined (Luke 8:31; Rev 9:1–2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3).

Deut 30:13 used the language of the abyss.⁴⁷ Paul has probably, then, under the influence of these texts, shifted the horizontal imagery to a vertical imagery that better suits his application.⁴⁸ As he could use the fact of the incarnation to suggest the foolishness of “going into heaven” to bring Christ down, so now he can use the fact of the resurrection to deny any need to “go down to the abyss” to bring Christ up from “the realm of the dead.”

In Rom 10:6–7, Paul uses language from Deuteronomy 30 to indicate what the “righteousness of faith” does *not* say. Now, in v. 8, he continues to plunder Deuteronomy 30 to show what this righteousness *does* say: “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart.” Paul’s Greek follows the LXX of Deut 30:14 closely (which in turn straightforwardly renders the Hebrew; again, see the chart above). Significant, however, is Paul’s omission of the concluding words in Deuteronomy: “so that you may obey it” (that is, “what I [Moses] am commanding you today”—Deut 30:11). Paul is therefore able to apply these words to “the message concerning faith that we proclaim.”

What are we to make of this startling “shift of application”?⁴⁹ How can Paul take a text that enjoins obedience to the law of God and apply it to the message of the gospel of righteousness by faith? Is he arbitrarily twisting the Scriptures to fit his theology of the gospel? And, if so, what happens to the unity of Scripture? When I worked on this passage in preparation of my commentary on Romans in the early 1990s, I was frustrated in my attempt to provide a neat and satisfactory answer to this question—specifically, an answer that would both interpret Romans 10 accurately and explain the legitimacy of Paul’s appeal to Deuteronomy.⁵⁰ I seized on this invitation as an opportunity to return to the issue and see if I could do any better.

47. *Targum Neofiti* reads, “Neither is the Law beyond the Great Sea that one may say: Would that we had one like the prophet Jonah who would descend into the depths of the Great Sea and bring it up for us” (the translation is from M. McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* [AnBib 27; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966] 370–78). It may also be significant for Paul’s application of the language to the resurrection of Christ that Jonah 2:3–10 uses both מים ‘sea’ and תהום ‘abyss’ in parallel of the prophet’s experience in the belly of the great fish (see Matt 12:40).

48. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture*, 131.

49. For the language of “shift of application,” see my *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983; reprint: Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock) 51–55.

50. The concern for “legitimacy” in the NT interpretation of the OT is a direct by-product of a high view of Scripture. For a recent consideration of this important issue, see D. J. Moo and A. D. Naselli, “The Problem of the New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament,” in vol. 1 of *“But My Words Will Never Pass Away”: The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (2 vols.; ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming); see

What are our options? First, we could deny that there is a problem. The problem disappears if, in fact, Paul has no intention of claiming the authority of the Deuteronomy text for his own teaching. He may simply be borrowing language from Deuteronomy—language that, as we will see below, had become somewhat proverbial—to make his point about Christ and the gospel.⁵¹ It is certainly unfair to label this approach a desperate measure to get around a problem. Certain elements of the text at least suggest this is not an unreasonable option. Paul does not use a traditional “introductory formula” (e.g., γέγραπται ‘it is written’) to introduce his quotations from Deuteronomy. Rather, he puts the language of Deuteronomy in the mouth of personified “righteousness of faith.” As we have seen, Paul cites fragments from Deut 30:12–14; and, in one case, he changes the wording of the fragment he quotes significantly. Moreover, he introduces his explanations of the Deuteronomy fragments with an expression (“that is”) that he never elsewhere uses to connect scriptural citations to his own conclusions. I am more open to this approach than I was twenty years ago: the combination of unusual, even unprecedented, features in Paul’s appeal to the words of Deuteronomy may, indeed, imply a certain “distance” from strict interpretation of the text.⁵² Nevertheless, it is hard to avoid the impression that Paul is intending, to some degree, to appeal to the authority of Deuteronomy for the points he is making here. More interpreters agree.⁵³

Second, we could at least lessen the degree of difference between Paul and Deut 30:11–14 if these verses are a prediction of the new covenant. This paragraph occurs toward the end of the presentation of the Moabite covenant in Deut 28:69–30:20[29:1–30:20].⁵⁴ Moses’ warning about the consequences of the failure of the people to ratify the

also D. J. Moo, “Paul’s Universalizing Hermeneutics in Romans,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 11 (2007) 62–90.

51. W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902) 287; C. Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950) 338; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 588; H. Hübner, *Gottes Ich und Israel: Zum Schriftgebrauch des Paulus in Römer 9–11* (FRLANT 136; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984) 86–91; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 121–23.

52. R. E. Ciampa appropriately views Paul’s use of Deuteronomy to lie somewhere between “straight” exegesis and the mere use of Deuteronomistic language to make a point (“Deuteronomy in Galatians and Romans,” in *Deuteronomy in the New Testament* [ed. M. J. J. Menken and S. Moyise; London: T & T Clark, 2007] 107). Calvin, similarly, claims that Paul’s purpose is not “strictly to explain this passage” but “apply it to the explanation of his present subject” (*Romans*, 389).

53. See, e.g., Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture*, 129.

54. J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy* (Apollos Old Testament Commentary 5; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002) 423.

covenant by their consistent obedience to the law turns into a semi-realistic prediction of failure. By the end of chapter 29, warning about the curse has become a description of the curse that will, indeed, come. In 30:1–10, then, Moses pictures the people in exile and predicts that through their own “turning” God would himself effect a “turning,” accomplishing for them the “circumcision of the heart” that Moses required of the people (10:16) but that they have proved incapable of doing for themselves (v. 6). After this prediction of future restoration, most interpreters think that Moses returns in vv. 11–14 to the present, exhorting the people of his day to obey the law. But a significant minority of interpreters argues that vv. 11–14 continue the future focus of vv. 1–10. It is at this time, when God himself circumcises the hearts of his people, that he will bring his word near to Israel (v. 14). Paul would therefore legitimately be applying Lev 18:5 to the Old Covenant and Deut 30:11–14 to the New, when God writes his law on the hearts of his people (Jer 31:31–34).⁵⁵ I wish I could interpret Deut 30:11–14 this way: it would, indeed, considerably diminish the apparent dissonance between this text and Paul’s application. But I am not sure that I can. Most interpreters of Deuteronomy argue that the characteristic language of “today” in v. 11 suggests that the implied tense in vv. 11–14 shifts back to the present—from future prediction in vv. 1–10 to exhortation about the present in vv. 11–14.⁵⁶ Reluctantly, then, I must reject this option.

A third attempt at explaining Paul’s interpretive approach appeals to the appropriation of Deut 30:11–14 in some other early Jewish texts. In

55. See esp. P. A. Barker, *The Triumph of Grace in Deuteronomy: Faithless Israel, Faithful Yahweh in Deuteronomy* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Waynesboro, GA, 2004) 168–90; and also S. R. Coxhead, “Deuteronomy 30:11–14 as a Prophecy of the New Covenant in Christ,” *WTJ* 68 (2006) 305–20; B. D. Estelle, “Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:1–14 in Biblical Theological Development: Entitlement to Heaven Foreclosed and Proffered,” in *The Law is Not Of Faith*, 123–37; J. G. Millar, *Now Choose Life: Theology and Ethics in Deuteronomy* (NSBT 6; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998) 94, 174–75; J. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) 473. This view is assumed (though not argued) by Wright, “Romans,” 659–60 (“restoration after the exile”). Other scholars, while admitting that Deut 30:11–14 focuses on the Israelites of Moses’ day, note that the future orientation of vv. 1–10 would inevitably have opened up a reading of vv. 11–14 as also having relevance to the future (e.g., McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 429; T. R. Schreiner, *Romans* [BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998] 558).

56. E.g., S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy* (ICC; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1916) 330–31; McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 429; E. J. Woods, *Deuteronomy* (TOTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011) 294; W. Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy* (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2001) 267–68; C. J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy* (NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996) 290–91; J. H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996) 286. Most commentators do not even mention the alternative.

Bar 3:29–30, language from Deut 30:11–14 is applied to wisdom: “Who went up into heaven and received her [wisdom] and brought her down from the clouds? Who travelled beyond the sea and found her and will buy her for precious gold?” Wisdom is associated with “the commandment of life” in Bar 3:9, relying on a widespread tendency to identify torah and wisdom in Judaism. Paul, in his turn, identifies Christ with wisdom. Therefore, in light of Christ being the *telos* of the law, it would make sense for Paul to use language from a passage that was associated with wisdom with respect to Christ.⁵⁷ However, Paul’s reliance on the Baruch text is not clear,⁵⁸ and the association of Christ with wisdom is perhaps neither as widespread nor as important to Paul’s Christology as some have made it.⁵⁹ Moreover, while dependence on this Jewish tradition may help explain why Paul uses Deuteronomy in the way that he does, it does not help us at all with the “legitimacy” question.⁶⁰

Fourth, we could widen our horizons and seek to understand how Paul’s use of Deuteronomy might cohere with a broad reading of the

57. See esp. M. J. Suggs, “‘The Word is Near You’: Romans 10:6–10 within the Purpose of the Letter,” in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox* (ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, and R. Niebuhr; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 289–312. Many scholars find this background to be at least part of the explanation for Paul’s application; see, e.g., S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 130–31; E. J. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul: A Tradition-historical Enquiry into the Relation of Law, Wisdom, and Ethics* (WUNT 2.16; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985; reprint: Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011) 248–49; Hays, *Scripture*, 78–81; Koch, *Der Schrift*, 153–60; B. Witherington (with D. Hyatt), *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) 262. E. E. Johnson thinks that there is contact with Baruch but that Paul simply identifies wisdom with the gospel (*The Function of Apocalyptic and Wisdom Traditions in Romans 9–11* [SBLDS 109; Atlanta: Scholars, 1989] 133–37). Deut 30:11–14 figured in other Jewish writers also; Philo, for example, applied the text to the search for “the good” (*On the Posterity of Cain* 84–85; *Change of Names* 236–37; *Rewards and Punishments* 80; *Virtues* 183; see esp. P. J. Bekken, “Paul’s Use of Deut. 30:12–14 in Jewish Context. Some Observations,” in *The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism* (ed. P. Borgen and S. Giversen; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995) 53–81.

58. As Seifrid points out, Paul’s text is closer to Deuteronomy than to Baruch (“Paul’s Approach,” 20–23). Moreover, the language of ascending to heaven and crossing the sea (or going down into the abyss) became somewhat proverbial (see *Jub.* 24:31; 4 *Ezra* 4:8; *b. B. Mes.* 59b).

59. For an extreme expression of doubt on this point, see G. D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007) 594–619.

60. See the perceptive comments on this by Hays: “The more closely Paul’s methods can be identified with recognized interpretive conventions of first-century Judaism, the less arbitrary and more historically understandable they appear; however, at the same time, such historical explanations of Paul’s exegesis render it increasingly difficult to see how interpretations that employ such methods can bear any persuasive power or normative value for that mythical creature of whom Bultmann spoke with such conviction: modern man” (*Echoes of Scripture*, 8–9).

theology of Deuteronomy as Paul sees it to have come to fruition in Christ. In 1996 I wrote the following:

The best explanation for Paul's use of the Deut 30 text is to think that he finds in this passage an expression of the grace of God in establishing a relationship with his people. As God brought his word near to Israel so they might know and obey him, so God now brings his word "near" to both Jews and Gentiles that they might know him through his Son Jesus Christ and respond in faith and obedience. Because Christ, rather than the law, is now the focus of God's revelatory word (see 10:4), Paul can "replace" the commandment of Deut 30:11–14 with Christ. Paul's application of Deut 30:12–14, then, is of course not a straightforward exegesis of the passage. But it is a valid application of the principle of that passage in the context of the development of salvation history. The grace of God that underlies the Mosaic covenant is operative now in the New Covenant; and, just as Israel could not plead the excuse that she did not know God's will, so now, Paul says, neither Jew nor Gentile can plead ignorance of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.⁶¹

I think this basic approach can be strengthened and elaborated by appeal to two theologically sophisticated assessments of Deuteronomy and its relationship to Paul.

The first is from an OT scholar noted for his work on Deuteronomy, Gordon McConville. McConville argues, broadly, that Deuteronomy offers "a sophisticated theological reflection" on the tension between law and grace, between exhortations to Israel that appear to assume her ability to respond and confirm the blessing of God and expressions of pessimism that suggest that Israel is "constitutionally incapable of choosing the way of life." This tension emerges particularly clearly in Deuteronomy 30: vv. 1–10 look to God to reverse the curse that will inevitably fall on Israel, while vv. 11–14 appear to assume Israel's responsibility for her own fate.⁶² Ultimately, McConville suggests, the exhortation gains validity only as the response to a new work of God's grace.

61. Moo, *Romans*, 653. For similar approaches, see J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947) 389; F. L. Godet, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977) 379; Murray, *Romans*, 2:52–53; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:526; Seifrid, "Paul's Approach," 35–37; D. O. Via, "A Structuralist Approach to Paul's Old Testament Hermeneutic," *Int* 28 (1974) 215–18.

62. G. J. McConville, *Grace in the End: A Study in Deuteronomical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993) 63–64, 133–34, 138. I hope that my failure to interact with McConville in my commentary was because the book was not published in time for me to take it into account.

A second reflection on the relationship between Paul and Deuteronomy is found in Francis Watson's stimulating study of Paul's appropriation of themes within the Pentateuch for his distinctive law/gospel emphasis.⁶³ Watson argues that "Paul's fragmentary exegetical statements do indeed stem from a broad construal of the narrative shape of scripture, and that fundamental scriptural themes function as hermeneutical keys."⁶⁴ Watson therefore considers Paul's use of Deut 30:11–14 within a broader reading of Deuteronomy (and ultimately of the Pentateuch). Paul, Watson argues, is engaged in debate with other Jews of his day about the ultimate meaning of Deuteronomy, a book that ends with a "severe internal tension": a tension "between conditional statements, which imply that the choice between blessing and curse, life and death is genuinely open, and statements of prophetic denunciation, in which the realization of the curse has become a certainty."⁶⁵ Many of Paul's Jewish contemporaries read Deut 30:11–14 as proclaiming that God's restoration of his people would occur via the law. Paul cannot accept this reading of the text, and so he re-interprets it.⁶⁶ Moses' "over-optimistic claim . . . stands in need of correction." But this "correction" is not simply (or only) an arbitrary imposition on the meaning of Deuteronomy from a later, christologically oriented perspective: it is a correction that Moses himself suggests with his focus on the primacy of divine action in chapter 32.⁶⁷ Here, beyond the threat of curse in chapters 27–29 and the illusory promise of a new start by means of the law (ch. 30), Moses speaks of an unconditional work of God, a focus that resembles the unconditional promise to Abraham on which Paul puts so much stress.⁶⁸

As the title of McConville's book puts it, then, Deuteronomy is about "grace in the end." Paul is convinced that this grace is manifest in Christ, being made available to both Jew and Gentile on the same terms: faith. His claim that the "near" word is to be found in Christ and the gospel proclamation about him is at the same time a faithful reading of Deuteronomy and an extension of the meaning of Deuteronomy in light of

63. F. Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T & T Clark, 2004). He discusses Deuteronomy on pp. 415–513.

64. *Ibid.*, 17.

65. *Ibid.*, 429.

66. *Ibid.*, 454.

67. *Ibid.*, 439. I do not endorse the language of "correction" that Watson uses here.

68. *Ibid.*, 453. D. Lincicum (*Paul and the Early Jewish Encounter with Deuteronomy* [WUNT 2.284; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010] 157–67) follows Watson to the extent that he, too, stresses that Paul reads Deuteronomy from back to front, finding the focus on divine initiative in ch. 32 to be the key to his reading.

the movement of redemptive history. Paul's appeal to Deut 30:11–14 exhibits the “deeper meaning” approach that typifies his (and other NT authors') reading of the OT. The word that brings the fulfillment of the promise, the “grace that lies beyond exile,” is not the torah, limited as it was in its effectiveness because of human sin, but a “new” word of God that itself provides for the true fulfillment of the torah—a fulfillment that, in my view, Christians experience not in their own always imperfect obedience, but in their union with Christ, who has fulfilled the torah on our behalf (Rom 8:4).⁶⁹

Conclusion

Paul's appeal to Deut 27:26 in Gal 3:10 and Deut 30:11–14 in Rom 10:6–8 shows that he finds in Deuteronomy both law and grace. The torah given to Israel reveals to the people (and to us!) the character of God and sets forth God's will for the people with whom he has entered into covenant. That torah, however, as Moses anticipates and as the history of Israel tragically demonstrates, could not be fulfilled by people whose hearts, because of sin, were “hard.” Paul finds in the warning about a curse that would fall on failure to uphold all the torah a principle about “law” in general: it makes demands that, because they cannot be met, confirms people in the death they have already chosen. But Deuteronomy also proclaims grace: grace in the very existence of Israel as a people chosen by God, grace in God's willingness to reveal his will to this people but, ultimately, a final and transcendent act of grace that restores God's people after their sin and exile. This is the grace that Paul finds to be proclaimed in the “near word” of Deut 30:11–14.

69. My appeal to Rom 8:4 for this point is certainly not uncontested (to put it mildly!); but I still think it is the best understanding of the verse (see my *Romans*, 481–85).