

typical of ironic style (cf. 1:6). Paul used the word this way—it is clear he is not so much surprised as disappointed or even disgusted. Yet in using ironic rebuke, he avoids the sense of publicly shaming the reader while at the same time communicating his dire concern at the situation. Nanos has shown that such a style of writing was not uncommon in Paul's day.

The style of ironic rebuke may also be noted in the bold (almost crass) expressions which Paul uses. For instance, he suggests, by way of word play, that those who are encouraging the non-Jews to undergo the ritual of a proselyte ("get cut"), might actually castrate (entirely cut off) rather than merely circumcise (5:12). This shows the intensity with which Paul is approaching the primary subject, tempered (as it were) by the use of irony.

We should keep this in mind as we study through the epistle. Paul's rapid, ironic style in places gives rise to less-than-perfect connections between his thoughts: he is "speaking" rapidly and with such intensity that at times he foregoes a full explanation, expecting his readers to "fill in the gaps." Some of the passages that have caused no undue amount of trouble for commentators might be better understood within the sphere of ironic rebuke.

The Purpose of the Epistle

The proposed backgrounds to the epistle, given thus far, would yield the following scenario, and thus the purpose for Paul's writing this epistle:

- a) Paul had helped to establish congregations in Galatia comprised almost entirely of non-Jewish believers in Yeshua. They were following the commandments of God and living out their faith within the context of Torah life as they studied the Scriptures.
- b) By Paul's teaching, they were not concerned to become proselytes since they had come to believe that faith in Yeshua, the indwelling Spirit, and the Tanach, along with Paul's instructions were sufficient for their life of righteousness.
- c) Some Jewish members of the congregation, however, could not envision the possibility of non-Jews being received as covenant members apart from their submission to the ritual of a proselyte (being circumcised). These members were influencing the non-Jewish members to accept the erroneous doctrine that apart from their submission to rabbinic halachah, they were not full "sons" in the covenant.
- d) Paul therefore writes to outline the means by which God brings sinners into the covenant, and to expose the erroneous teaching that adherence to man-made halachah (particularly the ritual of proselytizing) was necessary for full covenant membership.
- e) The freedom that Paul enjoins upon the believing non-Jews is not freedom from the Torah, but freedom to live within the protection of the Torah as prescribed by God, not man.

The Use of the Word νόμος (nomos, "Law," "Torah") in Galatians

There is no doubt that the issue of the Torah takes center stage in Paul's epistle to the Galatians. The Greek word νόμος (*nomos*) is found 32 times in the book (2:16,19,21; 3:2,5,10-13,17-19,21,23-24; 4:4-5,21; 5:3-4,14,18,23; 6:2,13). If one calculates percentages based upon occurrences per thousand

words, Galatians comes in at 12.0, while the closest to this is Romans with 8.9. Just in terms of the frequency of the word, then, Galatians is dealing with a controversy related to the Torah.

But how is the word νόμος (*nomos*) used in Galatians? We discover that there are some reoccurring phrases utilizing the word *nomos*:

“works of the Torah” (ἔργων νόμου, *ergōn nomou*) which corresponds to מַעֲשֵׂי הַתּוֹרָה, *ma’asei hatorah*) is found six times (2:16; 3:2,5,10). In two cases “works of the Torah” is juxtaposed to “hearing with faith” (ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως, *ex akoes pisteōs*), 3:2, 5.

“under the Torah” (ὑπὸ νόμον, *hupo nomon*) is found four times (3:23; 4:4-5; 5:18)

“whole Torah” is found twice in the NASB (5:3, 14) though the Greek is different in each. In 5:3 the Greek has ὅλον τὸν νόμον, *holon ton nomon* (“the whole Torah”) while in 5:14 the Greek is πᾶς νόμος, *pas nomos* (“all of the Torah”).

Beyond this, it is clear that Paul uses the Greek *nomos* to refer to the Torah given to Moses on Mt. Sinai:

What I am saying is this: the *nomos*, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. (3:17)

Yet there is no reason to discount the very real possibility that Paul uses the term *nomos* to include Oral Torah (the collected rulings of the Sages regarding how the Written Torah was to be interpreted and applied) as well. Though there were debates on the relationship of Oral and Written Torah in the 1st Century CE, the data would seem weighted in favor of the view that to at least one extent or another, the traditions of the Sages were practically received on equal footing with the Written Torah.

The Rabbinic literature appears to teach that non-written laws or the traditions of the Sages were accepted and held by the Jewish community as Torah, and that they were held as equal to (or even greater than¹⁷) the written Torah. First, it is clear that the Rabbis use the term “Torah” for far more than the books of Moses. Verses from the Prophets and the hagiographa are cited in answer to the question “Whence do we prove this from the Torah?” not only in Tannaitic but also in Amoraic dicta,¹⁸ though the rule was already known that “No inference may be drawn concerning Torah laws from statements in the post-Pentateuchal books of the Bible.”¹⁹ Daniel (9:10-13) speaks of תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה: “the Torah of Moses the servant of God” and “His תּוֹרַת, which He set before us by His servants the prophets.”²⁰

But secondly, the term “Torah” was also used of laws not explicitly found in the Tanach. M. *Sanhedrin* 11.2 states that people went “to the Great Court that was in the Chamber of Hewn Stone, whence Torah goes forth to all Israel.” This

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17 Hillel’s Prosbol, a ruling that repayment of debts, and return of land at the *Shemitta* (Sabbatical year) were not necessary, is an example of oral *halachah* overturning clear, written Torah. Cp. Deut 15:2 with m.*Shebi’it* 10.3.

18 b.*Avoda Zara* 52b; b.*Bechorot* 50a; *Tanhuma*, Re’e, §13.

19 Urbach, *The Sages*, p. 287; cp. *Tanhuma*, Naso, §25.

20 cp. 2 Chron 29:25; Ezra 9:0-14. The word תּוֹרָה occurs 13 times in the plural in the Tanach: Gen. 26:5; Ex 16:28; 18:16, 20; Lev 26:46; Is 24:5; Jer 32:23; Ezek 43:11; 44:5, 24; Psa 105:45; Dan 9:10; Neh. 9:13.

must be speaking of the *halachic* decisions handed down by the Sanhedrin. Thus, as the term תּוֹרָה (*torah*) was understood in a broad sense to encompass not only the Sinai legislation but also the story of Man, the biography of the Patriarchs, and the history of the nation of Israel, it is understandable how the term came to be used of the amalgamated teachings of the Sages that formed the accepted *halachah* of the community—indeed, which shaped the community. Urbach has affirmed that in the Rabbinic world up to the destruction of the Temple, “the tradition of the fathers, the enactments, and the decrees became Torah alongside the Written Torah.”²¹ And

... for the Jews of Alexandria, too, the term ‘Torah’ was not a word but an ‘institution,’ embodying the covenant between the people and its God, and reflecting a complex of precepts and statutes, customs and traditions linked to the history of the people and the acts of its rulers, kings, and prophets.²²

Whether the theological debates of the Sages would have affirmed the equality of Written and Oral Torah, the practice of the Jewish communities in the 1st Century most likely did. The purity laws, which by all calculations stood as priorities in 1st Century *halachah*, were entirely interwoven with the additional rulings of the Sages. No one in any of the divergent Jewish communities would have been reckoned as ritually pure had they not adhered to the *halachah* of the Sages in their particular community.

Indeed, we should not take the point of view that Oral Torah (the traditions of the Sages) were entirely inappropriate, or that they were viewed as such even by Yeshua and His Apostles. If one reads the Gospel accounts looking for instances of Oral Torah in the lives of Yeshua and His *talmidim*, the examples abound. Note the following from the Gospels:

- Matt. 9:14–15 The argument of Yeshua, in which He defends the manner in which His disciples fast, is based upon a recognized *halachah* that it is improper to fast in the presence of a bridegroom. This is not found in the written Torah. Cp. b. *Sukkah* 25b; t. *Berchot* 2.10.
- Matt. 10:24 In b. *Berachot* 58b, we read: “Enough for the servant that he should be like his master.” Likewise, in *Sifra* §251.2 we read: “It is sufficient that a slave be like his master.”
- Matt. 12:5 The teaching or *halachah* which states that the priests break the Sabbath but are innocent is not found in the written Torah. Cp. b. *Shabbat* 132b. For other instances where the Sabbath may be profaned, cp. m. *Nedarim* 3.11 (circumcision); m. *Pesach* 6.1-2; t. *Pesach* 4.13 (Passover sacrifices).
- Matt. 15:1 Pharisees are inquiring about the disciples of Yeshua: why do they transgress the traditions of the elders by not washing their hands according to *halachah* before eating? Yeshua rebukes them, citing also their use of *korban* to “hide” their wealth from aging parents who needed their support. In

21 Urbach, *The Sages*, p. 292.

22 Ibid., p. 289.

- both cases, it is clear that the Pharisees consider the *halachah*, based on Oral Torah, as binding. Cf. m.*Chagigah* 2.5; b.*Shabbat* 13b-14a; y.*Shabbat* 1.3d; b.*Yoma* 87a.
- Matt. 15:36 There is nothing in the written Torah about giving thanks before eating. Saying the *berachah* before eating is part of the oral Torah. The Torah only enjoins blessing God after eating (Deut. 8:10).
- Matt. 22:40 Yeshua quotes the Shema and Lev. 19:18, stating that upon these two precepts hang (*krematai*) the Torah and Prophets. The terminology of the Torah and Prophets hanging from something is derived from Oral Torah, cp. m.*Chagigah* 1.8; b.*Berachot* 63a.
- Matt. 23:16, 17 The Pharisees found a way to deny certain oaths (those sworn by the temple) and to allow others (those sworn by the gold of the temple), cf. m.*Nedarim* 1.3, 4; cp. also b.*Temurah* 32a-33b. Yeshua Himself argues that the Temple actually sanctifies the gold. This is not found in the written Torah.
- Matt. 23:23 The matter of tithing very small amounts of produce from volunteer seedlings is not taken up in the Written Torah, but is part of the Oral Torah, cp. m.*Maasarot* 1.1; b.*Yoma* 83b; b.*Nidah* 5a; b.*Rosh HaShanah* 12a; b.*Shabbat* 68a.
- Matt. 24:20 The whole issue of travel on the Sabbath is defined in Oral Torah, not Written Torah. There are no specific prohibitions in the written Torah restricting travel on the Sabbath. [The prohibition of Ex. 16:29 cannot mean that one is restricted to stay within his dwelling (the Hebrew has [מִקוֹם] מִקוֹמוֹ, “place” not בֵּית, “house.” In the context, the prohibition seems to deal with the issue of going out to pick up manna on the Sabbath.) Yet the written Torah does not define the dimensions of one’s “place.” It was the Oral Torah that developed, for instance, a “Sabbath-day’s journey”.] cf. b.*Erubin* 4.5; Acts 1:12. Jer. 17:19-22 prohibits the carrying of loads out of one’s house, but this is clearly defined as “work.”
- Matt. 26:20 Reclining is the position of eating at the Pesach meal, but is not prescribed in the written Torah. Cf. m.*Pesachim* 10:1. Reclining is a halachic requirement before one can eat the Passover.
- Matt. 27:6 The Written Torah prohibits the wages of a temple prostitute to come into the Temple treasury (Deut. 23:19). Of interest is b.*Aboda Zera* 17a where Jacob, a disciple of Yeshua of Nazareth, is said to have had an interaction with R. Eliezer over a saying of Yeshua based on Deut. 23:19. The Oral Torah expanded this to include any money obtained for unlawful hire (cf. b.*Temurah* 29b).
- Lk. 6:9 Cp. m.*Shabbat* 22.5. The issues of healing (see the parallel in Matt. 12:10) on the Sabbath are part of the Oral Torah, to which Yeshua no doubt refers.

- Lk. 11:44 The written Torah declares that a person is unclean from a corpse if he touches it or is in the same room with it (Num 19:11-15). The Pharisees extended the communication of impurity to any object overshadowed by a corpse (or part of a corpse) or any object whose shadow contacts a corpse or tomb (m.*Oholot* 16.1,2). The Oral Torah further elaborates the means by which impurity is transmitted from a corpse to an object. It appears that Yeshua accepted at least some of this Oral Torah as grounds for His illustration of the Pharisees as concealed tombs that rendered those who overshadowed them unclean.
- Jn. 7:51 The Written Torah suggests that a matter of Torah be carefully examined, but does not specifically say that the accused must be given the right to speak (cp. Ex 23:1; Deut 1:16; 17:4). Oral Torah, however, required that the accused be given the opportunity to speak for himself (Mid. Rab. *Exodus* 23.1)

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Summary: *nomos* in Galatians

Paul's use of *nomos* (νόμος) in Galatians must be determined from the context, but with the 1st Century idea of "Torah" well in mind. That the Judaisms of the 1st Century considered the Written and Oral Torah to comprise a unified whole is without question, though of course there were disputes about exactly what constituted the Oral Torah (i.e., disputes over which *halachot* were to be received). We cannot rule out the possibility that Paul included the category of Oral Torah within the scope of the word *nomos*. And one should be open to the very real possibility that the rabbinic ritual of proselytism is referred to under the rubric of "works of the Torah" (ἔργων νόμου).

Paul may also be using the term *nomos* to refer to the condemning aspects of the Torah. We should keep this idea in mind when we encounter the phrase "under the Torah" (ὑπο νόμον, *hupo nomon*). The unfortunate translation of Stern (Complete Jewish Bible) in which he uniformly translates *hupo nomon* as "legalistic use of the Law" has surely missed the mark. Note his translation of 4:4-5:

but when the appointed time arrived, God sent forth his Son. He was born from a woman, born into a culture in which legalistic perversion of the Torah was the norm, so that he might redeem those in subjection to this legalism and thus enable us to be made God's sons. (Gal 4:4-5)

Paul's point here, as we shall see, is not to construe the Judaisms of his day as "legalistic" (a charge which cannot be sustained from the rabbinic materials, as least as far as "legalistic" is defined by modern Christianity). Rather, he is showing that Yeshua died to redeem those who were under the condemnation of the Torah—a condemnation rightfully deserved, and thus justly administered by the Torah. When the Torah condemns sin, it is functioning exactly as God intends it to function. It is therefore accomplishing its Divinely ordained purpose, meaning it is righteous. Far from a misuse of the Torah, it's condemnation of sinners is one of the Torah's purposes.

Whether Paul uses *nomos* to mean “the principle of law” is questionable. Some have suggested that when *nomos* is used without the article, Paul intends us to understand his meaning to be that of a “principle of law” rather than a reference to the Torah of Moses. First, the use of the article with *nomos* as contrasted with the anarthrous use does not warrant such a conclusion. For instance, the article is not used with *nomos* in 4:4-5, but the Torah of Moses is clearly in view. The same may be said of 6:13: the article is not found with *nomos*, yet it is evident that Paul has the Torah of Moses in mind.

We must therefore take each use of *nomos* and weigh it against the immediate context, as well as against the 1st Century background (as we know it) and derive the meaning in this way. To take a monolithic interpretation of the term throughout Galatians (as has often been the case with the Christian commentaries) is surely to misunderstand and misrepresent Paul.

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Select Bibliography

The following are some of the commentaries which might be consulted within the study of Galatians. Most of the commentaries are from the standard, Christian perspective, i.e., that Paul is teaching the demise of the Torah in favor of Yeshua’s redemptive work. Though their theological perspective may be somewhat anti-Torah, they still may be profitably consulted for their contributions to the basic exegesis of specific texts.

I have utilized Dunn’s commentary as a primary reference for my own commentary, and the reader will see that I quote from his work quite often. Among the commentators listed below, Dunn represents (in my opinion) the awakening to Paul’s positive view of the Torah among today’s scholars.

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Chapter One

Commentary

1–2 Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Yeshua Messiah and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:

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As often in his epistles, Paul identifies himself as an apostle of Yeshua.¹ The term “apostle” answers to the Hebrew שְׁלוּחַ, *shaluach*, plural שְׁלוּחִים, *shaluchim*.² Thus, in *m.Rosh Hashannah* 1.3ff, the *shaluchim* go out to announce the new moon. These were messengers sent by the Sanhedrin to announce the official beginning of Tishri, and thus the beginning of the festival. Interestingly, Paul’s mentor, Gamaliel, sent epistles to communities outside of Jerusalem. Indications of three such epistles are preserved in the rabbinic literature (*b.Sanhedrin* 11b; *t.Sanhedrin* 2.6; *y.Sanhedrin* 1.2, 18d).³ These epistles contained reminders of official rulings of the Sanhedrin.⁴

For Paul to identify himself as the apostle of Yeshua was therefore not something out of the ordinary, at least to those who were familiar with the workings of the Jewish community in the 1st Century. Paul went forth, commissioned by Yeshua, to deliver His message. Such commissioned messengers did not construct their own message but carried the message of the one who had sent them. In like manner, we should not consider that Paul would have formulated his own ideas, but wrote as one delivering the message of Yeshua.

Paul’s perspective in writing this epistle is immediately seen in this opening greeting. For though such an opening had a generally recognized format, Paul interrupts the normal greeting with a theological statement related to his own authority: he did not receive his commission as apostle from men (ἄνθρωποι, *anthropoi*) nor from an individual (ἄνθρωπος, *anthropos*).⁵ The fact that Paul casts this in the negative would strongly indicate that this was one of the accusations levied against him by the influencers. As in 2Corinthians, Paul’s credentials were apparently being discounted as a means of undermining his message. Paul wants it understood from the outset that his message did not rest upon any group of men (i.e., those having some recognized authority) nor did his words emanate from a single man or teacher.

In fact, Paul is contrasting human agency with Divine agency. His message is not one with human authority but with the very authority of Yeshua and His Father. This is not to deny Yeshua’s humanity, something that Paul will clearly assert throughout the epistle. Rather, Paul here focuses upon the divine nature of Yeshua—His eternality, and thus His authorial equality with the Father. Since Paul’s commission came directly from Yeshua on the Road to Damascus, and since Yeshua only does what the Father commands, he reasons that his apostleship is fully established “in the mouth of two witnesses,”

1 Rom. 1:1; 1Cor. 1:1; 2Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1Tim. 1:1; 2Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1.

2 cf. Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Talmud*, (חורב, [reprint], 1903), “שְׁלוּחַ”.

3 See Cecil Roth, “Gamaliel” in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Keter: 1972), 7.296.

4 See *TLW*, p. 39.

5 The Greek ἄνθρωπος could include both male and female, and should be understood in this instance as the equivalent to אָדָם, *adam*. Paul’s emphasis is on that which distinguishes between mortal man and the Divine will in terms of his own commissioning.

Divine witnesses at that!⁶

One can hardly imagine that the influencers would have entirely discounted Paul's credentials. His influence with the Galatian assemblies was no doubt too well entrenched for that. Moreover, Paul himself had founded these assemblies. Rather, it seems likely that the influencers were considering Paul's credentials to be secondary to the credentials of the leaders in Jerusalem. Since Paul was sent out as an apostle by the Antioch assembly (Acts 13), and since this assembly was no doubt submissive to the rulings of the leaders in Jerusalem, they were reasoning that Paul likewise should give way to the leaders (at least some of the leaders) in Jerusalem who were pushing traditional *halachah* for the Gentile believers (i.e., their need to pursue becoming proselytes). Paul will address this issue more directly in chapter two. But here he makes it known from the beginning of the epistle that he considers his message to be that of Yeshua Himself, and one which therefore cannot be debated nor side-stepped.

It is most interesting that Paul identifies "God the Father" as the One who raised Yeshua from the dead. In Romans Paul notes that the resurrection declared Yeshua to be Son of God with power⁷ (i.e., the divine Messiah promised by the prophets) as well as securing the justification of the elect.⁸ The resurrection is the divine imprimatur upon the Messiah's work. Thus, the resurrection stands as irrefutable proof that Yeshua is who He claimed to be (i.e., the promised Messiah) and that therefore He stands as the Sovereign authority over the entire universe. Here the authority of the Father is linked to that of the Son.⁹ If the Father put His stamp of approval upon the Son (verified through the resurrection), then Yeshua's commissioning of Paul as His apostle stands with all the approval of the Father as well.

Were the influencers going to contradict the commissioning of the Risen Messiah? Such a position would be untenable to the wider congregations of Galatia.

and all the brethren who are with me – Often Paul identifies himself with co-workers who are with him.¹⁰ Paul was not a "lone ranger!" He did not see himself as launching his own work, nor beginning his "own thing." His mention of "all the brethren," then, is doubtlessly to add weight to his words, since in the mouth of two or three a matter is settled.

The use of the term "brother" (ἀδελφός, *adelphos*) was common in the Greek-speaking world for religious associates¹¹ but it was also used among the Jewish communities.¹² It was therefore not a term coined by The Way, nor something that identified the emerging Christian Church as distinct from the Jewish communities out of which it grew.

To the assemblies of Galatia: The use of the word ἐκκλησία, *ekklesia*,

6 If Paul had wanted to convey that his apostolic authority was from God the Father as mediated through Yeshua the Messiah, we might have expected him to write: "through Yeshua Messiah and from God the Father." That he did not should be understood as an emphasis upon the unity of Father and Messiah in their authority and commissioning of Paul.

7 Rom 1:4.

8 Rom 4:25.

9 Cp. Matt 11:27.

10 1Cor 1:1; 2Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1; 1Thess 1:1; 2Thess 1:1; Philemon 1:1.

11 cf. *BDAG*, "ἀδελφός".

12 Note its use in the Tanach: Ex 2:11; Dt 3:18; Neh 5:1; Is 66:20. Note also Tobit 1:3; 2Macc 1:1.

usually translated “church” in the English versions, would have been understood by Paul’s readers as referring to the assemblies in which they identified themselves. Since it was widely used in the Lxx to refer to the “assembly of Israel,” there is no need to posit some special meaning in its use here. These were the assemblies of believers founded by Paul.¹³

3–5 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua Messiah, who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.

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Interestingly, Paul combines the typical Greek greeting¹⁴ (χαίρειν, *chairein* though he changes it to χάρις, *charis*, “grace,” a word that sounded very much like the common greeting) with the standard Jewish greeting “shalom” (using the Greek equivalent, εἰρήνη, *eirene*). While he no doubt had the standard salutations in mind, he nonetheless ties both to the work of God in Yeshua, Whom he designates with three names: Lord (sovereign), Yeshua (Savior), and Messiah (the One promised by the prophets).

It is not in mere passing that Paul applies the term “Lord” (κύριος, *kurios*) to Yeshua. Besides its basic meaning of “lord” or “sovereign” which would be evident in a Greek-speaking culture, it also was the common title used in the Synagogue as a substitute for the Divine Name (the Greek κύριος, *kurios* regularly translates יהוה, YHVH in the Tanach). The early followers of Yeshua did not shrink from applying this title to their Master, and in so doing, ascribed to Him a divine status while at the same time unflinchingly affirming their monotheistic belief in the One God of Israel. Note, for example, the manner in which Paul applies Joel 2:32 to Yeshua (“whoever will call upon the Name of the LORD will be saved,” cf. Romans 10:13).¹⁵

The combination of “grace” and “peace” may actually sum up Paul’s essential message: God’s grace, given in the Messiah, is the only means of genuine peace with the Father. This is the message of the gospel, and one which Paul learned personally from his own study of the Scriptures as well as his personal confrontation with the risen Messiah.

The Hebrew sense of “peace” (unlike the word’s meaning in Greek) did not merely convey the sense of “no more war,” but actually points to a positive reality: everything existing as it should. Paul’s gospel to the Galatians, and to us, is that life as God intends it may be realized only through the salvation offered by God through His Son.

Having first mentioned Yeshua, Paul goes on to identify succinctly the core truths of His work, namely, first, that He “gave Himself for our sins . . .”¹⁶ This is substitution language which comes from the sacrificial ceremony: the spotless animal was given as payment in the place of the sinner, to atone for him. The Lamb of God fulfills this symbolism. It may well be that Paul emphasizes this at the outset of the epistle in order to bring into clear focus something that at least some in Galatia had apparently forgotten, namely, that the gospel is manifest in the selfless giving of the Son, and that this ought to characterize the

13 On the use of *ekklesia*, cf. *TLW* pp. 109ff; Hegg, *I Will Build My Ekklesia* (TorahResource, 2010), pp. 11ff; Dunn, *Galatians*, p. 30.

14 Cf. 1Macc 12:6; Acts 23:26, cp. Acts 15:23 and James 1:1.

15 For further study on the use of κύριος applied to Yeshua in the Apostolic Scriptures, see Hegg, *The Messiah: Introduction to Christology* (TorahResource, 2006), pp. 74–77.

16 Cf. 1Cor 15:3–5.

lives of all who call themselves His disciples.

The emphasis is not upon whether Yeshua was given (cf. Rom 4:25; 8:32) or voluntarily gave Himself (cf. Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2, 25; 1Tim 2:6; Tit 2:14), nor is there much to be made of the various terms that are used (δίδωμι, *didomi*; παραδίδωμι, *paradidomi*). The major point seems always to be simply that Yeshua became the substitute for sinners. It is in this “giving” that our salvation is made inevitable, and a realization of this transforms and conforms the heart of the believer to a life of giving as well.

Secondly, Paul notes that Yeshua’s having been given resulted in our being “rescued from this present evil age.” This follows the typical dualism of 1st Century Judaisms (at least those which held to the existence of the world to come) which universally saw the present age as characterized by evil, and the age to come as one of righteousness. This no doubt grew out of the apocalyptic works like Daniel (cf. Dan 2 and 7) and was furthered by the description of the world to come found in the prophets (e.g., Isaiah 65:25 where the lion and the lamb are at peace with each other). That apocalyptic works like 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch took this dualism to its final level only proves that it was extant in earlier years. What is more, this dualistic view is well attested at Qumran.¹⁷

But for Paul, the coming of Yeshua meant that the present evil age had been invaded by the Sovereign of the age to come, and in this way, the age to come had also entered into the current era, albeit only in part. The “rescue” is already happening, and those who are “in Messiah” are assured the final victory in the world to come.

Paul’s use of the term “rescue” here is interesting, primarily because this is the only place he uses this exact term (ἐξελπέω, *exireō*). This Greek word is often used in the Lxx to translate the Hebrew נָצַל, *natzal*, “to save” or “to deliver,” a term which almost always speaks of salvation or deliverance from present, physical danger. Paul may well have this very idea in mind (which does not discount that he also had in mind the eternal salvation of the soul). Being saved from the present evil world means that the very death which characterizes this age, and which is the result of sin, is that from which the redeemed are rescued. Paul teaches us clearly that Yeshua’s work of giving Himself for us is the means by which we are rescued.

But having eternal life is far more than merely being promised a place in the world to come. Our rescue from the present evil age is also seen in that while we are in the world, we are not part of the world. We are not citizens of this present evil age even if we live in it. Our actual participation in the salvation afforded by Messiah means that we are seated with Him in the heavenly places (Eph 2:6). Our affections are set on things above, not on things on this earth (Col 3:2ff), and therefore we are already being rescued from the death of this present evil age.

In fact, it is this reality that assures us personally that we possess eternal life. It is in our being rescued (not merely our hope of being rescued) that we see and experience the life-changing work of the Spirit, a work given only to those who are “sons of God” (cf. Rom 8:14). A transformed life is the sure proof of our regeneration because it is possible only through the work of the Spirit within us.

Thirdly, Paul adds that all of this was “in accordance with the will of our God and Father.” The incarnation, the work of Yeshua as sacrifice and risen Lord, the ascension, His intercession, His return and His reign are all the

¹⁷ CD 6.10, 14; 12.23; 15.7; 1QpHab. 5.7.

outworking of the Father's plan to bring about the salvation of His elect. Yeshua is the promised Messiah, the one foreseen by the prophets and awaited by Israel throughout her history. As such, Paul brings the focus upon Him, and asks the Galatians, in the midst of their strife, to remember the centrality of Yeshua as Lord and Savior.

Perhaps it goes without saying (though I think we should say it nonetheless) that this must constantly be our focus as well. If we lose sight of the centrality of Yeshua in our attempts to live out a Torah life of faith, we have lost our footing indeed! He is the One in Whom our lives are formed, and it is only by His grace—by His work of sacrifice—that we are rescued from this present evil age, and assured a place in the world to come.

The use of the word "Father" in reference to God is not a "Christian" innovation. The use of the term "father" in the rabbinic literature as a synonym for God is common:

Said R. Aqiba, "Happy are you, O Israel. Before whom are you made clean, and who makes you clean? It is your Father who is in heaven, "as it says, And I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean (Ezek 36:25). "And it says, O Lord, the hope [*miquweh* = immersion pool] of Israel (Jer 17:13) - Just as the immersion pool cleans the unclean, so the Holy One, blessed be he, cleans Israel." (m. *Yoma* 8.9)

Now it happened that when Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand fall, Amalek prevailed (Ex 17:11). Now do Moses's hands make war or stop it? But the purpose is to say this to you: So long as the Israelites would set their eyes upward and submit their hearts to their Father in heaven, they would grow stronger. And if not, they fell. In like wise, you may say the following: Make yourself a fiery serpent and set it on a standard, and it shall come to pass that every one who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live (Num 21:8). Now does that serpent [on the standard] kill or give life? [Obviously not.] But: So long as the Israelites would set their eyes upward and submit to their Father in heaven, they would be healed. And if not, they would pine away. (m. *Rosh Hashannah* 3.8)

Upon whom shall we depend? Upon our Father in heaven. (m. *Sota* 9:15)

These examples indicate clearly that the designation "Father" for "God" was a common rabbinic expression. Such a usage was based upon the Tanach:

Do you thus repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is not He your Father who has bought you? He has made you and established you. (Deut 32:6)

For You are our Father, though Abraham does not know us And Israel does not recognize us. You, O LORD, are our Father, Our Redeemer from of old is Your name. (Is 63:16)¹⁸

Thus, the theological axiom that the "Father" and the "Messiah" are distinct yet one does not flow out of the later Christian, trinitarian theology, but from the ancient words of the Tanach and the teachings of the Sages.

Here, Paul follows a common way of referencing God, yet we should not overlook the importance of his words. In the midst of the controversy which

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18 Cf. Is 64:7; Jer 31:9; Mal 1:6; 2:10; Ps 68:6.

threatened to inundate the Galatian congregations, Paul calls them (and us) back to the foundational principle of God’s fatherhood—that in His lofty and majestic transcendence, He nonetheless comes near to His children, and establishes a father-child relationship. That God would be known as the “Father of the fatherless” (Psalm 68:5[6]) bears this emphasis beautifully.

The final *b’rachah* (blessing) of the opening greeting is “to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.” One immediately recognizes the common phrase inserted in the reciting of the Shema: “Hear O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One. Blessed be His Name—may the glory of His kingdom be forever.”¹⁹ This was originally the response of the people to the High Priest during his duties on Yom Kippur. It was therefore well known and its words well rehearsed by anyone in the Jewish community. That Paul would include these well known words here emphasizes once again that from his perspective, Yeshua’s High Priestly work was the culmination of all that to which Yom Kippur pointed.

The addition of “amen” bespeaks the common, liturgical response of the community to matters of importance, such as oaths, blessings, and declarations.²⁰ One can almost imagine Paul expecting his readers to respond as “to whom be the glory forever” is read.

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6–7 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Messiah, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Messiah.

Paul moves from his greeting directly into a rebuke. Normally Paul follows his greeting with a word of thanksgiving or prayer for his readers (Rom 1:8ff; 1Cor 1:4ff; Phil 1:3ff; Col 1:3ff; 1Thess 1:2ff; 2Thess 1:3ff; Philemon 4ff). His immediate move to rebuke is therefore uncommon for him, and shows the level of his concern and disgust. While there surely could be matters for which he was thankful, the teaching of the influencers was so contrary to the Gospel as he knew it, there was no time for niceties, and nothing in their message for which he could give thanks. Their message undermined the very person and work of Messiah, and Paul’s impatience to deal with the matter is seen as he moves immediately into a stern rebuke.

He employs an ironic style in order both to hedge his disgust and to indicate the severe level of rebuke with which he is writing. The word “amazed” (θαυμάζω, *thaumazō*) signals this ironic style. The word itself often denotes the response of people to a miracle.²¹ But Paul is not expressing his amazement over the work of God but rather over the perverse teaching of the influencers. He only uses the word one other time (2Thess 1:10). It is thus not a common term in Paul’s vocabulary, and its use here is therefore all the more emphatic.

Paul is not “surprised” in the sense that he does not understand the issues at hand, nor is he “surprised” that there were those who would attempt to undermine his teaching and presentation of the gospel. But in casting the words in this manner, he is able to address those who are them-

19 Cf. m.Yoma 3.8ff.

20 m.Berachot 5.4; 8.8; m.Taanit 2.5; 4.8; m.Nazir 4.2; m.Sota 2.3,5; 7.5; 9.15; m.Bava Qama 9.7-8; m.Shavuot 3.11; 4.3; 5.2,4-5; 8.2-3,5-6; m.Tamid 7.3.

21 Matt 8:27; 9:33; 15:31; 21:20; Mark 5:20; Lk 8:25; 9:43; 11:14; John 5:21; Acts 2:7; 3:12.