

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL ARGUMENTATION IN GALATIANS 5:13-26

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I. *Introduction*

THE brilliant Dutch Reformed exegete and theologian Herman Ridderbos has done NT studies an immeasurable service by underscoring the fundamental redemptive-historical perspective of the apostle Paul. In his lesser known works, in his magisterial work on Paul's theology, and in his commentaries on some of Paul's epistles,¹ Ridderbos consistently illumined this basic framework of Paul's theology. Preceding the recent emphasis on Paul's Jewish milieu by almost a generation, Ridderbos approached the whole of Paul's theology by emphasizing "the redemptive-historical, eschatological character of Paul's proclamation":

The governing motif of Paul's preaching is the saving activity of God in the advent and the work, particularly in the death and the resurrection, of Christ. This activity is on the one hand the fulfillment of the work of God in the history of the nation Israel, the fulfillment therefore also of the Scriptures; on the other hand it reaches out to the ultimate consummation of the parousia of Christ and the coming of the kingdom of God. It is this great redemptive-historical framework within which the whole of Paul's preaching must be understood and all of its subordinate parts receive their place and organically cohere.²

It is with a great personal debt to Herman Ridderbos that I owe my basic understanding of Pauline theology. Largely through the lens of his perspective, I have come to appreciate the missiological and theological passion of the apostle. However, I have also found through my own study of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians the need to apply his redemptive-historical perspective even more extensively than he did. Specifically, Paul's argumentation in Galatians 5-6 depends *even more heavily* upon a redemptive-historical perspective than Ridderbos determined in his commentary on

¹ H. Ridderbos, "The Redemptive-Historical Character of Paul's Preaching," in his *When the Time Had Fully Come. Studies in New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957; repr. Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia, 1982) 44-60 (page references are to reprint edition); *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (NIC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953); *Aan de Romeinen* (Commentaar op het Nieuwe Testament; Kampen: Kok, 1959); *Aan de Kolossenzen* (Commentaar op het Nieuwe Testament; Kampen: Kok, 1960); and *De Pastoralen Brieven* (Commentaar op het Nieuwe Testament; Kampen: Kok, 1967).

² Ridderbos, *Paul*, 39.

Galatians. Ridderbos' failure to follow through with this perspective may reflect the fact that the commentary was written early in his Pauline work (1953); it may also be due in part to Ridderbos' view of the spiritual life (cf. his comments on Gal 5:16-18, pp. 202-5). Whatever the reason, we should note that by underscoring the redemptive-historical framework of Paul's reasoning in chaps. 5-6 and demonstrating its continuity with the same reasoning in chaps. 1-4, the brilliance of Paul's argumentation stands out even more, and Gal 5:13-26 takes on a very different hue.

My thesis is that correctly understanding Paul's redemptive-historical argument in Gal 5:13-26 significantly undercuts the view that this passage teaches a struggle within the Christian between internal parts or entities called "the flesh" and "the Spirit." I suggest that Paul was using these terms in this passage in a very different sense—in a redemptive-historical sense—to represent modes or eras of existence. Such an understanding simply extends Ridderbos' insight about Paul's use of flesh and Spirit:

That is why Spirit is opposed to "flesh." For in Paul flesh, too, is not primarily an existential notion, but a redemptive-historical one. Flesh is the mode of existence of man and the world before the fullness of the times appeared. Flesh is man and world in the powers of darkness. And opposing this is the Spirit, the *Pneuma*, not first and foremost as an individual experience, not even in the first place as an individual reversal, but as a new way of existence which became present time with the coming of Christ. Thus Paul can say in Romans 8:9: "But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit." This being in the Spirit is not a mystical, but an eschatological, redemptive-historical category. It means: You are no longer in the power of the old aeon; you have passed into the new one, you are under a different authority.³

An interpretation of the flesh/Spirit antithesis in light of redemption history is not as unlikely as one may first think if we recognize the centrality of the redemptive-historical framework in Paul's theology. Paul expresses this framework by numerous perspectives or metaphors through which he views the historical progress of redemption. For example, the following are suggestive of the pervasiveness of this framework: from the first Adam to the last Adam (Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:20-28), from childhood to adulthood in the developmental periods of God's children (Gal 3:23-4:7), from the Abrahamic to Mosaic covenants in the covenantal development (Gal 3:15-22), from the present age to the age-to-come (Gal 1:4; Rom 12:1-2), from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of his beloved Son (Col 2:13-14), from mystery to co-heirs regarding the Gentile inclusion (Eph 3:1-13), and from the natural body to the spiritual body (1 Cor 15:35-58). Paul's use of the *σάρξ* / *πνεῦμα* perspective as a redemptive-historical lens is even more pervasive than any of the above schemas (e.g., Galatians 3-6; Romans 7-8; Phil 3:3-4; 1 Cor 3:1-3; etc.). However, the interpretation of this schema

³ Ridderbos, "The Redemptive-Historical Character of Paul's Preaching," 52.

as parts of persons rather than modes of existence has muddled Paul's historical emphasis and contributed to an existential and dehistoricizing understanding of the apostle.⁴

What we have apparently failed to understand is that Paul seems to have inherited the term σάρξ ("flesh") from his Judaistic opponents, turned it on its head, and begun to use it against them. Any understanding of the σάρξ / πνεῦμα conflict in Galatians must recognize at a foundational level that this terminology grew out of the polemics of the Judaizing controversy. To the Judaizers, the σάρξ was a term of endearment. Apparently, they preached a gospel grounded upon the premise that God had an eternal covenant through the circumcision of the flesh of Abraham and his heirs. This "σάρξ-covenant" was referred to in LXX passages like Gen 17:13b: καὶ ἔσται ἡ διαθήκη μου ἐπὶ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν εἰς διαθήκην αἰώνιον.⁵ However, Paul demolished their theology of the σάρξ by emphasizing the common OT sense of σάρξ as "human bodily existence in its weakness, frailty, and transitoriness in contrast to God's eternal existence as spirit" (e.g., Gen 6:3; 2 Chr 32:8; Job 10:4; Ps 56:4, 78:39; Isa 31:3; Jer 17:5).⁶

Paul's strategy in Galatians was to enrich this basic OT sense of σάρξ by placing it in antithesis with πνεῦμα, as was done in OT contexts like Gen 6:3 and Isa 31:3. Paul began the σάρξ / πνεῦμα antithesis in Gal 3:3 and then carefully developed the value of both σάρξ and πνεῦμα to within a redemptive-historical framework throughout the rest of the epistle. While such redemptive-historical reasoning has been widely recognized in Galatians 3-4, it has seldom been underscored in chaps. 5-6. Actually, it is in these last two chapters that we see the climax of Paul's redemptive-historical argumentation.

Paul's consistent point in chaps. 3-6 is that σάρξ refers to life *before* Messiah came or, now that he has come, life *apart from* faith in Messiah. It is only at the crucifixion of Messiah Jesus that life in the σάρξ ended (Gal 5:24; cf. Rom 8:2-4). While living in the σάρξ before Christ came was not culpable, it was nevertheless life in a weak, frail, and transitory

⁴ Bernard Lategan noted Paul's pervasive historical emphasis through the widespread use of temporal and spatial markers. Specifically, he noted that "the temporal indicators are a specific feature of Paul's style. He often uses time to differentiate between alternative modes of existence" ("Textual Space as Rhetorical Device," in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* [ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht; JSNTSup 90; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993] 401).

⁵ This was noted by Robert Jewett in *Paul's Anthropological Terms. A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings* (AGJU 10; Leiden: Brill, 1971) 96. See also Sidney B. Hoenig, "Circumcision: The Covenant of Abraham," *JQR* n.s. 53 (1962-63) 322-34, for a treatment of this issue from a Jewish perspective. For additional passages on the covenant in the flesh, see Gen 17:11, 14, 23-25; Lev 12:3; Ezek 44: 7, 9. Compare the additional references to σάρξ added to the circumcision contexts of Gen 34:24 and Jer 9:26 in the LXX. In Jewish literature see Jub. 15:13-33; Jdt 14:10; 4 Ezra 1:31; Sir 44:20 and later in the rabbinic texts of *b. Sanh.* 99a and *b. Sebu.* 13a.

⁶ See Baumgärtel, *TDNT*, σάρξ, 7.105-8.

condition because of the nature of *σάρξ*. For Israel, this coincided with life under the Mosaic Law (Gal 3:19-4:10). Therefore, *σάρξ* and *νόμος* were tandem members. From Moses to the Messiah, to be *ὑπὸ νόμον* was also to be *ἐν σαρκί* (cf. Rom 8:4). This is why the allegory of Sarah and Hagar in Gal 4:21-31 is so instructive. Paul's brilliant polemical stroke in this passage is that the Galatians' desire to be into *ὑπὸ νόμον* (4:21) is the tragic desire to return to the slavery of Hagar and Ishmael, which corresponds to being under the Mount Sinai covenant (4:25). The entrance into such a covenant of slavery is via an Ishmael-like birth *κατὰ σάρκα* (4:23, 29). Ironically, a covenant birth according to the *σάρξ* is exactly what the Judaizers were preaching.

It is essential to clarify at this point that *σάρξ* is not inherently evil in either the OT or Paul's writings. Rather, it is simply a part of the creational limitations of being human. We can see this perspective in Paul's diverse uses of *σάρξ* in Galatians. The *σάρξ* is a part of general human identity with its implied inadequacy of human knowledge in 1:16⁷ and its accompanying illnesses and humbling frailties when Paul first visited the Galatians (4:13-14). This term is further qualified when applied to the identity of Israelites. Paul asserts that no *σάρξ* will be justified by works of the Mosaic Law (2:16), yet that *σάρξ* is also the realm of *his* discipleship by Christ (2:20). Both of these statements must be interpreted within their immediate context, namely, Paul's correction of the Jewish Christians in Antioch who had caved in to the Judaistic demands of the circumcision party from Jerusalem (2:11-21). Therefore, the most likely understanding of *σάρξ* in this passage is that it refers to the Jewish Christians whose bodies are *distinguished by circumcision*. No circumcised flesh will be justified by the works of Torah, but rather life in circumcised flesh is to be lived by faith in the Messiah, else the grace of God is nullified and Christ died needlessly (2:21).⁸

The inherent weakness, frailty, and transitoriness of the *σάρξ* takes on negative moral qualities when it is viewed instrumentally in relation to sin. Most scholars include the usages in Galatians 5-6 in this list, along with those in Romans 7-8, 13:11-14; Phil 3:3-4; 1 Cor 3:1-3; 2 Cor 1:17, 5:16, 10:2-4, 11:18; Eph 2:1-3; and Col 2:6-23. Some also add 1 Cor 5:5 and 2 Cor 7:1 to this list of moral or ethical occurrences of *σάρξ*.⁹ While

⁷ W. David Stacey observed the general theological significance of *σάρξ καὶ αἷμα* in Paul's usage: "In 1 Cor 15:50, this phrase is used for humanity in its transience and mortality. In Gal 1:16, it is used for humanity with the stress on the inadequacy of human knowledge. Both imply limitation, but not the same limitation" (*The Pauline View of Man* [London: Macmillan, 1956] 157).

⁸ See the discussion of Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms*, 97-98, for these same conclusions with supporting argumentation.

⁹ For example, see George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 469; W. D. Davies, "Paul and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Flesh and Spirit," in *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (ed. Krister Stendahl; New York: Harper & Row, 1957) 163; John

the non-Galatian passages are beyond the scope of this article, I would like to turn my attention to Gal 5:13-26 and to the validation of a redemptive-historical understanding of *σάρξ* and *πνεῦμα* in this crucial passage.

II. *Gal 5:13-15 and 5:25-26—The Choices in Use of Freedom*

These two passages will be dealt with together because of their function as brackets or bookends in Paul's argument. They bracket the antithetical sets of behavior of the *σάρξ* and the *πνεῦμα* that are described in 5:16-24. The first bracket in 5:13-15 is preceded by the epistle's first overt warning about the danger of submitting to circumcision in 5:1-12. While Paul has been building to this warning throughout the entire epistle, this is the clearest confrontation yet. Paul ends Galatians with an equally ringing warning in 6:11-17, which shows that this topic is obviously very much in his thinking in chaps. 5-6.¹⁰ Clearly in this context also, circumcision is the official symbol of taking up the yoke of Torah (Gal 5:2-3). It is the most obvious act that ties the body as *σάρξ* to *νόμος*. Therefore, when Paul follows his warning about submitting to circumcision in 5:1-12 with an exhortation about the *σάρξ*, it is most natural to read it as an exhortation about Judaistic behavior.

The structure of Gal 5:1-6:10 underscores this understanding of *σάρξ* in Gal 5:13 also. This section is an argument proving the superiority of the Galatians' present deliverance in Christ over what the Judaizers could offer by contrasting the relational dynamics within the two communities. Paul's point in 5:1-6:10 is that "his gospel alone provided them true deliverance from sin's powers through their receiving of the Holy Spirit":

5:1-12 Paul warns and exhorts about the antithetical consequences of identity choice for their continued deliverance from sin's powers.

5:13-26 The fundamental manifestation of deliverance from sin's powers in the community of God's people is loving service, not competitive striving.

5:13-15 (Front bracket) *The Initial Expression of the Antithetical Choices*: Manifestation of freedom from the constraints of the Mosaic Law within the community of God's people should not be used as an opportunity (*ἄμορμῆ*) for continued fleshly failure, which is vitriolic and self-consuming, but rather as an opportunity through love to serve one another, which is the summation principle of the whole Mosaic Law.

A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (SBT 5; London: SCM, 1952) 22-26; and W. David Stacey, *The Pauline View of Man*, 158-64.

¹⁰ Frank J. Matera notes that Gal 5:13-6:10 is itself bracketed by the warnings against circumcision in 5:1-12 and 6:11-17 ("The Culmination of Paul's Argument to the Galatians: Gal. 5.1-6.17," *JSNT* 32 [1988] 84-88). However, the second warning is really the postscript for the entire epistle, and functions as a summarizing exhortation. Therefore, while this undercuts the bracketing observation, it nevertheless demonstrates the importance of the issue of circumcision by its domination of the postscript.

5:16-24 *The Antithetical Manifestations of the Two Choices*: Those who insist on living according to the past standards of fleshly behavior within the community, under the Mosaic Law will share in the sins of a community composed of those who will not inherit the kingdom of God; but those who identify with the community of the Spirit will be enabled by God's Spirit to manifest the fruit of loving unity apart from the daily constraints of the Mosaic Law.

5:25-26 (Back Bracket) *The Closing Expression of the Antithetical Choices*: Being a part of the community of the Spirit means that one should choose to live according to the rule or standard of the Spirit and not according to the competitive striving that characterizes the community of the flesh.

6:1-10 Some specific manifestations of the deliverance from sin's powers which fulfill the relational goal of the Law within the community of the Spirit are seen in the gracious restoration of sinning members and in the generous financial sharing with appropriate persons within the community.

Paul's argument takes a strong relational turn in Gal 5:6 that continues through 6:16. In this discussion the relational standard that Paul holds up is "faith working through love" (5:6b). This standard is introduced as a strong contrast (ἀλλά) to making distinctions in Christ according to circumcision or uncircumcision (5:6a). This contrast signals that the following relational discussion harnesses the *antithetical contrasts* between Paul's community and the Judaizers' seen in 3:1-5:5. Specifically, the antithesis discussed in 5:1-5 of the freedom of Paul's gospel versus the bondage of the Judaizers' nongospel is continued in the relational discussion of 5:6-6:16.

In 5:13 Paul reiterates in an explanatory fashion (γάρ) the Galatians' call to freedom of 5:1. The ὑμεῖς is emphatic in 5:13a and heightens the contrast between the disturbers of 5:12 and the Galatians. However, he also uses the additive, yet specifying, use of μόνον to qualify further their freedom relationally:¹¹ ὑμεῖς γὰρ ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ ἐκλήθητε, ἀδελφοί· μόνον μὴ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν εἰς ἀφορμὴν τῆ σαρκί, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις Gal 5:13b-c gives the purpose for their freedom in negative, then positive terms. Negatively, Paul says, "Do not use [μὴ plus an understood imperatival verb]¹² the freedom for [εἰς] an opportunity for τῆ σαρκί." Positively, and contrastingly (ἀλλά), they have the freedom from sin's powers so they can serve one another through love. Both the negative and positive statements of the purpose are really more forceful and more overtly relational restatements of the same two aspects, first set in antithesis in 5:6:

¹¹ Paul uses μόνον in Gal 1:23, 2:10, 3:2, 6:12, and 4:18 (with μὴ) in some type of qualifying sense also (cf. Phil 1:27).

¹² E. D. Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC: Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921) 292 and BDF 255 suggest ἔχετε. Ronald Y. K. Fung notes no general consensus as to what verb should be supplied (*The Epistle to the Galatians* [NIC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988] 244). In such cases where the immediate context does not offer a good choice, the simplest verb and voice seem wisest. Cf. BAGD 517 (III.A.6).

5:6a For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything...

5:13b you do not have your freedom for an opportunity for the flesh...

5:6b but faith working through love.

5:13c but through the love serve one another.

Paul circumscribes the focus of "love" in this context as the treatment of others apart from the distinctions based on circumcision and uncircumcision. Therefore, the use of *σάρξ* in 5:13b is a continued use of the physical term with the continued ethical cast of the Judaizers' emphasis on circumcised bodily tissue. This is the same sense of *σάρξ* begun in Gal 3:3, after being foreshadowed in 2:15-21, then carefully developed in 4:21-31. Therefore, the occasion or opportunity for *τῇ σαρκί* in 5:13b is an occasion to emphasize *circumcised* flesh or bodily tissue. This is the same sense of *σάρξ* in 6:12a: "Those who desire you to make a good showing *ἐν σαρκί* try to compel you to be circumcised."

Inextricably linked to this emphasis on bodily tissue via circumcision is the way of life where bodily deeds are constrained by Torah. The Judaizers' nongospel includes this total package (5:2-3). However, this life of circumcision and Torah-observance is not a proper use of Christian freedom. For the Galatians to think that they have their freedom for such an occasion is fallacious. To have freedom *εἰς ἀφορμὴν τῇ σαρκί* is to attempt to be perfected by the Judaizers' bodily emphases (3:3) by emphasizing birth into God's family *κατὰ σάρκα* (4:23, 29), which is wanting to be under Torah (4:21; 5:1).¹³

But why should Paul need to repeat in 5:13 the overt freedom statement of 5:1 and the overt love statement of 5:6? This repetition seems necessary because Paul is launching into the antithetical contrast of the internal dynamics of the Judaizers' and his communities in Galatia in 5:13-6:10. His restatement of the freedom of the Galatians' calling in 5:13a, his reiteration of the inappropriateness of circumcision-oriented living in 5:13b, and the repeat of the lifestyle of loving service in 5:13c all introduce Paul's climactic point: his communities, not the Judaizers', manifest true freedom from the *στοιχεῖα*¹⁴ and are able to engender the relational ideal of neighbor-love that truly fulfills the Mosaic Law.¹⁵ While the Judaizers' communities bite

¹³ See G. Walter Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts* (JSNTSup 29; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989) 152, for a similar conclusion.

¹⁴ Eldon Jay Epp has argued that the unifying theme in all of Paul's diverse imageries of what God has done in Christ is that "God has set his people free, has moved them from bondage into freedom . . . his one paramount point that God, through Christ, has brought freedom to humankind" ("Paul's Diverse Imageries of the Human Situation and His Unifying Theme of Freedom," in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology* [ed. Robert A. Guelich; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978] 100-116, esp. p. 100).

¹⁵ In a very insightful article, Stephen Westerholm concludes that "the harried apostle appears to have been consistent in at least" these points: "Paul never derives appropriate Christian behavior by simply applying relevant precepts from Torah"; he "never claims that

and devour one another (5:15) and are boastful and challenging and envying one another (5:26), the Pauline communities are seeking to serve one another in love (5:13c) and to walk according to the Spirit (5:25). While the Judaizers' communities manifest the deeds of the flesh and give evidence that they will not inherit God's kingdom (5:19-21), the Pauline communities manifest the fruit of the Spirit and the true fulfillment of the Mosaic Law (5:22-23). This relational fulfillment of neighbor-love (5:14) is seen in the handling of the difficult issues of believers' sinning (6:1-5) and the sharing of material resources within and without the community (6:6-10). In both of these areas, the churches Paul planted are to manifest the behavior appropriate for the new creation that is living according to the standard of the Spirit, rather than according to the standard of the flesh (6:12-16).

In Gal 5:14 Paul relates the Mosaic Law as a whole or entire unit (ὁ πᾶς νόμος) in an explanatory way (via γάρ again) to both τῆς ἀγάπης of 5:13c and τῆ σαρκί of 5:13b. Paul's use of Lev 19:18 in Gal 5:14 as a summarizing relational statement of the Law (ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν) connects very obviously with his love statement in 5:13c. However, the νόμος/σάρξ tandem also plays a significant role in Paul's use in 5:13-26 (e.g., 5:13-14, 17-18, 19-23). The connection between the whole Law which "has been *fulfilled* in one word" ¹⁶ and τῆ σαρκί in 5:13b is an ironic connection. Its irony rests in the Judaizers' attempt to persuade the Galatians to fulfill the Mosaic Law through emphasis on the (circumcised) σάρξ. However, inherent in this emphasis is the central distinction between those who are circumcised and uncircumcised in Christ (5:6a). This may have led the Judaizers to redefine who their neighbor was by using their freedom as an occasion for fleshly distinctions and thereby greatly restricting those who qualified as their "neighbor" in Christ.¹⁷ If this is the case, then Jesus' words about neighborliness to the lawyer in Luke 10:25-37 are germane: such fleshly distinctions and concerns lead to casuistic lovelessness and

Christians 'do' (ποιεῖν) the law; they—and they alone—are said to 'fulfill' (πληροῦν) it"; and he "never speaks of the law's fulfillment in prescribing Christian conduct, but only while describing its results" ("On Fulfilling the Whole Law (Gal. 5:14)," *SEA* 51-52 [1986-87] 237).

¹⁶ Compare Rom 8:4 and especially 13:8-10 for Paul's connection of πληρῶν and the Law in the sense of "fulfill," not "sum up," although this latter sense may be encompassed in the former. The immediate context in Gal 5:13-15 is one of behaving appropriately and thereby fulfilling the Law's basic tenet. See Fung, *Galatians*, 245-46. In spite of this sense, however, there seems to be a purposeful ambiguity in Paul's choice of πληρῶν, which is less exact than "observe" or "do" (cf. John M. G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians* [Studies of the New Testament and Its World; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988] 143).

¹⁷ The issue of those who qualified as a "neighbor" may have been a part of the issue of social intercourse in Gal 2:11-14, although it cannot be definitively proven at this point. See E. P. Sanders, "Jewish Association with Gentiles and Galatians 2:11-14," in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa; Nashville: Abingdon, 1990) 170-88, for an interesting discussion of the possible interpretations of this incident.

negate the Law's central tenet of neighbor-love. Nevertheless, if the Galatians should choose to follow the Judaizers in their emphasis on τῆ σαρκί in order to fulfill the Mosaic Law, the tragic irony is that they will risk negating its central tenet about human relationships.

It is important to note that Paul is not advocating a love-antinomianism in Gal 5:13-14 any more than he is advocating a Spirit-antinomianism in 5:16-18. Rather, he is contrasting the Judaizers' Torah-centered nomism with a Christ-centered nomism of love, which he apparently already had taught them. Therefore, he can appeal to and enhance τὸν νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ (6:2) and a previously given set of standards about the kingdom of God (e.g., 5:21b). The Pauline churches were given a κανὼν (Gal 6:16) and a τύπος (Phil 3:17) to follow. Therefore, Paul can confidently assert in Gal 5:14 that the Christ-centered law he had taught fulfilled Torah. This Christ-centered law is fulfilled in Christians when they walk κατὰ πνεῦμα: "He condemned sin ἐν τῆ σαρκί in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk κατὰ σάρκα, but κατὰ πνεῦμα" (Rom 8:3c-4).

By contrast (5:15, δὲ), the risk the Galatians run if they enter into the Judaizers' communities and attach themselves to Israel is that they may annihilate themselves through an animalistic type of biting and devouring of one another. As Betz has noted, "comparisons of bad conduct with the behavior of wild animals were commonplace in the diatribe."¹⁸ Is Paul describing the Galatians' rivalries and behavior, as some advocate,¹⁹ or is he merely speaking in hypothetical and hyperbolic language?²⁰ If these are the only two options, then the latter one seems preferable. However, while Paul may be using some hyperbolic language, it seems unlikely within the terse antithetical argumentation that he has been using that he would choose to describe a hypothetical situation. Therefore, a third option is preferred: Paul is describing concrete instances of the relationships *within the Judaizers' communities*. They have created intensely competitive communities where distinctions based on the σάρξ breed rivalries and animosities.²¹ In Gal 4:17 Paul noted that their exclusive mentality first shut out the Galatians (ἀλλὰ ἐκκλείσαι ὑμᾶς θέλουσιν) for the purpose that the Galatians would be motivated to seek them (ἵνα αὐτοὺς ζηλοῦτε). This kind of group exclusion to group-oriented people engenders deep and powerful emotions. It is not the least bit unreasonable to see how such a highly

¹⁸ Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 276-77.

¹⁹ E.g., Walter Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972) 43-46, and George S. Duncan, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (MNTC; London: Hodder Stoughton, 1934) 164-65.

²⁰ Betz, *Galatians*, 277.

²¹ Sheldon R. Isenberg, "Power through Temple and Torah in Greco-Roman Palestine," in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults* (ed. Jacob Neusner; 2 vols.; Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 12; Leiden: Brill, 1975) 2.24-52, esp. p. 42.

competitive core and such an exclusive mentality have great potential for "animalistic" interpersonal behavior. The most likely option for the description of Gal 5:15 seems to rest with the Judaizing group against whom Paul is competing. While his language is obviously somewhat hyperbolic, it must have had some correspondence in observable fact with which the Galatians could relate.

While Gal 5:13-15 functions as the initial bracket of the whole section of 5:13-26, vv. 25-26 function as the closing bracket. While the front bracket sets forth the initial expression of the antithetical relational choices between the two competing communities in Galatia, this back bracket reiterates the same choices. While Gal 5:13-15 appeals to the Galatians to continue as they had begun in freedom, in 5:25-26 Paul appeals to them to continue as they had begun in living out corporately the life according to the rule or direction of the Spirit: εἰ ζῶμεν πνεύματι, πνεύματι καὶ στοιχῶμεν. μὴ γινώμεθα κενόδοξοι, ἀλλήλους προκαλούμενοι, ἀλλήλοις φθονοῦντες.

The contrast between the Pauline and Judaizer communities in these two verses centers on the life of relational unity that the Spirit brings forth versus the life of competitive strife that communities devoid of God's Spirit manifest. Paul again refers to the beginning of life in Christ as life beginning according to the direction of the Spirit (εἰ ζῶμεν πνεύματι; cf. 3:2-3). This beginning has shaping priority and dominance over the whole life that follows. Hence, the Galatians should seek to walk in agreement with or in step according to the same rule or direction of the Spirit. This is similar to the appeal in Eph 4:1-3 *to preserve* the bond of the Spirit (cf. Col 2:6-7). The Spirit desires to produce his fruit among the Galatian churches (Gal 5:22-23) and this crop is one that brings strong relational unity.

However, the Galatians will never experience the fullness of the Spirit's relational fruit and the walking in agreement with his standard if they enter the Judaizers' communities. This is because of the Judaizers' competitive core that seems to produce division and unhealthy individualism in the form of boasting, challenging one another, and envying one another (Gal 5:26). Again, Paul must have been appealing to characteristics of the Judaizers' communities that the Galatians had been able to observe, at least in part. The hierarchical sense of distinctions (5:6a; 6:12-13, 15) and the fleshly means of being perfected within the Judaizers' communities (3:2-3) must have fueled the relational dynamics described in Gal 5:26.

Gal 5:13-15 and 5:25-26 lay out the relational choices that the Galatians face in deciding how to, use their freedom. At the core of Paul's argument in these verses is some potent and ironic redemptive-historical reasoning. If the Galatians use their freedom for Abrahamic circumcision and Mosaic Torah-observance, then they will bite and devour one another. However, if they choose to love one another and walk according to the Spirit, then they will fulfill the whole Mosaic Law. Jesus Christ's provision of the Holy Spirit and ability to love is more than adequate to fulfill the Law. However,

getting circumcised and taking up the yoke of all of Torah will not lead to fulfillment. Surely this amazing irony was not lost on the Galatians.

III. Gal 5:16—18—*The Opposition of Flesh and Spirit*

Within the bracketing passages of Gal 5:13-15 and 5:25-26, which summarize the antithetical relational dynamics of the Pauline and Judaistic communities, Gal 5:16-24 functions as Paul's fuller delineation of the internal dynamics of the two groups. As one would expect with Paul's rhetorical approach begun in Gal 3:1, these two competing communities are delineated in an antithetical manner. In fact, within Gal 5:16-24 we reach the climax of the antithesis of the community of the Spirit with the community of the flesh.

The logical linkage of 5:16-24 to 5:13-15 is one of *means* to the desired *end*. In Gal 5:13-15 Paul expressed the desired *end* of the Galatians' freedom in Christ: loving service of one another, not making fleshly distinctions or biting and devouring one another. It is in Gal 5:16-24 that Paul now explains the *means* of achieving this desired relational end. Grammatically, the linkage is with λέγω δέ in 5:16 ("But I say"), which is probably used in an adversative sense for continuing a discussion, and especially for emphasizing an aspect of the previous argumentation (cf. Gal 1:9; 3:17; 5:2; and especially 4:1). The adversative sense sets the contrast with the undesired relational end described in 5:15. Rather than this animalistic annihilating of one another, Paul offers the sure means to avoid completing this kind of fleshly behavior. While in 5:13 he described this behavior as "an opportunity for the flesh" (ἀφορμὴν τῆ σαρκί), in 5:16 he describes it in a parallel fashion as "the desire of the flesh" (ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκός). Walking according to the rule of the Spirit (πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε) is the gracious and sure means of not fulfilling (οὐ μὴ τελέσητε) the desire associated with the σάρξ way of life.

If the ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκός of 5:16 is truly parallel to the ἀφορμὴν τῆ σαρκί of 5:13, and it appears to be in context, then Paul's focus upon this desire of the σάρξ is not upon its manifold sinful passions, which correspond to τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός in their behavioral manifestations (5:19-21). Rather, Paul may be underscoring the primary intent of the Judaizers' passionate emphasis on σάρξ, i.e., on circumcised bodily tissue. The desire of the σάρξ is the as the opportunity for the σάρξ: to place the Galatians under Torah via circumcision so that the Judaizers' nomistic distinctions between the circumcised and uncircumcised will be brought to bear. Paul's antidote is, therefore, to walk according to the rule of the Spirit so that the Judaizers' passion for the circumcision of the σάρξ will not be fulfilled.

Gal 5:17 explains this clash of the desire of the σάρξ and the desire of the πνεῦμα to and v. 18 gives the resolution to the conflict: "But if you are led according to the rule of the Spirit, you are not ὑπὸ νόμον." The antithesis

of πνεῦμα is and νόμος in 5:18 must surely parallel the antithesis of πνεῦμα and σάρξ in 5:16-17, or else Paul's resolution to the conflict of verses 16-17 is meaningless. If this is the case, then the ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκός of 5:16 is the desire to place people ὑπὸ νόμον. To this threat Paul offers the same antidote in first the active, and then the passive, voice: walk according to the rule of the Spirit (5:16) and be led according to the rule of the Spirit (5:18).

The imperative περιπατεῖτε in 5:16 is a very common and extremely important term in both Jewish and Greek ancient ethics, as Betz has noted in this insightful passage:

The term expresses the view that human life is essentially a "way of life." *A human being must and always does choose between ways of life as they are presented in history and culture.* For ancient man, ways of life are more than "styles of life": they are not only different in their outward appearance, but their different appearance is the result of different underlying and determining factors. These factors influence human behavior by providing the "way" in which human beings "walk." *Therefore, the way of life of human beings determines the quality of their life. More than merely a matter of outward style, the way of life provides continuity, guidance and assistance for the task of coping with the daily struggle against evil.*²²

Betz's insights help inform us how the Galatians would have related to Paul's command to "walk according to the rule or direction of the Spirit." Given the clear πνεῦμα/ σάρξ antithesis of 5:16-18, the Galatians would see that their choice was between two "ways of life," or, as we have been translating the dative πνεύματι, between two "rules" or "directions" in life. Apparently both of the communities had promised the Galatians the necessary continuity, guidance, and assistance for coping with the daily struggle with evil that Betz describes. In Gal 5:16-24 Paul appeals to the observable behavior of the two communities to convince the Galatians that walking as σαρκί (or ὑπὸ νόμον) will not result in the kind of behavior that they desire in Christ (5:17) and is tantamount to walking in the way of those outside the kingdom of God (5: 21b).

Perhaps a further word about understanding πνεύματι as a dative of rule or direction in 5:16 (and also in 5:18 and 5:25) is appropriate at this point. John Eadie and J. B. Lightfoot are in the minority of commentators who agree with this article's perspective that πνεύματι is a dative of rule or direction (Lightfoot) or a dative of norm indicating rule or manner (Eadie).²³ Specifically attacking this view is Elinor Rogers, who says that

πνεύματι does not mean here in [v.] 16b "by the rule or norm of the Spirit" . . . simply because στοιχέω 'walk' in 5:25b and 6:16a implies certain information, dictates, rules, or principles, and such a rule is explicit in 6:15a-b. With

²² Betz, *Galatians*, 277 (emphasis mine).

²³ John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1884; repr. Minneapolis: James and Klock, 1977) 407, and J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (10th ed.; London: Macmillan, 1890; repr. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957) 209.

περιπατέω 'walk' that idea probably would have been expressed as κατὰ πνεῦμα 'according to the Spirit'.²⁴

Rogers advocates understanding πνεύματι as a dative of instrument or agency ("walk by the Spirit").²⁵ While this view is very appealing and widely held, it has two difficulties. First, there is the obvious parallelism of the antitheses in Gal 5:16 and 5:18 and the associating of σάρξ as in v. 16 with νόμος in v. 18. As Rogers herself admits, πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε in 5:16 and πνεύματι ἄγεσθε in 5:18 are a "sandwich structure."²⁶ However, Rogers' view of the ethical uses of σάρξ as "your naturally evil selves"²⁷ tends to lessen the impact of Paul's parallelism and negates the effect of the sandwich structure by making the issue internal and individualistic rather than external and corporate.

Second, the sense of στοιχέω in 5:25b and 6:16a is not to be understood as arguing *against* a similar sense for πνεύματι in 5:16 and 5:18, but rather as arguing *for* a similar sense of a dative of rule or norm because of the widely recognized parallelism between these verses (e.g., Delling in *TDNT* 7.667-69). Even more important within this parallelism is the fact that the categorizing of the dative πνεύματι flows out of its attachment to the specific verbs περιπατεῖτε, ἄγεσθε, στοιχῶμεν in Gal 5:16, 18, and 25, respectively. These *verbs of rule or direction* give the dative its *ad hoc* categorization as a dative of rule or direction.²⁸ The fact that Paul simply uses the dative πνεύματι instead of κατὰ πνεῦμα (as in Gal 4:29) could be explained as a stylistic alternative, or even better, as an overt attempt to show how life "according to the rule or direction of the Spirit" is inextricably linked to the life "begun by the Spirit" (ἐναρξάμενοι πνεύματι in Gal 3:3). The continuity in the use of πνεύματι would help to establish this linkage.

Within the argument of Galatians, the command πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε in Gal 5:16 and the unpacking of this command in 5:17-24 is really the rhetorical and emotional pinnacle of all of Paul's persuasion using the σάρξ/πνεῦμα antithesis. In a sense, the following two sections are a "cool down" of sorts because they are a very specific application of this general way of life (in 6:1-10) and the conclusion to the entire epistle (in 6:11-18). But Paul is also reaching a theological climax in his description of the work of the Spirit in this section. In 5:16-24 we now see more clearly how walking according to the rule or direction of the Spirit is the divine means of deliverance from σάρξ. Earlier Paul asserted that the Spirit is the One who mediates within the Christian the fullness of time that the Messiah has

²⁴ Elinor MacDonald Rogers, *A Semantic Structure Analysis of Galatians* (Semantic Structure Analyses Series; Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1989) 170.

²⁵ Ibid., 170.

²⁶ Ibid., 169.

²⁷ Ibid., 170.

²⁸ I am indebted to Professor Moisés Silva for this crucial insight.

brought (Gal 4:4-6). Therefore (ὥστε), the Christian is no longer a slave to the στοιχία τοῦ κόσμου, but rather a υἱός and κληρονόμος (4:7). Paul's point in Gal 5:13-6:10 is now to reveal in relational terms what this πνεῦμα-centered deliverance looks like when contrasted to the σάρξ-centered promises of the Judaizers. Their "deliverance" is anachronistically bound to the preparatory and inferior aeon of the Mosaic Law (3:19-4:3). Therefore, the best they can promise the Galatians is more infantile bondage to the στοιχία τοῦ κόσμου (4:3). Ironically, since the Judaizers are the Ishmaelites, they will not live out the Abrahamic blessing κατὰ πνεῦμα; only the Spirit-born Isaacites will enter into this blessing (4:21-31; cf. 3:13-14).

In light of these promises of inheritance which are intimately connected to the work of the Spirit, Paul's promise to the Galatians in 5:16 is that if they will but walk according to the rule of the Spirit, there is absolutely no way (οὐ μή) that they will carry out (τελέσητε) the Judaistic emphasis (ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκός).²⁹ He reiterates this promise from the nomistic side of the σάρξ/νόμος tandem in 5:18 when he bluntly states that if the Galatians are being led (ἄγεσθε, present passive) according to the rule of the Spirit, then they are not in the state of being ὑπὸ νόμον (cf. 3:23; 4:4, 5, 21). But what about Paul's hard-to-understand statements about the mutual opposition in 5:17?

At least five major views of the exact nature of the σάρξ/πνεῦμα opposition in Gal 5:17 have been set forth in recent decades:³⁰

1. σάρξ = physical part of humans according to Hellenistic dualism³¹
2. σάρξ = the lower principle in man, and πνεῦμα = the higher³²
3. σάρξ = the realm of man's earthly-natural existence or the merely human, earthly-transitory realm³³
4. σάρξ = the evil impulse, and πνεῦμα = the good impulse paralleling the rabbinic doctrine of the two inclinations³⁴

²⁹ With the aorist subjunctive or future indicative, of οὐ μή "is the most definite form of negation regarding the future" (BDF 184).

³⁰ I am indebted to Ladd (*Theology*, 470-74) for this basic delineation.

³¹ Otto Pflieger, *Paulinism: A Contribution to the History of Primitive Christian Theology* (2nd ed.; London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1891) 1.47-67.

³² George B. Stevens, *The Pauline Theology* (rev. ed.; New York: Scribner, 1897) 139-50.

³³ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Scribner, 1951) 233-38.

³⁴ W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (4th ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 17-35.

This view is applied to Romans 7 by Davies in *Jewish and Pauline Studies* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 24-27. Additionally, see Frank Chamberlin Porter, "The Yecer Hara: A Study in the Jewish Doctrine of Sin," in *Biblical and Semitic Studies* (New York: Scribner, 1901); C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974) 295-314; J. L. Martyn, "Apocalyptic Antinomies in Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *NTS* 31 (1985) 415-16; and especially Joel Markus, "The Evil Inclination in the Letters of Paul," *IBS* 8 (1986) 8-20. Relating Qumran parallels to Paul's antithesis, see Karl G. Kuhn, "New Light on Temptation, Sin, and Flesh in the New Testament," in *The Scrolls and the NT*, 94-113; Davies, "Paul and the Dead Sea Scrolls," 157-82.

5. **σάρξ** = unregenerate human nature believers still possess (now the predominant view)³⁵

The above survey reveals that there has been a wide divergence of views of the **σάρξ/πνεῦμα** conflict in recent decades ranging from an earlier Hellenistic interpretation of a duality between materiality and immateriality to the presently dominant duality-of-natures perspective. Rather than respond individually to each interpretation, I will add to the bewildering array of views by proposing a sixth interpretation of the conflict, a redemptive-historical understanding.

Viewing the **σάρξ/πνεῦμα** conflict of Gal 5:17 within a redemptive-historical perspective sheds light on the exact nature of how they "set their desire against" one another (**ἐπιθυμῆι κατά**) and stand in opposition (**ἀντίκειται**) to one another. The opposition of **σάρξ** and **πνεῦμα** is at least threefold. First, they are opposed in scope or ethnic inclusion. After the changes wrought by Jesus Christ's crucifixion (Gal 6:12-16 and 3:28), boasting in the racial distinction of their **σάρξ** is an inappropriate boast for the Judaizers (6:13-14). On this side of the cross, **σάρξ** now represents a wrongly exclusive era in redemptive history that is diametrically opposed to a universally inclusive era through faith in Jesus Christ (3:6-8, 13-14). The Judaizers were perpetuating this wrong-headed exclusiveness in contradistinction to "the truth of the gospel" (2:5, 14) with its absence of Judaistic practices (2:1-21).

Second, **σάρξ** and **πνεῦμα** now oppose each other temporally: **σάρξ** represents an earlier, preparatory, and now inferior era of redemptive history because of its linkage to Torah (3:19-4:11). To advocate living **κατὰ σάρκα** as the Judaizers were doing (e.g., 4:23, 29) is to advocate an anachronistic set of standards, namely, living according to the rule of the **σάρξ** instead of according to the rule of the **πνεῦμα**. Such an anachronistic rule negates the eschatological effects of Christ's crucifixion (1:4; 2:19-21; 3:1; 6:12-16). His crucifixion negated **σάρξ** (6:15) *and* its power over Christians (5:24).

Last, and probably closest to Paul's reasoning in Gal 5:17c, is not just the *temporal* and *ethnic* opposition of **σάρξ** and **πνεῦμα**, but also the *ethical opposition*. This opposition exists because of the negating effects of the Judaizers' nongospel on Christ's crucifixion. Since they advocate righteousness **διὰ νόμου**, then they effectively advocate that Christ's death was needless (**δωρεάν**, 2:21). Therefore, they boast in circumcision (6:13) rather than in the cross of Christ (6:14). The *ethical result* of the effective negation of the

³⁵ Ladd, *Theology*, 472-3. See also, E. D. Burton, *Galatians*, 492-5 and D. E. H. Whitely, *The Theology of Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966) 39. Burton specifically defines the ethical usage of **σάρξ** (e.g., in Gal 5-6) as "that element of man's nature which is opposed to goodness, that in him which makes for evil; sometimes thought of as an element of himself, sometimes objectified as a force distinct from him, this latter usage being, however, rhetorical" (p. 493).

benefits of Christ's death is living as if one were still a part of this present evil age (1:4; cf. 5:2-4). Even more importantly, the Judaizers essentially lived as if the *σάρξ* had not been crucified with Christ (5:24). This meant living according to the rule or direction of the *σάρξ* not the *πνεῦμα*. Choosing not to walk according to the rule of the *πνεῦμα* removed *the only means* of not fulfilling the desire of the *σάρξ* (5:16). Therefore, *ethically*, the Judaizers were living a life in opposition to the Spirit and in conformity with the flesh. While *individually* the Judaizers were apparently Christians, *corporately* they identified with and lived attached to the *Jewish community*. Therefore, they embraced the fleshly set of behavior that flowed out of this community of the *σάρξ* (5:19-21). Therefore, while *individually* they may have wished to do certain things, they could not (5:17c). This is the result of possessing the Spirit, but not walking according to the Spirit (5:16). Therefore, they would fulfill the desire of the flesh. As a result (*ἵνα* in the consecutive sense), they could not do those things that they would wish or please to do. That is, those who follow the Judaizers' way of life will still wish/desire (*θέλητε*) to do the right things (e.g., loving service of others). However, they will be unable to do so because they are not walking according to the Spirit's rule or direction.³⁶

Encompassed in the Spirit's way of life is the enablement to live this new-covenant life (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:26-27) since he is the divine means of mediating this life (cf. 2 Cor 3:5-6). This is why Paul can immediately contrast the debilitating failure of Christians within the Judaizers' communities in Gal 5:17c with the personal terminology of 5:18a: *εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε*. As many commentators have noted, "to be led *πνεύματι*" is simply another way of saying "to walk *πνεύματι*."³⁷ Note that the contrast between 5:17c and 5:18 is one of the failure of Judaistic living according to the *σάρξ* (5:17c) versus the freedom of Christian living according to the *πνεῦμα* in reference to the Mosaic Law (5:18). Those Galatian Christians who choose to be led according to the rule of the Spirit are not under the rule of Torah and its accompanying fleshly failure. How else can the contrast of 5:18 with 5:17c be understood?

To recap the logical flow of Gal 5:16-18 and to summarize the lengthy discussion of it, the following main points can be reiterated about Paul's redemptive-historical argumentation:

³⁶ See Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 112-17, and Fung, *Galatians*, 250-51, for up-to-date interactions with the three main interpretations of the *ἵνα* clause of Gal 5:17: (1) the *σάρξ* frustrates the *πνεῦμα*-inspired desires of the Christian; (2) the two forces of *σάρξ* and *πνεῦμα* equally frustrate one another; (3) the *πνεῦμα* frustrates the desires of the *σάρξ*. Additionally, Barclay (pp. 112, 115-17) sets forth a fourth view: (4) the *πνεῦμα* will morally limit their freedom and will morally define the moral choices they must make. While his view is more appealing than the previous three, none of these seems adequate in light of the contextual definition of *σάρξ* advocated in this article. Therefore, the view represented here actually qualifies as a fifth interpretation.

³⁷ E.g., Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (5th ed.; MeyerK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971) 250, and Pierre Bonnard, *L'épître de Saint Paul aux Galates* (2nd ed.; CNT 9; Neuchâtel and Paris: Delachaux & Niestle, 1972) 112.

1. *σάρξ* = bodily existence in frailty and weakness apart from God's indwelling Spirit, particularly in the circumcised state under Torah, when referring to Judaizers. Therefore, *σάρξ* represents the redemptive-historical era of the Mosaic Law when used in this context.

2. *πνεῦμα* = the Holy Spirit and represents living in the freedom that Christ's crucifixion brought, which ended the mode of existence called *σάρξ* for God's people (cf. Gal 5:24; Rom 7:5-6; 8:9).

3. Gal 5:16 = the command to walk according to the rule or direction of the Holy Spirit to avoid carrying out the desire of the *σάρξ* which, in context, is the desire to be circumcised and to be under Torah. Choosing the way of life according to the Spirit would prevent the Galatians from carrying out the submission to circumcision (the desire of the *σάρξ*).

4. Gal 5:17 = an explanation (*γάρ*) of the final phrase of 5:16 ("and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh"). Therefore, the perspective is from *within the σάρξ*. This means v. 17 explains the dynamic at work on Christians who become a part of the Judaizers' communities and attach themselves to Israel. These Christians will experience *ethically and interpersonally* what Paul warned them about in Gal 5:1-4. They will live out the now-inferior conditions of life under the Law (Gal 4:1-3, 8-11) because of the opposition of the Judaistic way of life to the Spirit-led way of life.

5. Gal 5:18 = the contrast (*δέ*) to life within the *σάρξ* community. This contrast is being led according to the rule of the *πνεῦμα*. This means being within the Pauline communities and not being under Torah in the Judaizers' communities.³⁸

IV. Gal 5:19-24—*The Corresponding Opposing Lifestyles*

While Gal 5:13-15 and 5:25-26 act as brackets to the central section of 5:16-24, 5:16-18 functions as the main statement of Paul's antithetical contrast of his and the Judaizers' communities. After the two elements of the antithesis (each representing a community) are clearly identified in 5:16-18, the resulting "ways of life" that flow out of each element/community are then set forth in antithesis in 5:19-21 (the *σάρξ* way of life) and 5:22-23 (the *πνεῦμα* way of life). Gal 5:24 then functions as the definitive historical and theological conclusion of the antithesis: *σάρξ* as an entity and its resulting way of life is no longer appropriate for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

For the first-century person, choosing a way of life brought a corresponding way of behaving with it. Therefore, first-century authors could appeal to the family or group identity of persons in order to inform or reinforce the

³⁸ Epp raises the interesting possibility that this Pauline imagery may recall Israel's exodus from the bondage of Egypt and cites Rom 7:6, 8:2, 14-15 as other examples where the freedom that the Spirit brings is contrasted to the slavery of being under the Law ("Paul's Diverse Imageries," 109).

behavior appropriate for the way of life that corresponded to that identity. These appeals occur quite overtly in other Pauline epistles (e.g., Rom 6:1-11; 1 Cor 6; Eph 4:1-3). The entire passage of Gal 5:13-26 fits this type of appeal. The uniqueness of this ethical exhortation, however, is that it is antithetically structured throughout as Paul contrasts the way of life of the Pauline/πνεῦμα communities with that of the Judaizer/σάρξ communities.

The crucial exegetical question when confronting the deeds of the flesh in Gal 5:19-21 is the identity of those who do these deeds. To say that the Judaizers are in view is to beg the question somewhat. The stance of this article is that the Judaizers were *Christian Jews* from the Jerusalem/Judea area.³⁹ If Paul is referring only to the Judaizers in Gal 5:19-21, then he is implicitly saying that *Christians* are capable of doing the deeds of the flesh. The exegetical difficulty with this is that Paul culminates his description of the behavior of the community of the flesh in 5:21b with the ringing statement "that those who practice such things will not inherit [οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν] the kingdom of God."⁴⁰ This statement also occurs in almost identical form in 1 Cor 6:9-10 and Eph 5:5 as the conclusion to brief catalogs of vices. Both of the broader contexts of these passages (1 Cor 6:1-11 and Eph 5:3-14) clearly describe the conduct of non-Christians *in contrast to Christians* (cf. Rom 8:1-11). Therefore, one must conclude that Paul's straightforward statement in 5:21b means what it appears to say: the description of those who do the deeds of the flesh in 5:19-21 is a description of non-Christians (i.e., pagans).⁴¹

³⁹ For a defense of this view, see Walt Russell, "Who Were Paul's Opponents in Galatia?" *BSac* 147 (1990) 329-50, and Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; :Dallas: Word, 1990) lxxxviii-c.

⁴⁰ M. Martínez Peque ("Unidad de forma y contenido en Gal 5.16-26," *EstBib* 45 [1987] 105-24) has noted that *antithesis* is the most appropriate literary genre that explains Gal 5:16-26 and he has suggested the following inner structure for the passage (p. 109):

- A....πνεύματι v. 16a
- B.....σαρκός v. 16b
- C.....νόμον v. 18
- D.....τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός vv. 19-21a
- Eβασιλείαν θεοῦ v. 21b
- D'.....ὁ δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος vv. 22-23a
- C'.....νόμος v. 23b
- B'.....σάρκα v. 24
- A'....πνεύματι v. 25

According to Peque's structuring of the passage (pp. 112-13), Gal 5:21 b is the focal point of Paul's masterful use of antithesis. While I would include Gal 5:13-15 within this structure, its inclusion would not change the focus of Paul's emphasis on the exclusion from the βασιλείαν θεοῦ of those who practice (οἱ πράσσοντες) the deeds of the σάρξ. Compare the similar conclusions of Nils A. Dahl, "Paul's Letter to the Galatians: Epistolary Genre, Content, and Structure" (unpublished paper for the SBL Paul Seminar, 1974) 69.

⁴¹ Peder Borgen has noted in reference to Gal 5:19-21 and 1 Cor 6:9-11 that "Paul uses catalogues of vices to illustrate the pagan way of life, which for the converts belonged to the past" ("Catalogues of Vices, The Apostolic Decree, and the Jerusalem Meeting," in *The Social*

The simultaneous description of the *Christian* Judaizers and the *non-Christian* sarkic practitioners in Gal 5:19-21 is easily understood from Paul's previous identity of the community of the *σάρξ* in Gal 4:21-31. Especially in 4:23-25 Paul identifies the *σάρξ* community as the Jewish community still under the Mosaic or Sinaitic covenant (4:25). Again, *σάρξ* and *νόμος* are seen by Paul as an inextricable tandem. Therefore, while the identity of those who practice the deeds of the *σάρξ* in Gal 5:19-21 would normally refer to pagans in most of the proselyte literature of Paul's day,⁴² Paul now ironically includes Israel and all those who are attached to her (i.e., the Judaizing communities). Israel and the Judaizing communities are seen by Paul as a homogeneous whole still being under Torah, and thereby still "in the flesh" along with all pagans. The term *σάρξ* is doubly appropriate to describe this community because of both the Judaizers' and the Jews' emphasis on *σάρξ* in kinship and in circumcision.

The term *σάρξ* is also appropriate as a description of the Jews/Judaizers within this context because of the contrast of humans as *σάρξ* to God as *πνεῦμα* and because of the focus of *σάρξ* on humanity in its frailty and transitoriness. Specifically, the Judaizers want to attach the Galatians to a community that is "in the flesh" and is thereby not indwelt with God's Spirit. The Jewish (and Judaizer) belief that Torah is God's gracious gift that will adequately constrain their bodily behavior has already been indirectly assaulted by Paul in the description of the *σάρξ/πνεῦμα* opposition in Gal 5:16-18. Now in 5:19-21 he directly assaults the Jews' and Judaizers' fallacious belief about Torah's constraining power by describing the set of practices produced by living *ὑπὸ νόμον* and *σαρκί*. The tragic irony of these practices is that they are not divergent from the behavior described in contexts that are clearly Gentile and pagan (e.g., 1 Cor 6:9-11).⁴³

What Paul is *not* saying in Gal 5:19-21 is that the Christian Judaizers or pious Jews presently do all of the sins that he enumerates in this list of vices. Rather, Paul's point is redemptive-historical in nature in that the list of sins in vv. 19-21 is a litany of the deeds of Israel during the Mosaic Law era. Israel was "in the flesh" and "under Torah" when she manifested these behaviors which are "evident" (*φανερά* in 5: 19a) throughout her history. Neither Torah nor circumcision prevented the practice of these fleshly deeds. Paul makes this same point in Eph 2:3 when he includes himself and

World of Formative Christianity and Judaism [ed. Jacob Neusner et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988] 131).

⁴² Borgen, "Catalogues," 131-33.

⁴³ Charles H. Cosgrove has also noted that these behaviors are weighted in a certain direction: "One gets the impression that Paul has loaded a traditional vice list (cf. 1 Cor 6:9-10) with sins of community strife, in order to make the point that *rivalry* is to be taken seriously as the more obvious 'sins of the flesh' " (*The Cross and the Spirit: A Study in the Argument and Theology of Galatians* [Mercer, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988] 157). For a helpful fourfold sub-division of the list of the deeds of the *σάρξ* and the various English translations of these fifteen vices, see Fung, *Galatians*, 253-62.

his fellow Jews ("we") with the Gentiles ("you") as united in bondage to the *σάρξ*: "Among them *we too* all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, *even as the rest*" (NASB). Neither Torah nor circumcision will prevent the Galatians from *continuing to do* these deeds if they attach themselves to Israel (4:21; 5:1-4; 6:12-13). Torah and circumcision did not, do not, and will not compensate for the absence of God's Spirit and of the effects of Christ's crucifixion on the *σάρξ* (5:24). Is Paul "Israel bashing"? Not at all!⁴⁴ Rather, he is again showing the inferiority of life under the Mosaic Law (cf. 3:19-4:11) in light of the eschatological changes wrought by Christ's death (e.g., 1:4) and by the giving of the Holy Spirit to those who believe in Jesus (3:1-5). Those Jews who resist life according to the Spirit by not believing in Christ therefore live according to the flesh unaided by God's Spirit and excluded from his kingdom. Hence, Paul's stark point to the Galatians in 5:19-21 is simply: "Why would you want to attach yourselves to a community which has a very evident history of the deeds of the cap and which is a community that is now devoid of God's Spirit and outside of his kingdom?"

Elsewhere, I have sought to underscore the corporate dimension of the Galatian conflict and the central issue of group identity to the Galatian Christians.⁴⁵ At this point I can only note that we see one very important aspect of this kind of sociological thinking in Gal 5:19-23 in the catalog of vices (5:19-21) and virtues (5:22-23). They are given a concrete embodiment in the Judaizer/Jewish and Pauline communities, respectively. Paul is contrasting in stereotypical terms how members within these two communities would be expected to behave as they sought to walk in the way of that community. This "way" would be that which was modeled and patterned for the Galatians by the leaders of the respective communities. While the community of the *σάρξ* has a long history in Israel, it is a checkered history, at best, that the Judaizers are representing. By contrast, Paul must have appealed to Jesus and his early followers in his patterning of the community of the *πνεῦμα*, and he certainly was not reticent about appealing to his own previous behavior while he was in their midst (4:12-20) or elsewhere (e.g., 1:11-2:21; 5:11; 6:14, 17).

Paul used *δέ* to link the list of vices in 5:19-21 both to the previous section and to vv. 22-23. Gal 5:24 is also linked to the list of virtues in 5:22-23 with

⁴⁴ See Luke T. Johnson, "The New Testament's Anti Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic," *JBL* 108 (1989) 419-41, for an insightful treatment of the NT's alleged "anti-Jewish slander." One of his four main conclusions is that "by the measure of Hellenistic conventions, and certainly by the measure of contemporary Jewish polemic, the NT's slander against fellow Jews is remarkably mild" (p. 441). See also Donald A. Hagner, "Paul's Quarrel with Judaism," in *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith* (ed. Craig A. Evans and Donald A. Hagner; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 128-50.

⁴⁵ Walt Russell, "Paul's Use of *σάρξ* and *πνεῦμα* in Galatians 5-6 in Light of the Argument of Galatians" (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1991) 106-12.

δὲ. These linkages give the flow of Gal 5:16-24 a steady, even rhythm and a sense of connection. In spite of this flow, it is obvious that the sense of the linkage of the fruit of the Spirit in 5:22-23 to the deeds of the flesh in 5:19-21 is adversative and intended as an obvious contrast. This contrast is heightened by the use of the singular καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος in v. 22 versus the plural ἔργα τῆς σαρκός in v. 19. Additionally, the contrast is strengthened by the shortened list of nine virtues versus the longer list of fifteen vices and the sense that "fruit" versus "deeds" engenders. Fung has remarked about Paul's use of καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος "the phrase directly ascribes the power of the fructification not to the believer himself but to the Spirit, and effectively hints that the qualities enumerated are not the result of strenuous observation of an external legal code, but the natural product ('harvest') of a life controlled and guided by the Spirit."⁴⁶

While the sense of "fruit" does not exclude the believer's active involvement in its cultivation (e.g., 5:16 and 5:25-26), it nevertheless carries with it a tremendous sense of divine enablement for exhibiting such qualities of life: "The expression 'fruit of the Spirit' means that the nine concepts should be taken as 'benefits' which were given as or together with the Spirit. In other words, when the Galatians received the Spirit, they were also given the foundation out of which the 'fruit' was supposed to grow."⁴⁷

Inherent in such a contrast between the behavior of the σάρξ / νόμος way of life versus that of the πνεῦμα way of life is the redemptive-historical contrast between life under the Mosaic covenant versus life under the new covenant. In fact, the two major OT announcements of the new covenant in Jer 31:31-34 and Ezek 36:26-27 are given as gracious contrasts to Israel's failure under the Mosaic covenant. The placing of the Law within God's people, and the giving of a new heart and God's Spirit made unthinkable the returning to life under the former covenant.

It is also no accident that Paul begins this list of new covenant or Holy Spirit fruit with ἀγάπη, since he had already used this virtue as the contrasting element to Judaizing or old-covenant distinctions twice in the preceding context: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through *love* [ἀγάπη]" (Gal 5:6). "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through *love* [διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης] serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall *love* [ἀγαπήσει] your neighbor as yourself'" (Gal 5:13-14).

Life according to the Spirit is to be characterized by ἀγάπη as the first and perhaps foremost virtue of those that should be produced in believers' lives. In a very real sense, ἀγάπη could be called the distinctive of the new-covenant life (Gal 5:6, 13-14; Col 3:12-14; 1 Cor 12:31-13:13; cf. John 13:34-35). However, Paul does not just single out ἀγάπη, but refers to the

⁴⁶ Fung, *Galatians*, 262.

⁴⁷ Betz, *Galatians*, 286.

nine virtues of Gal 5:22-23a (and others like them) as a unit in v. 23b: **κατὰ τῶν τοιοῦτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος**. What does Paul mean when he says "against such things there is no law"? Two clarifying observations can be made from the immediate context that answer this question. First, this statement is obviously analogous to the parallel summary statement in 5:21b regarding the deeds of the flesh. The repetition of **τοιοῦτον** (neuter in both cases) from v. 21b to v. 23b signals this analogy, and the term functions in a summarizing fashion at the end of both lists. This is not unusual because **τοιοῦτον** was used to recap vice and virtue lists in Greek ethical writings (examples in BAGD, 821, s.v., 3 a,b).

Secondly, both of the **τοιοῦτον** phrases in Gal 5:21b and 23b summarize the ethical consequences of following the contrasting ways of life of the **σάρξ** and the **πνεῦμα**. Those who live **σαρκί** will practice the deeds of the flesh and will *not* inherit the kingdom of God. Those who live **πνεύματι** will not be accused of breaking the Mosaic Law because they will possess the relational qualities that fulfill and enhance the neighbor-love core of the Law (Gal 5:13-14). As the new covenant promised, however, the impetus to fulfill the Law does not come from Torah itself, but from the new Spirit, God's Spirit, that he puts within his people (Ezek 36:26-27). Betz beautifully summarizes this Mosaic Law/Spirit contrast:

In view of the situation which the Galatians have to face, Paul suggests that it is, more important to be enabled to act with ethical responsibility than to introduce a code of law which remains a mere demand. In other words, the introduction of Torah into the Galatian churches would not lead to ethical responsibility, so long as the people were not motivated and enabled ethically. If they were not motivated and enabled, however, the Torah is superfluous.⁴⁸

Paul's point in commending the way of the Spirit and his fruit in a negative manner regarding the Mosaic Law is a safeguard against the possible Judaizers' criticism about walking **πνεύματι**. Such criticism is now neutralized in a programmatic manner. The virtues that the Spirit produces in the lives of believers will violate none of Torah's ordinances.

In keeping with his oscillation between the members of the tandem of **σάρξ** and **νόμος**, Paul now moves from his discussion of behavior and its constraints in terms of **νόμος** (5:23b) to a description of behavior in terms of **σάρξ** in Gal 5:24. Since 5:13, this is the beginning of the fourth movement from **σάρξ** to **νόμος**: (1) **σάρξ** (5:13) to **νόμος** (5:14); (2) **σάρξ** (5:16-17) to **νόμος** (5:18); (3) **σάρξ** (5:19) to **νόμος** (5:23b); (4) **σάρξ** (5:24) to **νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ** (6:2). Because this fourth movement is expressed in terms of the victory of walking **πνεύματι**, the movement is from the death of **σάρξ** for those identified with Christ Jesus in 5:24 to the fulfillment of the new Law—**τὸν νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ** in 6:2.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 289.

However, the power of Paul's description in Gal 5:24 of those attached to Jesus Christ (οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ]) has been largely negated with the traditional understanding of σάρξ. For example, Gerhard Ebeling is typical of commentators when he writes:

For Paul, therefore, the ethical realm as such is far from being a realm of triumphs; it is rather a realm of repeated defeats, in which, however, the Spirit cries out "Abba," making this clear: "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (v. 24). This execution has been commanded and introduced. But the process lasts as long as life ἐν σαρκί (*en sarki*, in the flesh) endures, not in order to subjugate it by violence or even shorten it arbitrarily, but in order to allow the fruit of the Spirit to gain the upper hand over the works of the flesh. From advocates of death we are to be made witnesses on behalf of life.⁴⁹

Central to this understanding of the crucifixion of the σάρξ is the assumption that it has an ongoing presence in the life of the Christian. Therefore, the death of τὴν σάρκα in 5:24 has supposedly been merely "commanded and introduced," and thereby has set in motion the life-long process of flesh-death. The manifold difficulties with such a view of σάρξ are lexical, theological, contextual, and cultural in nature.⁵⁰ However, at this point, it will have to suffice to note that Paul is again appealing to the eschatological (or redemptive-historical) significance of Jesus Christ's crucifixion. His crucifixion has decisively changed the identity of the people of God (cf. Gal 2:15-21).

The definitive contrast between the former identity of the people of God as Israelites and the present identity as those belonging to Christ was most pointedly begun in Gal 5:1-6. The contrast is between those "of Israel" who take up the yoke of Torah and submit to circumcision and those of "Christ Jesus" (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in 5:6) who recognize that circumcision and uncircumcision now mean nothing for the identity of the people of God (cf. 6:12-16). Apparently the Judaizers were repeating the traditional Jewish belief that circumcision and Torah would adequately restrain the bodily behavior of the Galatian Christians.⁵¹ Ironically, they emphasize fleshly marks to restrain fleshly behavior (cf. Col 2:20-23, especially v. 23). Of course, Paul's rejoinder is that walking according to the Spirit and his enablement frees the Christians from this former way of life (5:16-18). This avoids the fleshly deeds that Israelites have made evident (5:19-21) and opens up the Spirit-fruit for those attached to Christ (5:22-23).

⁴⁹ G. Ebeling, *The Truth of the Gospel: An Exposition of Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 255.

⁵⁰ See Russell, "Paul's Use of σάρξ and πνεῦμα in Galatians 5-6," 1-170.

⁵¹ See Hans Dieter Betz, "Spirit, Freedom, and Law: Paul's Message to the Galatian Churches," *SEÁ* 39 (1974) 145-60, and Bernard C. Lategan, "The Argumentative Situation of Galatians," *Neot* 26 (1992) 257-77.

In Gal 5:24 Paul asserts his crowning piece of evidence to the superiority of life "in Christ" versus life "in Israel." His evidence is that life ἐν σαρκί has ended for those "of Christ Jesus" because of the aeon-changing effects of Christ's crucifixion. In this context the death of Christians' σάρξ is the ending of their bodily frailty under the dominion of sin and the στοιχεία (4:3) when they were without the indwelling enablement of God's Spirit. For the Jews, the additional dominion of the νόμος over them while they were in the σάρξ led them to wrongly emphasize deliverance through their covenant in the σάρξ with God. Paul's point in Gal 5:24 is that all of this Gentile/Jewish bondage to the σάρξ and all of the Jewish emphasis on the σάρξ-covenant is now ended at the cross of Jesus Christ. It is now anachronistic for those belonging to Christ Jesus to talk about life ἐν σαρκί or to be bound to manifest the set of behaviors that accompany life ἐν σαρκί with its passions and lusts. Jesus Christ's death ended the normativeness of the ἔργα τῆς σαρκός (5:19-21) and replaced them with the καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος (5:22-23). Because of the Christian's corporate identity in Christ (οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ]), Paul can say in 5:24 that they crucified their σάρξ (ἐσταύρωσαν is an aorist active). Logically, this occurred at the time when they put their faith in Christ and became sons of God (Gal 3:26).

V. Conclusion

Culminating Paul's redemptive-historical argumentation in Gal 5:13-26 is perhaps his most powerful redemptive-historical point about the σάρξ: the crucifixion of the σάρξ is a real death that *definitively* ended forever the real life of the σάρξ and its mode of existence for the people of God (5:24). The crucifixion of Christ ended the age of bodily frailty for the people of God because it broke sin's power over their bodies (3:19-4:11) and led to the enabling indwelling of God's Spirit (3:1-5). Therefore, it is unthinkable (though obviously not impossible) that the Galatians should want to identify with a community that stubbornly continues in the now culpable state of σάρξ and manifests the deeds of the σάρξ (5:19-21). The better alternative of Spirit-enabled life is normative for those who belong to Christ (5:22-23).

This is Paul's point in Gal 5:13-26 as he exhorts the Galatian Christians to choose to walk according to the rule or direction of the Holy Spirit, not according to the rule of the flesh. Should they choose the latter option, however, it would be as Paul earlier stated: Christ would have died needlessly, and God's people would continue to live in the frail and enslaved state of the σάρξ (Gal 2:19-21). This is the same choice between the old σάρξ-way-of-life and the new cross-way-of-life that Paul will conclude with in Gal 6:12-16. Separating these two great redemptive-historical eras and their corresponding ways of life is the aeon-changing event of Jesus Christ's crucifixion that definitively ended the old σάρξ-state for God's people:

"Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal 5:24).

Clearly understanding Paul's redemptive-historical argumentation underscores this pivotal fact. While there continues to be a struggle in living the Christian life, Gal 5:13-26 does not validate the view that the struggle is against an internal moral entity called "the flesh." Rather, because we once were "in the flesh" (Rom 8:9), we will still struggle against the effects of that former condition (i.e., against being σαρκικοί or "fleshly" in 1 Cor 3:1-3). However, Paul's redemptive-historical argument in Gal 5:13-26 clarifies that Christ truly set us free from living a life under the tyranny of the flesh. Rather than something we brought with us into the Christian life, the flesh as a moral entity is a condition that was left behind in our pre-Christian life. Now, we are empowered by the Spirit to put to death the effects of that former moral state which we manifest bodily: "but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body [τὰς πράξεις τοῦ σώματος], you will live" (Rom 8:13b). Now, like the Galatians, we can choose to walk according to the standard of the Spirit because of God's gracious work in redemptive history.

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