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PAUL'S TREATMENT OF ERROR IN GALATIANS

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of New Testament Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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June 1950

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

From the earliest beginnings of Christianity, it is evident that error was destined to become a common problem in the Church of every age. Jesus Himself had warned His disciples that it would come (Matthew 7). Error had already manifested itself repeatedly in the life and work of St. Paul. But nowhere do we find it taking on such a vicious form as in the Galatian Churches where the very heart and center of the gospel was being denied.

The purpose of the present writer in this thesis has been to determine just how Paul went about treating and refuting the error. What were his arguments and attitudes over against his converts? His opponents? The error itself? Were his arguments sound and convincing? Does he leave room for compromise? To what degree does he allow his own self to enter the picture? In attempting to answer these questions, the writer has endeavored at all times to maintain objectivity except where a difference of opinion among leading commentators forced him to exercise selectivity. Detailed exegesis has been kept to a minimum and has been employed only where it was helpful in understanding the particular point Paul was making.

As far as the present writer has been able to determine, there is no published work on this topic. In preparing this

thesis the writer has found the following authorities particularly helpful: Burton, Duncan, Koehler, Lightfoot, Ramsay and Zaim.

All quotations of the Scriptural text are from the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament unless otherwise indicated.

In view of the fact that the problems were discussed in the Jewish, there are the following considerations. It is held the writer is who is handling you will hear his judgment, however he is, and who is a certain degree of position held by him or any of the described members. There is a similar allusion in Job, "now if we, or our kindred, should preach a way of heaven, we would not be regarded as madmen, for we should be regarded as madmen." From these two passages it is inferred that probably one of the Galatian visitors or teachers

1. See also, Introduction to the New Testament, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911, p. 107.

CHAPTER II

THE JUDAIZING ERRORISTS

In the Galatian Churches, as in all Pauline churches of which we know anything, there were some native Jews - a necessary assumption if 3:26-29 is to have a natural explanation. On the other hand, it is obvious that Paul is writing to a predominantly Gentile congregation, since he speaks of the Galatians as at one time not knowing God (4:8).¹ This at once raises the question as to the identity of the Judaizers. Were they Jews within the Galatian Churches as were the errorists at Corinth, or did they come from the outside and launch their devastating attack? The apostle nowhere answers the question.

In favor of the view that the troublers were churchmen of Galatia itself, there are the following considerations:

1) In 5:10 the words, "he who is troubling you will bear his judgment, whoever he is," are said to hint a certain eminence of position held by one or more of the deceiving teachers: there is a similar allusion in 1:8, "even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you..." From these two passages it is inferred that probably one of the Galatian elders or deacons

¹Theodore Zahn, Introduction to the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), I, 106.

himself had committed the offence. This would be a case like the one envisioned in Acts 20:30, where the apostle warns the Ephesian elders that "from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."² 2) The intimation of 5:12 that it might be a good thing if those who were unsettling the Galatians would inflict an ἀποκοπή upon themselves seems far more appropriate if the troublemakers are regarded as fellow-churchmen.³ 3) Paul speaks of them as "undergoing circumcision," περιτεμνόμενοι, the present tense, implying that the trouble originated with certain ones who were themselves Galatians (6:12,13).⁴

But these arguments are by no means decisive. In the first place, the writer cannot help but sense a purely conjectural element in applying 5:10 and 1:8 to the assumption that the seducers were officers in the Galatian Churches. Furthermore, Paul could just as well have spoken of an ἀποκοπή in the sense that those Judaizers who had entered the Churches of Galatia would at once remove themselves to their original place of habitation and activity. Finally, the apostle's statement that the seducers were undergoing circumcision (6:13) as possibly implying that the trouble originated with the

²E. Huxtable and Others, The Pulpit Commentary (New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls, n.d.), XLVI, xii-xiii.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

Galatians themselves must be disregarded 1) by reason of a well-attested variant in place of *Περίτεμνόμενοι*, namely, *Περίτετμημένοι*, the perfect tense, meaning "those who have undergone circumcision," i.e., Jews by birth, and 2) by the fact that the more suitable interpretation of *Περίτεμνόμενοι* is "the circumcision party," "those who advocate circumcision."⁵

In support of the traditional explanation that the Judaizers were from outside the Galatian Churches, probably from Jerusalem, the writer has found and regards as tenable the following views: 1) Throughout the letter these false teachers are distinguished from the members of the Church addressed and charged with being their seducers (1:7; 3:1; 4:17,29-31).⁶ 2) Paul does not resist them as if they were settled teachers who as members of the Churches were doing things which seemed injurious, but he treats them as if they were preachers of a false gospel, "missionary preachers who dogged his steps and invaded the Churches which he founded."⁷ Zahn says,

The comparison which Paul makes in 4:21-31 between his opponents and himself by contrasting the spiritual with the fleshly descendants of Abraham, referring to the earthly Jerusalem as the home or the mother of the former, and to the heavenly Jerusalem as the home or mother of the latter, is very far-fetched unless these Jewish-

⁵J. B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (8th edition; London: Macmillan and Co., 1864), pp. 222-223.

⁶Zahn, op. cit., p. 166.

⁷Ibid.

Christian missionaries had come into Galatia from this earthly Jerusalem.⁸

4.) In Jerusalem and Judaea, where Jewish Christianity was a living force, there certainly was a party within the Church which insisted on setting Christianity within the framework of Judaism. Acts 15:5 refers to Christian Pharisees who demanded that Gentiles must be circumcised and told to keep the Mosaic Law; and the false brothers whom Paul denounces in 2:4 were Christians - at least nominal Christians. But they were Jews first and Christians afterwards; and they would fight to the uttermost any interpretation of Christianity which was to separate them from the commonwealth of Israel, and link them up with "Gentile sinners." In this they were sure of support from their non-Christian Jewish brethren, whose attitude to Pauline Christianity was one of deep resentment and finally active opposition.

Thus the opposition to Paul in Galatia may have had the backing of non-Christian Jews; but the driving force came from Jewish-Christians. And the probability is that they were Jewish-Christians from Judaea. Enissaries from Judaea found their way to Antioch, according to Acts 15:1; and if their real aim was to do all in their power to wreck Paul's work, then the probability is that they pursued him into Galatia.⁹

⁸Zahn, op. cit., p. 166.

⁹George S. Duncan, "The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians," The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1934), p. xxvii.

Therefore, since these Judaizers were in all probability from the Jerusalem Church, the question arises whether these men had the endorsement of the Mother Church. Paul's entire manner of argumentation in chapter two seems to indicate that the Judaizers made some kind of appeal as being representative of the Jerusalem apostles. But Paul assures the Galatians that just the opposite was the case, one reason being that Titus, who was a Greek, was not compelled to be circumcised, and the other, that James, Peter and John gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, indicating thereby their doctrinal agreement with one another. Although the present writer does not identify Galatians 2:1ff. with the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1ff.), Bishop Lightfoot's comment on the Judaizers' activity in Acts 15:1ff. is applicable to the activity of those who are mentioned in 2:1ff.

It would betray great ignorance of human nature to suppose that a decision thus authoritatively pronounced must have silenced all the opposition. If therefore we should find its provisions constantly disregarded hereafter, it is no argument against the genuineness of the decree itself. The bigoted minority was little likely to make an absolute surrender of its most stubborn prejudices to any external influence. Many even of those, who at the time were persuaded by the leading apostles into acquiescence, would find their misgivings return, when they saw that the effect of the decree was to wrest the sceptre from their grasp and place it in the hands of the Gentile Church.¹⁰

An interesting question always is the question of motives.

¹⁰Lightfoot, op. cit., pp. 307-308.

Why do people act as they do, and here, what constrained the Judaizers to have such a zeal for Jewish legalism outside the fact that it was the religion of their fathers? The apostle alleges most strongly the selfish motives of his opponents. "It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ." (6:12). It is trouble for themselves that they wish to avoid. Since they themselves were members of an orthodox Jewish community, different from other Jews only in that they accepted Jesus as the expected Messiah, they wished to remain in good standing in their community, and with that purpose in mind, they wanted to be able to point out some of their Gentile converts who had not only accepted Jesus as the Christ, but who had also conformed to those physical requirements of the Mosaic Law which from the Jewish viewpoint were vital and necessary to salvation. If they could do this, they would escape that persecution which the apostle had himself suffered and to which they would be subject if they did not uphold the time-honored standards of Jewish legalism. Paul confirms this truth by excluding the reason which the Judaizers probably claimed for their activity, namely, a sincere zeal for the law. He maintains (6:13) that the Judaizers' converts do not themselves keep the law, not referring to their failure to attain perfect conformity, but to the fact that they do not undertake to keep it in full and are not required by the

Judaizers to do so.¹¹

Another aspect of the Judaizers' selfishness is bared in 4:17. "They make much of you, but for no good purpose ($\overset{\circ}{\omicron}\overset{\circ}{\kappa}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\lambda}\overset{\circ}{\omega}\overset{\circ}{\varsigma}$); they want to shut you out, that you may make much of them." Paul refers to his opponents as courting the favor of the Galatians $\overset{\circ}{\omicron}\overset{\circ}{\kappa}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\lambda}\overset{\circ}{\omega}\overset{\circ}{\varsigma}$ - not honorably, not sincerely and unselfishly. $\overset{\circ}{\kappa}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\lambda}\overset{\circ}{\omega}\overset{\circ}{\varsigma}$ is an adjective which means good only in a general way; "specifically, especially when referred to person and their actions, it signifies, excellent, noble, admirable." To the Greek one is $\overset{\circ}{\kappa}\overset{\circ}{\alpha}\overset{\circ}{\lambda}\overset{\circ}{\omega}\overset{\circ}{\varsigma}$ who bears the character of a gentleman in our nobler use of the term.¹²

That from which Paul's opponents wished to exclude the Galatians is not stated; the context implies either 1) the privilege of the gospel, i.e., the sense of acceptance with God which comes from faith in Jesus Christ, or 2) the circle of those who hold the broader view, Paul and his companions and converts, who maintain the Gentiles are accepted if they have faith without fulfilling the requirements of the Ceremonial Law. In either case, the effect and purpose of such exclusion would be that the Galatians would turn to the Jewish-

¹¹Ernest D. Burton, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians," The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), p. 352.

¹²R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians to the Ephesians and to the Philippians (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, c.1937), p. 222.

Christians for guidance and association, and the latter would be in the position of being sought after (*ζηλοῦτε*). Burton thinks that the verb favors the former interpretation, since it is not natural to speak of one group of persons as shutting others out from another group; a verb to alienate, or to cause separation from, would be more probable.¹³

In addition to these assertions of the Judaizers' motives, the apostle uses several verbs which shed light on the method of their activity. In 1:7 Paul speaks of the errorists as *ταεΐσσοντες ὑμᾶς* i.e., "raising seditions among you, shaking your allegiance." The phrase *ταεΐσσοντες τὴν πόλιν* is commonly used of factions.¹⁴ Chapter two, verse four, characterizes their activity as *κατασκοπήσαι*, "to act as spies on," although it should be noted that the identification of the "false brethren" of chapter two with the Galatian errorists is not certain. Lightfoot says that "*κατασκοπήσαι* generally signifies to examine carefully, being most frequently used where the notion of treachery is prominent."¹⁵ *Παρεισδκτους* "to be brought in secretly or craftily," and *Παρεισήλθον*, "to come in stealthily," are even more characteristic of the Judaizers' methods. Although it cannot be determined from these verbs whether the Judaizers had a prearranged plan in

¹³Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

¹⁴Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 106.

in foisting their legalistic opinions on the Galatians, one thing is certain - they worked with indefatigable zeal for their cause and utilized any means to accomplish it.

Taking its cue from Peter's dissimulation at Antioch where his action was sufficient means to convey the belief that faith without ceremonial observances was inadequate, the Pulpit Commentary also points out that perhaps the Galatian subvertors did not preach their gospel in words, but simply by their action - by Mosaic observances; by vaunting and glorying in such ceremonies, and by rejecting those from fraternal fellowship who did not take part in these ceremonies. "Such movements of thought and feeling, especially when embodying themselves in distinguishing badges of outward ceremonial action, are apt in general to be very catching with unwary and unstable souls."¹⁶ Although there is nothing in the epistle to warrant this assumption, it could very well be that this was one of the Judaizers' subtler methods which helped cause the Galatians' irrational and sudden swing to Judaism (cf. *βαρκαίρω - ἀνοήτως*).

What has been said so far paints a pretty black picture of the judaizing errorists. And certainly it is not without foundation that the apostle reproached the deceivers with having consciously or unconsciously no deeper motive in their

¹⁶ Huxtable, op. cit., p. xiv.

than to commend themselves to their unbelieving countrymen, in order that their faith in a crucified Messiah might be excused.

On the other hand, as J. T. Kochler points out, Paul nowhere says that these men ever denied a basic tenet of Christianity, nor that they were aware of the fact that they were actually in error (cf. Rom. 10:2,3).¹⁷ What he does say is that these men preached "another gospel," and that they desired to pervert (μεταστρέψαι) the gospel of Christ.

μεταστρέψαι means to reverse or change to the opposite and so is stronger than διαστρέψαι which is simply to distort or wrench.¹⁸ It was a gospel, then, that they preached, but it was a different, an opposite one. The idea that was prominent in the apostle's mind when he called this heresy a reversal may be gathered from 3:3: "Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?" The Judaizers maintained that the Galatians must not be satisfied with merely believing Paul's gospel. Just as there were "stages" in many heathen religions through which the initiate must pass to attain perfect righteousness, so, too, faith in Jesus Christ seemed to the Judaizers a useful stage by which pagans could come to full incorporation with God's covenanted people of

¹⁷J. P. Kochler, Der Brief Pauli und die Galater (Milwaukee, Wis.: Northwestern Publishing House, 1910), p. 11.

¹⁸Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 77.

Israel. But to attain full and complete salvation, faith in Christ needed to be supplemented by some degree of conformity to the Ceremonial Law given through Moses, namely, circumcision. Thus, the Judaizers probably argued, it was not necessary for the Galatians to give up that which they had learned from Paul, but only add to it the seal (circumcision) of the promise which God had given to Abraham. Such teaching on the part of the Judaizers would also be in line with the fact that the Galatians fell quickly. The gospel which Paul preached to them had been so palatably and subtly changed that the Galatians were not capable of perceiving the difference and so accepted the ^ὁ *ἔθετον εὐαγγέλιον* readily and without question.

But Paul bares the error at its very core. He says that full and complete righteousness coming from faith as the cause (*ἐκ πίστεως*) through the law as the condition (*διὰ νόμου*) is to deny the sufficiency of Christ's atonement and freedom from the law. "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." (5:2 - AV). The judaizing error, therefore, was not one of little consequence, but ultimately resulted in a complete denial of salvation through Christ alone.

The judaizing error also took on a personal side. It is evident from Paul's argument in chapters one and two that his opponents were substantially in agreement with him that the teaching in the Church belonged to the apostles as a definite

class in the Church. Apparently his opponents held the view that Peter did in Acts 1:21,22, in regard to adding any apostles to the Eleven, namely, that the authority to do this rested with the Jerusalem Church. Therefore it followed that anyone who claimed to be an apostle was either a false teacher or a less-authoritative associate of the Twelve whose teachings were to be accepted only in so far as they were in agreement with the Twelve. It is not entirely clear into which class Paul's critics had placed him. But the nature of his reply in the epistle in which he denies dependence on men and the original twelve apostles in particular makes it probable that they regarded him, not as being commissioned by the Twelve, but as being instructed by them and then becoming a perverter of the truth. This deprived him of all rights to be a Christian teacher.¹⁹ Zahn observes:

They argued that Paul's independence was an unjustifiable pretension and that his teachings were a degeneracy from Christianity as originally taught. It is implied in 1:10 that in his effort to please men, i. e., to make the Gospel palatable to Gentiles, and to make as many converts as he could in his missionary work, Paul abridged the Gospel in some of its essential points, and preached it to the Gentiles only in a mutilated form.²⁰

From 5:11 it also appears that Paul's opponents called the Galatians' attention to this fact that Paul could, like

¹⁹Burton, op. cit., p. 3.

²⁰Zahn, op. cit., p. 167-168.

other apostles, preach circumcision when the occasion demanded, and therefore Christianity implied no decisive break with Judaism. Paul had said, "But if I, brethren, still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted?" Many commentators think that this charge refers to the event recorded in Acts 16:1-3, Timothy's circumcision. Burton, however, is of another opinion, which would also be in keeping with an early dating of the epistle, taken by this writer. "The reference is doubtless to his pre-Christian life, since we have no information that he ever advocated circumcision after he became a Christian."²¹ In arriving at this interpretation, Burton takes the first *ετι* as temporal and the second one as denoting logical opposition. The sentence then means: "If I am still preaching circumcision, why am I despite this fact persecuted?"²² Another reason in favor of Burton's view is this. Assuming first of all that the epistle was written late and if the event of Timothy's circumcision became the occasion for the charge to which Paul here refers (5:11), then it is indeed strange that Paul would make no further reply than simply to deny the charge, and that only by implication. So in all probability the charge that he preached circumcision probably has its roots in the character of Paul's early life, with which the Galatians were acquainted. (1:13, 14).

²¹Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 287.

The success of the Judaizers and the seriousness of the error which they perpetrated must not be underrated. From the whole epistle, from the earnestness with which Paul speaks, from his thorough handling of his own doctrinal position and of the question of his apostolic authority, we can see that the judaizing view was getting the upper hand. On the other hand, the apostasy from the principle of justifying faith was as yet by no means complete, but only in its beginning stages (1:6; 4:9,17,21). The observance of various days had commenced, but the idea that the Galatians should comply with circumcision is something that is still impending, as can be gathered from Paul's statement in 3:4. They had not yet actually yielded to the persuasion of the Judaizers. Nevertheless, the Galatians were on the brink of disaster, for Paul also says, "I fear lest I have labored over you in vain." (4:11).

The situation which confronted Paul was indeed delicate and precarious. The Galatians were on the verge of being lost; yet they could be saved. As for himself, Paul found that hope and fear dwelt in his heart at one and the same moment. What did he do? The following pages seek to answer that question.

CHAPTER III

PAUL'S VINDICATION OF HIS APOSTOLATE AND GOSPEL

The opening sentences of a Pauline epistle generally repay careful and detailed study. They often reveal the thoughts that dominate the apostle as he begins to write, and so provide a keynote for the rest of the letter. This is notably the case in Galatians.¹

Paul begins by asserting his divine commission when he says, *Παῦλος ἀπόστολος*. This in itself is not unusually striking, since in most of his letters he commonly designates himself as an *ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, with the addition of the words, *διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ*. It is as if he were presenting his credentials from the court of Jesus Christ. In no letter, however, does he describe his commission with such fulness or emphasis as here, where he defines his apostolate not merely affirmatively, but also by means of a double negative. There is no parallel to this in any other epistle.² His enemies had denied his apostleship; all the more uncompromisingly will he assert it.

¹W. M. Ramsay, Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (2nd edition; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1900), p. 237.

²George S. Duncan, "The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians," The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1934), p. 7.

Paul is an apostle not from (ἀπό) men nor through (ἐκ) man. In both of these negative phrases Paul's language is perfectly general - he is merely working out the contrast between God and man as the ultimate source of his authority. ἀπό expresses source in its simplest and most general form, and therefore denies human origin in the broadest way possible without itself directing the mind to any particular person. Hence the omission of the article.³ Yet vv. 16 and 17 leave no doubt that in using this particular construction Paul has in mind especially his relation to the Jerusalem apostles.⁴ He did not appear, as Joseph and Matthias did (Acts 1:23), before the other apostles as a candidate for apostleship, as if the ultimate question was whether they would accept or reject him. Similarly, with regard to his claim that this apostleship was not ἐκ ἀνθρώπων, the gospel which he as an apostle proclaimed was not one which he had derived by sitting at the feet of another apostle, nor was its authority dependent on the question of its agreement with the teaching of the other apostles. Upon this point Paul cannot insist too much, and therefore he reasserts it in vv. 12,13.

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

³Ernest D. Burton, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians," The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), p. 5.

⁴Duncan, op. cit., p. 7.

In contrast to those negative truths, Paul asserts that this apostleship came to him through Jesus Christ and God the Father. The first part of this phrase (*διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*), where the preposition is the same as in the preceding phrase, "not through man," refers primarily to the channel through which the apostolic authority had been conveyed to him; yet the addition of *καὶ θεοῦ Πατρὸς* includes the idea of the ultimate source from which Paul's authority and power originate. The very fact that Paul can combine these two ideas in one composite propositional phrase shows that for him the action of God as Originator and that of Jesus Christ as Transmitter are not separate and distinct, but together constitute a direct divine intervention which leaves no place for dependence on human agencies.⁵

What is especially significant here is that the names, Jesus and God, are linked together by the words, "who raised him from the dead." Why are these words added? The explanation which most readily suggests itself is that it was from the risen Christ that Paul claimed to have received his commission as an apostle. It ought, however, not be forgotten that what Paul is concerned to vindicate in this epistle is not his apostleship merely, but the very gospel with which he had been commissioned (cf. his emphatic statement in vv. 11,12); and the content of that gospel, no less than his call to preach

⁵Burton, op. cit., p. 5.

it, was given him by the revelation of Christ risen, and ascended.⁶

A related thought is expressed in v. 4, after the salutation, where, instead of continuing with the usual benediction or thanksgiving, the apostle says, "who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age." The addition of these words, like the full statement regarding the origin of his apostolate in v. 1, is occasioned by Paul's desire to emphasize an aspect of the gospel which must be vindicated in the face of ignorance and opposition. Paul realizes that to make this defense he must establish his apostolic authority, but already here in the introduction he is constrained to give expression to the thought which is of first-rate significance in treating and refuting the judaizing error, that Christ died to rescue us from the present evil world.

Paul has another reason for stating that he is an ἀπόστολος. It is a curious fact that the Greek word ἀπόστολος, in the sense of "a man sent forth with a commission," should be so seldom found till we meet it in the New Testament; and the frequency and prominence of its use there may be taken as a measure of the new emphasis which the early Christians had learned to place on this conception of a man being sent from God.⁷ By using this word, then, Paul desires to make clear

⁶Duncan, op. cit., p. 5.

⁷Ibid., p. 4.

that he is not preaching the Word by his own choice.⁸ This thought comes to the fore especially in 1:16 where Paul says:

But when he who had set me apart (ἀφοσιώσας) before I was born⁹, (ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου), and had called me (καλέσας) through his grace (χάρετος), was pleased (εὐδόκησεν) to reveal (ἀποκαλύψαι) his Son to me...

Here the reader will observe how words are accumulated to tell upon this one point on which Paul is insisting - the sole agency of God as distinct from his own efforts. In everything Paul regarded God as the Activator and the Doer. He strengthens this point by making a covert allusion the call of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5), thereby paralleling his calling with that of the prophet, whose calling the Judaizers recognized as coming from the Lord.

In Paul's letters, the opening salutation is often followed by a word of thanksgiving. Paul likes to give thanks for the progress his readers are making in Christian faith and life, and his thanksgiving is often accompanied by a prayer that their progress will go on from more to more. In some epistles, e.g., II Corinthians, Ephesians, as also in I Peter, the thanksgiving appears in the form of an ascription of praise in which God is blessed for His saving grace in Christ and for the effects which that saving grace is producing in the lives

⁸ J. P. Koehler, Der Brief Pauli an die Galater (Milwaukee, Wis.: Northwestern Publishing House, 1910), p. 11.

⁹ Lightfoot's comment on this phrase is worth noting. "Before I had any principles, any impulses of my own." Op. cit., p. 82.

of the believers; and in much the same way the doxology here (v. 5) may be claimed as taking the place of a general thanksgiving. Paul on his part can and does give glory to God for His grace revealed in Christ: the tragedy is that on the side of the Galatians that grace is being spurned.

Hence, instead of beginning with a word of praise, the epistle opens with an abrupt and passionate outburst, not softened in the Greek even by an introductory particle. "I marvel." It is significant to note that Paul clothes his indictment in the form of astonishment and amazement. He does not harangue them with heftiger Rede, because Paul knew that, if the Galatians still had a feeling for the Savior, it is more likely that they would become conscious of their misdeed by being designated as having turned away from the grace which the Savior offers.¹⁰ And this initial note of astonishment is maintained throughout the epistle, even in passages where passion might so easily have degenerated into mere denunciation (cf. 3:18f.). Paul's attitude throughout is that of the man who, in Christian love, is always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient (I Corinthians 13:7).

It may be that Paul's charitable spirit is further exemplified when he tactfully refers to the seducers, not by name, but merely as οἱ ἑταίροι. We have another example

¹⁰ Koehler, op. cit., p. 20.

of this in 1:9, "if any man preach any other gospel..." Paul does not refer to the Judaizers by name, because in so doing he might possibly designate some who were particular friends of the Galatian converts and thus would hinder his purpose. Politeness was in place even where men's souls were at stake.

On the other hand, this charity on the part of Paul must not be interpreted as if he were compromising his position. There is sternness too. He accuses the Galatians of shifting and deserting - this double idea is brought out by one compound verb (*μεταβιβασιονε*) in the Greek, which implies a wilful change of allegiance, a going over from one side to another.¹¹ In vv. 8 and 9 he deliberately repeats an imprecation, not for his own prestige or the success of his missionary labors, but for the gospel of Christ. Its significance is in no way to be toned down, because anyone who proclaims and distorts the gospel of Christ is "anathema." "He becomes a person set apart and devoted to destruction, because he is hateful to God."¹²

Paul is arrested here by the uncompromising boldness of the language that he uses, and so in 1:10, by contrast he recalls, it seems, some of the denunciations with which his opponents were seeking to undermine his authority. The Judaizers had said that he was appealing to the interests of men

¹¹Duncan, op. cit., p. 9.

¹²Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 78.

(*Πεισῶ*); also, that he was trying to please or satisfy men (*ἀεικῶ*). In the first of these taunts the word used denotes the process of presenting a case so as to win approval. Paul, it was said, was like a sophist or demagogue, whose sole object was to get men to agree with him. Concerned to win adherents, he made the gospel easy, but cared little either for the truth of what he preached or for the ultimate salvation of those who accepted it. The second taunt is more general. Paul was a man-pleaser - which may mean either that he was concerned to win popular applause, or that it was man and not God who dictated for him his standards of conduct. The latter perhaps is the better interpretation.

Both of these accusations Paul indignantly repudiates. There is indeed a sense in which he might have accepted the first and gloried in it. The very nature of the gospel necessitates that whoever preaches it should seek to "win" men; and so thoroughly was this Paul's ambition that, as he himself proudly claims, he became "all things to all men" (cf. especially I Corinthians 9:19-23). But in all this he saw no cause for reproach; it was all done for the sake of the gospel. Hence, with the words he has just dictated (vv. 8 and 9) still resounding in his ear, he stops short and asks whether, when a man can express himself as he has just done (this is the force of *ἀεικῶ* in the Greek) it is men he is appealing to, or God? This contrast between "men" and "God" is more a matter of deep religious feeling with Paul than of logic;

yet there is no lack of logic in the final summing-up. He says, "If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ." (1:10b). Why "still"? The sense is strictly a logical one, viz. "If I, who am and claim to be a bondservant of Christ were, despite this, to seek to satisfy men, then my alleged devotion to Christ as Lord would be a delusion and a sham. And that there is no delusion about it, but that both his life and his gospel are based on a rock foundation, Paul now proceeds to maintain in a lengthy apology.

First of all, he recalls in one short but vivid sentence the main features of his life before the gospel was revealed to him, thereby showing how his whole mentality predisposed him to be an opponent of the gospel he now preached. And after his conversion, his immediate reaction to the divine revelation on the Damascus road was not to consult with any human being, nor did he take the obvious step of going up to Jerusalem to see the recognized leaders of the Christian Church, but he went into Arabia and then returned to Damascus. Finally after three years, he went up to Jerusalem where he visited Peter for fifteen days and also saw James. At this time, he was still unknown to the Churches in Judaea. Paul affirms the truth of this historical sketch by the expression, "In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!" (1:20). For similarly emphatic and solemn affirmations of Paul, see I Thessalonians 2:5 and II Corinthians 1:23; 2:31. Paul's use of the expression here shows clearly that the facts

just stated are not given simply for their historical value, but as evidence of what he has before asserted, his independence of the Twelve.¹³

Continuing his narrative in 2:1, Paul says,

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up by revelation; and I laid before them (but privately before those who were of repute) the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, lest somehow I should be running or had run in vain.

Every word in this sentence is significant for the point Paul is making. Paul does not say that he consulted anyone, as a pupil might consult a master. His gospel had already been given to him by revelation, and he had already been proclaiming it (1:23). What he did in Jerusalem was to tell people about it - he "submitted" it.¹⁴ He did not content himself, as is sometimes the way with missionary speakers, with describing the circumstances in which he worked and the results which he achieved, but he informed them what the message was which in those unusual circumstances was being blessed with such success. And more particularly, he did this in private conversation with those who were authorities. Paul does not here identify these authorities, but from 2:9 it is apparent that Peter, James and John were included.¹⁵

¹³Burton, op. cit., p. 61.

¹⁴Duncan, op. cit., p. 39.

¹⁵Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 109.

The gospel of Christ, then, was the real issue at this Jerusalem conference, and in 2:6b Paul significantly points out the results of this meeting. 1) Those who were authorities added nothing to him, i.e., "they imparted no fresh knowledge to me, they saw nothing defective or incorrect in my teaching."¹⁶ 2) But Peter James and John gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship when they saw the grace that was given to them, i.e., "they heartily recognized my mission."¹⁷ How Paul's soul must have exulted as he told this tale! And what a travesty of the truth was all the talk of the Judaizers about the subjection enforced on him by the Jerusalem authorities. Here was no subjection but fellowship in the work of the gospel; no enforcement of a superior authority, but mutual recognition by each party of the other's God-appointed sphere of service. The phrase, *δεξιὰς κοινωρίας*, excludes the idea of surrender or submission which the phrase "to give the hand" might suggest.¹⁸

Paul adds an apparent qualification to the giving of the right hands of fellowship. "Only they would have us remember the poor, which very thing I was eager to do." (2:10). But this qualification by its very nature serves to emphasize Paul's claim that the Jerusalem authorities had no addition

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁸ Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

to make to his gospel. They merely asked of him a service of love, a service which he himself was quite willing to render.

The test case of Titus, Paul's co-laborer, was also not to be overlooked. "Not even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek." (2:3).

Lightfoot suggests the following two interpretations:

Is it 1) not even Titus, who as my fellow-labourer would be brought constantly in contact with the Jews and therefore might well have adopted a conciliatory attitude towards them... or is it 2) not even Titus, though the pressure exerted in his case was so great? We need more information. Probably both ideas are present.¹⁹

At any rate the point Paul wishes to make is that the circumcision upon which the Judaizers were so very insistent was not required by the Jerusalem authorities whom the Judaizers claimed to be representing.

Paul continues to vindicate the claim that his gospel is independent of human authority. So far the claim has been that his gospel is not something which he had inherited, or which he had been taught; he had never accepted dictation with regard to it from alleged superiors, but he was recognized as a fellow-laborer by the Jerusalem apostles. He now tells of a development which called him to assert his independence by open resistance and remonstrance. Concerning this, Bengel says, "The argument has come to its height."²⁰

¹⁹Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 105.

²⁰Quoted in H. A. W. Meyer, A Critical and Exegetical Hand-book to the Epistle to the Galatians (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884) p. 75.

The occasion arose when Peter, coming to Antioch, was attracted by the spectacle of Jewish and Gentile Christians living together in harmony in one community. He joined himself for a time to this community, and, following the practice of the Jews of that Church, ate with the Gentile members. Presently, however, certain men came from Jerusalem as the representatives of James. These men brought such pressure to bear upon Peter by their presence that he gradually discontinued his social fellowship with the Gentile Christians. So influential was this change in Peter's practice that all the Jewish members of the Church ceased to eat with the Gentile follow-Christians, and as a result of this, even Barnabas, who just a short while before at Jerusalem had championed with Paul the freedom of the Gentiles, also followed Peter's example. Thus the Church was divided, socially at least, into two, and by this fact pressure was brought upon the Gentiles to take up observance of the Jewish law of foods in the interest of restoring and preserving the Church.

It was at this point that Paul says he intervened. It is evident that he did not act hastily; he waited until he saw things clearly. But when he saw that even Barnabas was carried away by Peter's dissimulation, then it was plain that they were not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel.²¹ For this, Paul says, "I opposed him to his face,

²¹Lenski, op. cit., pp. 99-100.

because he stood condemned." (2:11). Paul's independence stands out here in bold relief. For just a short while before Paul and Peter had exchanged the right hands of fellowship as a token of their mutual friendship and doctrinal accord. But truth was dearer to Paul, and so Paul resisted Peter, the context implying that he did so with success.²²

It has been mentioned that Paul charged Peter, Barnabas and the Antiochian Jews with not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel. The definition of this expression, "truth of the gospel," in St. Paul's language is important. It denotes the doctrine of grace and the maintenance of Christian liberty, as opposed to the false teachings of the Judaizers. Cf. 2:5 and compare Colossians 1:5,6 where the same idea seems to be indirectly involved.²³ Therefore Paul puts this sharp question to Peter in the presence of all who were around, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" (2:14b). The words ἀναγκάζεις ἑσθαι εἶναι are of crucial importance for the understanding of Paul's position. They show what he regarded as the significance of Peter's conduct in refusing longer to eat with the Gentile Christians. Under the circumstances this meant not only the maintaining of the validity of

²²Wm. Dallmann, "Lectures on Galatians," Concordia Theological Monthly (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1940), XI, 596-597.

²³Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 107.

the Jewish law for Jewish Christians, but also involved the forcing of Jewish law upon the Gentiles. This, of course, left no choice for the Gentile members of the Antiochian Church but to conform to Jewish practice or allow a line of division to be drawn through the early Church.²⁴ And it was this element of coercion brought to bear on the Gentiles which made the issue a matter of direct concern to Paul, since in its final ramifications this coercion forced the question, "Are we justified by faith or by works?" (2:15-21). The Sacred Record does not tell us whether Peter answered this charge or not, but since Paul mentions nothing, it is assumed that Peter in humility and lowliness acknowledged his aberration from the truth and could possibly have nothing to say. I Corinthians 9:5 would seem to show, however, that no lasting bitterness remained between the two apostles.

Should Paul not have gone to Peter privately instead of making his rebuke "in the presence of all?" No. It was necessary that the rebuke be public, not as deserved punishment for Peter, but so that all who were carried away by Peter's dissimulation could hear and learn the truth for their own good. Even Pelagius says, "Publicum Scandalum non potest privatim curari."²⁵ Augustine, otherwise his opponent, agrees: "Non enim utile erat errorem, qui palam noceret, in secreto

²⁴Burton, op. cit., pp. 111-113.

²⁵Lenski, op. cit., p. 100.

omendare.²⁶

This incident at Antioch, as has been pointed out before, proved Paul's independence of the Jerusalem authorities. But this, it seems, is not its sole significance for Paul, for he follows his rebuke against Peter by expostulating on the very heart of the gospel, justification by faith, not by works. In developing this point of his argument, he seems at the outset still to be addressing Peter, but in the end it looks as if Peter is forgotten, and what began as an account of a remonstrance with a brother apostle changes imperceptibly into a passionate address to the Galatians.

Paul recalls how Peter and he are both Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners. Here the name sinners (*ἁμαρτωλοί*) seems to be used with reference to spiritual rather than moral delinquency. In this sense it was often applied by devout Jews to those in their own nation who were not strict in their observance of the Mosaic Law and to the Gentiles who were non-observers of the law.²⁷ Paul uses the word here (2:15) to show how little profit to them Jewish birth and privileges had been since faith was the basis of acceptance with God. Paul emphasizes this fact by saying three times in one verse (2:16) that justification does not come from the *ἔργα νόμου*.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 115.

By ^{ἔργα} ^{νόμου} Paul means deeds of obedience to formal statutes done in the legalistic spirit, with the expectation of thereby securing and meriting divine approval and award, such obedience, in other words, as the legalist rendered to the law of the Old Testament as expanded and interpreted by them (the Judaizers). ^{ἔργα} ^{νόμου} are deeds of men compared to an act of God in relation to justification.²⁸

In this same passage (2:16) Paul further fortifies his position with an intensified positiveness by a quotation from the Old Testament which he later uses constantly as a weapon against his opponents. "By the works of the law shall no one be justified." By using the future tense, "shall be justified," Paul wishes to express not the time at which justification took place, but the absoluteness of the rule that no human being is to expect ever to be justified by the works of the law.²⁹

Paul, however, knew that despite the exactness with which he had thus stated his position, the Jews could easily put a double meaning on this point of the argument. The rigorous Jew would be tempted to say (and this doubtless was one of the Judaizers' contentions in Galatia) that what faith in Christ did for Paul and those who sided with him was to take good Jews and make them sinners, non-observers of an inviolable holy law. Would not this in turn make Christ a minister of sin, i.e., "one who furthers the interest of sin, promotes, encourages it?"³⁰ Paul says, "μὴ γένοιτο." - an expres-

²⁸Barton, op. cit., p. 115.

²⁹Moxtable, op. cit., p. 85.

³⁰Lightfoot, op. cit., p. 113.

sion of repudiation found again in 3:21, and no fewer than ten times in Romans. Paul uses it here to demolish an argument which according to human standards may sound plausible, but whose conclusion is completely incompatible with the revealed character and purposes of God. Paul has no patience with human disputations which ignore the truths of revealed religion.

The *μη̄ γενοίτο* is sustained by an argument of the e contrario type.³¹ "For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." (2:18). This statement is evidently pointed at Peter, although Paul tactfully applies the statement to himself. If a person practices the statutes of the Ceremonial Law after he has laid them aside for a number of years, as Peter had done, then he proves himself to be a transgressor (*παραβάτης*). By a subtle substitution at this point of the new term (*παραβάτης*) in place of the ambiguous *ἁμαρτωλός* of the previous verses, Paul, with a poignant sense of reality, drives home the plea that conduct such as he is describing and in which the Galatians were participating is a direct and serious violation of God's Will; it is a conscious wilful transgression of the Will of God as revealed in Christ if a Christian allows such a regulation to stand between him and eating with a brother in Christ.

The reason for this is clear. Employing a double contrast between living and dying, between law and God, Paul declares:

³¹Burton, op. cit., p. 130.

"I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God." (2:19). By "dying to the law" Paul means that he has ceased to have any direct relation with it, and he implies that he had passed into a realm where the law has no hold over him (cf. Romans 7:1). When he adds that death to the law took place through the law, he means that it was his experience under the law that revealed the law's ineffectiveness (as a means by which a man can be justified in God's sight), and so led him to be done with it, and to seek justification in another way.³²

The real significance of Paul's death to the law in his argument against the Judaizers comes out in the phrase which follows (19b): "That I might live unto God." How vehemently Paul's opponents have repudiated the implications of this contrast! They maintained that a man lived to God in keeping the law, since in the law God Himself speaks to man; it is an expression of His eternal Wisdom and His eternal Will. "No," replies Paul, "the law stands between man and God; for God is not primarily a law-giver enforcing His commands; he is a Father seeking His sons." Paul emphatically denied the theological implications of the Pharisaic teachings of the law; but above all he had a profound religious sense of the reality of the life which God seeks to impart to man, a life apart from which man is dead; and it was because the law utterly

³²Duncan, op. cit., p. 70.

failed to give life (3:21) that it stood condemned, and that he personally died to it.³³

In 2:20 Paul continues to elaborate on the theme of living unto God. The power that now enables him to do this is the crucified Christ and the fact that his old self (²ἐγώ) has been crucified with Christ. And therefore, "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." ³⁴ It is unfortunate that in English we cannot retain the stately word order of the Greek - "and live no longer I, there liveth in me Christ." Christ was the determinative agent in Paul's life, even as He was the determining factor in his argument against the Judaizers, and here, even the word order bears out this fact by throwing special emphasis on ¹κεκοττός. Burton points out:

It is, of course, the heavenly Christ of Whom Paul speaks... With this spiritual being Paul feels himself to be living in such intimate fellowship, by him his whole life is so controlled, that he conceives him to be resident in him, imparting to him impulse and power, transforming him morally and working through him for and upon other men.³⁵

³⁴"The use of ¹με and ²ἐμὸν rather than ¹ἡμᾶς and ¹ἡμῶν indicates the deep personal feeling with which the apostle writes. The whole expression, while suggesting the ground of faith and the aspect of Christ's work with which faith has specially to do, is rather a spontaneous and grateful utterance of the apostle's feeling called forth by the mention of the Son of God as the object of his faith than a phrase introduced with argumentative intent." Burton, op. cit., p. 140.

³⁵Ibid., p. 137.

What does Paul mean when in the closing sentence of this chapter he says, "I do not nullify the grace of God"? Is this perhaps a defense against an argument his opponents have been urging against him that he ignores the grace of God which God has shown to Israel, that grace which He had manifested especially in the great gift of the law? Such an interpretation is possible. Another explanation, suggested by Duncan and taken by this writer, is that the apostle is here in a mood, not of defense, but of attack.³⁶ "I refuse," he says, "to annul the grace of God, as the Judaizers and those who follow them are really doing."³⁷ He explains his meaning more clearly in the words which follow. "For if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose." (2:21b). The orthodox Jewish position, advocated by the Judaizing party in the Galatian Churches, was that the law was given by God for men to keep, and that righteousness (acceptance with God) was given to those who kept it. What Christ does in this view is to help men to keep the law. Paul trenchantly declares that, if righteousness comes in that way, then indeed Christ's death was useless; there was no need of a new revelation of God's way of righteousness, and the death of Christ with its demonstration of divine righteousness and of God's love and its redemption of men from the curse of the law was needless.

³⁶Duncan, op. cit., p. 75.

³⁷Ibid.

That in the plan of God all this did come to pass, however, is evidence that it was not needless, and this in turn proves that righteousness through the law was not in God's plan for the world, and bolsters Paul's assertion that he is not setting aside the grace of God by denying the validity of the law.

Thus Paul concludes the vindication of his apostleship and gospel against the Judaizers' assaults on their genuineness and authority - he got them by revelation from Jesus Christ, and he was in no way dependent for them on those who went before him; though Peter, James and John had approved his mission and his gospel, he had been and remained independent of them. Paul now goes on to vindicate his gospel against those who challenge its truth. The treatment of this theme, for which he has provided an unpremeditated transition by his sublime argument in 5:15-21, is to occupy him throughout chapters three and four, where, contrasting his gospel of grace with a legalistic gospel, he appeals successively to experience, to Scripture and to reason.

CHAPTER IV

PAUL'S VENDEICATION OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL

In the beginning of chapter three Paul returns to the situation in Galatia itself, which he had left behind in 1:9. The change in thought seems to be abrupt, but not so at all when the reader considers the conclusion to which the apostle came in 2:21, i.e., that Judaism is a practical denial of Christ's death because it tacitly assumes that a man is justified by his own works. This thought is at once intolerable to Paul, and therefore he cannot help but burst out into an indignant remonstrance, "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?" (3:1). Paul's aim in this and the following questions (3:2-5) is to revivify among the Galatians the memory of their first condition before any contradictory and confusing messages had affected them. He wants to touch their hearts and make them feel for themselves again the divine word in their own souls. Ramsay says,

He (Paul) swept over their hearts as the musician sweeps over the strings of his instrument, knowing exactly what music he can bring from them and what he must not attempt with them.¹

¹W. M. Ramsay, A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (2nd edition; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1900), p. 312.

Practically every word in Paul's first question (3:1) is loaded with significance. He calls the Galatians "foolish," ¹ *δυσήτοιοι*. By this word he does not imply natural stupidity and fickleness, but rather suggests to the Galatians their failure to use their powers of perception. Their conduct was irrational in the light of their past experience, and they were sinking back to the old level of superstition and ignorance in which they thought they could attain perfection by physical acts and works.² For look how he had preached to them in times past - *Προεγγένη*. "He had publicly announced (the gospel) as a magisterial edict or proclamation."³ Furthermore, he did this *κατ' ὄφθαλμοῦς*. This expression is stronger than *περὶ ὄφθαλμῶν*, since it brings out the idea of a confronting.⁴ Paul, then, had preached to them in no uncertain terms, and what he preached to them was Christ crucified (*ἑσταυρωμένον*). Paul uses the perfect tense here instead of the aorist, advisedly, because he wants to denote not the act but the state of being crucified.⁵ In other words, what is announced is not an

²Ernest D. Burton, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians," The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), p. 143.

³J. B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (8th edition; London: MacMillan and Co., 1884), p. 134.

⁴Ibid.

⁵George S. Duncan, "The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians," The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1934), p. 78.

historical fact, but rather the eternal truth which it signifies. And as such, this is an announcement which could not afford to be read with empty wonder, as if it dealt with the past only, but it is one to which the Galatians must give earnest attention, for it has an abiding significance. This is precisely the point that Paul wanted to get across to the Galatians. Because of their recent defection, Paul, by his colorful, exact and forceful choice of words, wanted to re-awaken in their own souls that they had at one time accepted this Christ and placed on Him their only hope for salvation. Paul put into practice a principle which Goethe described thus:

O! never yet hath mortal drunk
 A draught restorative
 That welled not from the depths of his own soul!⁶

Paul poses another question which is a forcible appeal to their past experience. "Let me ask you only (*ΜΟΝΟΝ*) this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by the hearing with faith?" (3:2). The implication of the *ΜΟΝΟΝ* is that an answer to the question about to be asked would itself be a decisive argument.⁷ Presented with irresistible cogency, the question admits only one answer, *ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως*, and Paul does not wait for the answer to be forthcoming. He rushes on and asks another question. "Having begun in the Spirit (*Πνεύματι*), are you now ending in the

⁶Quoted in Ramsay, op. cit., p. 306.

⁷Burton, op. cit., p. 147.

flesh (σὰρξ)?" (3:3). Instead of following up the Galatians' assumed mental answer to his question in 3:2, viz. "we received the Spirit by faith," in which faith would have been the emphatic term, the apostle transfers the emphasis to Πνεῦμα with σὰρξ standing in contrast to it. Here it is to be noted how the apostle got down to the very core of the Galatians' past experience. The activity of the Spirit had been an important element in their early Christian experience. The message of the Judaizers, on the other hand, emphasized the σὰρξ which in this case is not the flesh as the seat of carnal appetites, but the flesh which was marked by circumcision, although there is perhaps an allusive play on the other sense also.⁸ Therefore, this change in antithesis at this point from "faith" and "works of law" to "Spirit" and "flesh" is more effective for Paul's purpose. The Galatians might have replied that by accepting circumcision they were not necessarily resisting the Spirit. Paul wishes them to realize that they assuredly were doing so. To attach value to circumcision when the Spirit has been received without it is to deny the value attaching to the Spirit, and is a sign of spiritual retrogression, and not of progress.

Dropping argument for a quiet appeal, Paul goes on to ask, "Did you suffer so many things in vain? - if it really be in vain." The Galatians would know to what experiences

⁸Duncan, op. cit., p. 81.

Paul was referring. The Greek verb *ἰδοῦμαι* does not in itself define the experiences as either good or evil. However, from the general use of the word elsewhere in the New Testament, it seems to be more natural to regard Paul as here appealing to the sufferings which the Galatians had endured for the faith. Paul's previous appeal, therefore, to the spiritual benefits which have come to the Galatians through their faith is followed here by a reminder of the sufferings which their faith had enabled them to endure. And then, with hope breaking through, for the cause is not yet lost, Paul adds, "if it (your suffering) really is in vain." Paul calls on them to take note where their senseless behavior is taking them, but suggests that surely it will stop short before disaster comes. Truly an example of charity hoping all things!

Paul concludes his appeal to experience in this section with a question similar to that in 3:2. "Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?" In it, we see that Paul simply cannot get his thought away from the reality of God's full and free and efficacious Spirit. Duncan says, that this is a fact "which transcends in significance everything else for him."⁹ This, of course, must not be construed as detracting from the Christocentricity of Paul's argument, because Paul knew that it was because of the work of Christ

⁹Ibid., p. 82.

that the Spirit of God was active in the hearts of the Galatians.

Paul in combating the Judaizing error now moves on from his reiterated contrast between "doing what the law demands" and "believing the gospel message" and appeals to the typical case of Abraham. He passes from direct remonstrance (3:1-5) to a longer general argument based on God's acceptance of Abraham, or from the personal question: "How did you Galatians win your acceptance with God?" to the larger and more general question: "Who are the people whom God accepts and on what basis are they accepted?"

For a true understanding of Paul's argument at this point it is well to note the precise connection between 3:6 and the passage which precedes. In the Greek, v. 6 is introduced by the simple conjunction *καὶ οὕτως* ("even as," AV & RV) and this has often led to the mistaken idea that v. 6 is essentially a subordinate clause dependent on v. 5, so that Paul's appeal to the Galatians in 3:1-5 is regarded as clinched and closed by the quotation from Scripture in v. 6 or by subsequent summing up in v. 7. Such an interpretation obscures the real point of Paul's argument. The Greek word *καὶ οὕτως* is regularly used to mark the introduction of a new topic, the statement as it were of a text on which the commentary is to follow (cf. Mark 1:2; I Timothy 1:3)...¹⁰

Why does Paul cite the case of Abraham? It is not that he is himself here opening up a new subject of controversy; rather it is that his opponents have already based their claim on an appeal to the case of the patriarch, and Paul now sets out to refute them. They maintained that to be a son of Abraham one must either 1) be a circumcised male descendant,

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 84-85.

or 2) (if the Gentiles wished to become sons of Abraham) submit to circumcision.

Paul goes back to Genesis 15:6 to prove that the contention of his opponents was false. He says, "Thus Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." (3:6). Faith was the distinguishing mark of Abraham and not any ³¹ *εργα νόμου*, i.e., circumcision, which the Judaizers were advocating. While Burton charges that the passage from Genesis which Paul uses here in no way furnishes a natural basis for an argument against the Judaizers,¹¹ he overlooks the fact that the Kernpunkt of the whole narrative concerning Abraham in Genesis is that he believed the promises of God and was a man of faith (Cf. Hebrews 11:8).¹² Paul treats this subject of Abraham's justification by faith more elaborately in Romans four, where he states that Abraham received circumcision as a sign or a seal of the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. Abraham was reckoned righteous before circumcision "to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them." (Romans 4:11b).

Therefore Paul begins to refute the arguments of his opponents by interpreting the phrase, "sons of Abraham," not genealogically, but rather as designating those who have faith.

¹¹Burton, op. cit., pp. 158-159.

¹²J. P. Kochler, Der Brief Pauli an die Galater (Milwaukee, Wis.: Northwestern Publishing House, 1910), p. 68.

That this is a very natural and reasonable interpretation is evident from the way he introduces this conclusion, *γινώσκετε ἅσα*, "So you see then." And this use of the word "sons" as meaning those who walk in someone's footsteps was by no means foreign to the Semitic use of the term (cf., e.g., "sons of thunder" and "children of disobedience").¹³ While Paul is perfectly in sympathy with the demand of the Judaizers to link up the new religion with the religion and history of the Jews, and indeed insists on doing so, as his repeated appeal to Scripture shows, still he is equally insistent that the connection must be traced along religious and not merely tribal or nationalistic lines.

Paul's substitution of "sons of Abraham" for "seed of Abraham," as it is in Genesis, contributes greatly to the point he is making, because the Galatians understood the adoption laws of the time which equated sonship and heirship. Paul's thought is this: The adopted heir succeeds to the religious obligations and position of the deceased. Conversely he who succeeds to the religious position of any man is his son. Therefore he who succeeds to the faith of Abraham is his son.¹⁴ The Galatians indeed had done this, and therefore the Judaizers' contention for circumcision as the mark of sonship must be disregarded.

¹³Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

¹⁴Ramsay, *op. cit.*, pp. 341-342.

In support of what he has just said (3:7), Paul says that the Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith when the promise was made to Abraham, "In thee shall all the nations be blessed." (3:8) The Galatians would at once understand that this applied not only to the ancestral descendants of Abraham, but to everyone and especially themselves because of the manifestation of the Spirit in their lives. It is true that this promise does seem rather vague and, as it stands, can scarcely be equated with the gospel. But not so if we see that in Paul's eyes God does not change despite any advancement or retrogression men may show in their appreciation of Him. His redemptive purpose in Christ was inherent in His purpose before the world began (Ephesians 3:1). The gospel of justification by faith was implicit in God's Word from the beginning.¹⁵ Abraham awoke to this great truth, though his descendants in subsequent ages tended to forget it; but it is plain, Paul contends, that if men are to be blessed in him (according to the words of the promise), it can be only in so far as they learn to take their stand before God in the same spirit of faith and receptivity as Abraham did.

What, then, are the conclusions on which Paul would like the Galatians to rest? In the first place, Paul wants to assure them that all who rely on faith are blessed. This blessedness refers not only to the gift they had through the

¹⁵Duncan, op. cit., p. 91.

Spirit, but also includes all future blessings which would be theirs in the new age after the judgment. Paul has referred to their justification indirectly; but his full reasoning is that they have been justified, and in consequence are eligible for God's promised blessings.

In the second place, the Galatians are to remember that by blessing them in this way, God has fulfilled in them the promise He gave to Abraham: "So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith." (3:9). And if any question would be raised about "Abraham's sons," they could reply, "We are sons of Abraham by faith; we are heirs by faith in the promise made to him." They could, therefore, be confident that neither their penance nor their inheritance depended in any way on their acceptance of the rite of circumcision.

Paul now moves directly in the camp of the enemy. The keynote is struck in the words with which in the Greek the section opens, ὅσοι γὰρ ἐξ ἔργων. "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse." Just as above (3:6-9), Paul had used the concise expression οἱ ἐκ πίστεως to describe those whose lives were ordered by faith in Christ, so here the corresponding phrase ὅσοι γὰρ ἐξ ἔργων denotes those who seek to please God by carrying out His prescribed regulations. Paul seeks to show that instead of being blessed by coming under the law, the Judaizers, according to their own promises, the Scriptures, must face the

inevitable outcome of coming under a curse. For it is written, "Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them." (3:10).

Paul might have been expected to follow up this argument by an appeal to personal experience, viz. that apart from divine help no man is able to keep the law, and no man therefore can escape the curse. But his reasoning does not follow this line. The point of view of the Judaizers, as we already have seen, was just this that divine help for keeping the law perfectly was available through Christ, i.e., through the gift of the Spirit, and this was the belief which in turn they had sought to impress on the Galatians. It would have been useless therefore for Paul to appeal to a fact of experience which might have carried great weight in an argument directed against non-Christians, but which neither his Galatian readers nor their judaizing teachers would have regarded as being applicable to the present dispute. Besides, it was not on personal experience alone, but on the written Word that Paul knew his case must be built. His opponents had appealed to Scripture and from Scripture he must refute them.¹⁶

How then does Paul continue his argument? He asserts that on the basis of the law (*ἐν νόμῳ* - this propositional phrase carries the emphasis in the Greek just as "faith" does in 3:8) no man is justified before God. Paul invites

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 93.

the Galatians to keep steadily before themselves the question on which their ultimate blessing or cursing will depend. They have been shown how faith leads on to justification and justification to blessing; will justification and blessing likewise follow for those who seek them by obedience to the law? Plainly (*σύνδου*), Paul says, they will not; the evidence of Scripture is against it.

The Scripture evidence which Paul adduces is Habakkuk 2:4, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." And then he continues, "The law does not rest on faith, for (the law says) 'He who does them shall live by them.'" Paul here shows that the principles of legalism and faith are mutually exclusive as the bases for justification, and by this assertion excludes any thought of a compromise between the two principles.¹⁷ The case from a logically argumentative standpoint could not be stated with more clarity and cogency to the Galatians, and for that matter, to the Judaizers too. It admitted only one conclusion: Since the Galatians were not keeping the whole law and were not required by the Judaizers to do so (6:13), they were under the curse of the law.

At this critical point in the argument Paul says,

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us - for it is written, 'Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree' - that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (3:13, 14).

¹⁷Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

The sentence is all the more impressive in the Greek because it has no introductory particle to connect the new and contrasted statement with what preceded in 3:11,12. Coming after all that has been said about the curse, the abrupt introduction of the name of Christ suggests the appearance on the scene of one who alone can deal with so tragic a situation.¹⁸ And that is precisely the thought Paul wishes to convey to the Galatians. It was Christ alone who could redeem them from the curse of the law - not circumcision or any other prescription of the Ceremonial Law, and it was through Christ alone that the blessing of Abraham and the promise of the Spirit could come through faith.

The introduction of the phrase *ἐν χειρὶ* at this point is significant for Paul's argument. The Judaizers claimed that it was *ἐν Ἰσραήλ* that a man received the blessing of Abraham. But Paul denies that this blessing is embodied in the nationalistic fellowship of the Jews, but rather in the religious fellowship which draws its very life from Christ (*ἐν χειρὶ*). Deissmann says that *ἐν χειρὶ* must be taken with a certain literalness that conveys local significance, and therefore *ἐν χειρὶ* means more than by Christ's agency; it implies that Christ and those who are His are linked together in an indissoluble union.¹⁹

Paul affirms this truth two more times over against the

¹⁸Duncan, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

¹⁹Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 104.

Judaizers when he says, "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith," (3:26) and again in 3:28, "For you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Paul continues by introducing an argument from the common knowledge of men that contracts once agreed to cannot be modified. He starts out (Moffatt Translation), "Brethren, I speak from the point of view of men." (3:15). Paul's use of *ἀδελφοί* here is probably due to his feeling that he is now addressing the Galatians more directly than in the preceding paragraph, to his desire to secure their friendly attention, and to the fact that he never forgets that they and he are still brethren in Christ. He continues, "No one annuls even a man's will, or adds to it, once it has been ratified." And if this is true of a man's covenant, it is even more certainly true in the case of a *θεῖα διαθήκη* made by God - so true, Paul contends, that not even the Law of God which came 430 years later could "annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void." (3:18).

Paul's primary purpose is to present the promise given to Abraham as a *θεῖα διαθήκη* of God, complete in itself. This truth needed to be reaffirmed in view of the Galatian defection. And if Ramsay's findings are correct, we see that the word *θεῖα διαθήκη* was well chosen for the point Paul wanted to make. He says,

1) The ancient *θεῖα διαθήκη* was a solemn and binding covenant, guaranteed by the authority of the whole people and their gods. It was originally executed verbally before the assembled people as a solemn religious act.

The word therefore was well suited to express the binding irrevocable solemnity of the word uttered by God. 2) The *ḥet'um* was primarily an arrangement for the devolution of religious duties and rights, and not merely a bequeathing of money and property. The heir by *ḥet'um* was bound to carry on the religion of the family just as if he had been a son by nature and was placed there for that purpose. The term was therefore well suited to describe God's promise of religious inheritance to His chosen people. 3) The maker of the original *ḥet'um* had full power in his hands; and the party benefiting from the *ḥet'um* exercised no authority in the making of it. The latter had only to fulfill the condition and he succeeded to the advantages of the *ḥet'um*. The act of God was of the same one-sided type. 4) The *ḥet'um* expressed strongly the absolute authority of the disposer, who in the biblical conception was God Himself.²⁰

In whatever way, therefore, the law might be related to the *ḥet'um*, it was God's gracious promise which provided the unalterable basis of the covenant-relationship between Him and His people. The inheritance offered to Abraham and his offspring (3:16) would come as the result of God's free gift; and that gift would be robbed of its initial fullness and freeness if it were subsequently made dependent on the obedience of the law. Paul will have nothing to do with the judaizing contention that by keeping the law it is possible for Abraham's seed to inherit the promise. Therefore he asserts, forcibly and concisely, that "if inheritance is by the law, it is no longer by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise." (3:18). Paul's point here is that as the inheritance originally came by promise, it could not now come by law. If in the case of Abraham God took the

²⁰Ramsay, *op. cit.*, pp. 357-364.

initiative and of His own free grace promised to him the inheritance, why should the sons of Abraham think they were to earn it by a process of legal obedience? Paul wanted his converts to be convinced of this fact: that inheritance ceases to be a free gift from God when men think that their obedience gives them a claim on it.

But now a challenge faces Paul. If the inheritance comes to man solely as the result of God's gracious promise and the law has nothing directly to do with it, what function then does the law serve (3:19,20)? Paul is bold in his statement of the problem and bold in his answering of it. You imagine, he seems to say, that in the law you have the full and final expression of God's Will, something which He purposed from all eternity. On the contrary, I want you to know that there are four basic considerations which demonstrate the purpose and inferiority of the law. 1) It is essentially subsidiary in character because it was "added," or "interpolated." It is an addition to the main stream of God's purpose and is in no sense a natural and continuous development of the promise given to Abraham. 2) The subsidiary character of the law is seen in the special purpose it was designed to serve, namely, the necessity of bringing home to God's chosen people their sinfulness. 3) Furthermore, the reign of the law is essentially temporary because it was designed to hold only "till the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made." (3:19b). 4) And then, in a final sentence designed to rob the

law still further of the unique dignity which the Judaizers attached to it, Paul says, "It was ordained by angels through an intermediary. Now an intermediary implies more than one; but God is one." (3:20). Lightfoot comments thus on the statement:

The very idea of mediation supposes two persons, at least, between whom the mediation is carried on. The law then is of the nature of a contract between two parties, God and the Jewish people. It is only valid so long as both parties fulfill the terms of the contract. It is therefore contingent and not absolute... Unlike the Law the Promise is absolute and unconditional. It depends on the sole decree of God. There are not two contracting parties. There is nothing in the nature of a stipulation. The giver is everything, the recipient nothing.²¹

But Paul realizes that all this line of argument as to the purposes of the law might be construed in the minds of his opponents as leading to an impasse in that it makes out the law and the promises, both of which have issued from the same God, as working in opposition to one another. Paul is emphatic in repudiating any such contention. He maintains that the law and the promise must be viewed in the light of the final purpose of Him from Whom both came. That purpose was to give life (3:21). The law could not do this, since its purpose was to consign all things to sin (3:22). By "consign" (*συνεκδέσσειν*) is meant that men are shut up with no apparent possibility of escape.²² So true and real is this fact to

²¹Lightfoot, op. cit., pp. 146-147.

²²Duncan, op. cit., p. 118.

Paul that he feels constrained to mention it three more times as he says, "Now before faith came, we were confined (*ἐφεινενίμεθα*) under the law, kept under restraint (*σφραγισμένοι*) until faith should be revealed. So that the Law was our custodian (*Παιδαγωγός*) until Christ came..." Paul does not say that God did all this, but rather Scripture and the law. It was on the basis of Scripture and the law that the Judaizers had challenged Paul, and it was on that basis that he must meet them. In Scripture, of course, God is conceived as being ever at work, intent on His purpose of redemption (4:5). But sin, too, is at work, bringing everything under its sway; and, in taking account of it, Scripture is like the judge recording his verdict and handing the culprit over to be under its power.²³

Paul's repeated emphasis on this function of the law is designed to show that the law could in no way give life. The law was merely a stage by which God sought to advance the realization of His promise of blessing. If a person was to obtain life, life must be given (3:22), and it could only be given to those who trusted the promise which God had so graciously made, i.e., to those who have faith. Paul, however, goes still further. He is arguing, it must be remembered, against men who acknowledged the need for faith, but who yet believed that life could be given to those whose faith in-

²³ Ibid.

spired them to observe the Ceremonial Law. But Paul, on the contrary, keeps steadily before himself and before his Galatians the fact that the faith in question must be faith in Jesus Christ. Listen to him speak:

But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (3:26-29).

Luther says,

Paul, as a true and an excellent teacher of faith, hath always these words in his mouth, 'by faith, in faith, of faith which is in Christ Jesus...' He saith not, ye are the children of God, because you are circumcised, because ye have heard the law, and have done the works thereof as the Jews do imagine, and the false apostles teach, but by faith in Jesus Christ.²⁴

We can imagine the apostle flinging this triumphant exclamation (3:26-29) out as a challenge to the Galatians and to those who were misleading them. And it is evident how clearly he has his converts in mind, for he suddenly turns to use the second person (3:26-29). Fearful lest the force of his conclusion would be missed if it were clothed in too general terms, Paul feels he must address it directly to the men who were so tragically disregarding it and thus missing the dignity of sonship.

²⁴Martin Luther, Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, translated by A. J. K. Davidson. (Revised and corrected edition by Erasmus Middleton; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1930), p. 314.

With the vindication of his position in 3:29, Paul might have ended this part of his letter. At the mention of heirs, however, in v. 29, following what he has said in v. 2), regarding the minor and his superintendent-slave, there suddenly occurs to him another thought which can be used to reinforce his argument. His eagerness and irrepressibility are seen in the ejaculation, *δέγω δέ*, "What I mean is this."

Paul's argument is twofold: 1) The sting of the argument is seen in this fact that even a son who is designated to be the father's heir must be under guardians and trustees and is no better than a slave; he has no freedom of action and is in the fullest sense a dependent. Paul is relentless in his assertion that before faith came (3:23), our position, despite the inheritance which God had marked out for us, was not that of sons in the full sense, but that of children who had not yet reached maturity and freedom. It is to be noted that Paul says, "so with us." (4:3). It was not only the Galatians, who as heathen in their pre-Christian days were no better than children or even slaves; the same was true of us who were Jews.

2) The persuasive element in the argument is that tutelage and guardianship even in ordinary life suggest a future emancipation. In the spiritual sphere this emancipation came when "God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive the adoption of sons." (4:4,5). Paul again stresses the idea of the Galatians' sonship, not as contingent on the

law, as the Judaizers held, but as realized in the fact that Christ redeemed all who were under the law. Paul can never leave this focal point of his argument, because it is far from him "to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (6:14).

But how do the Galatians know they are sons? What proof is there in Paul's dogmatic assertion as opposed to the claims of the Judaizers? Paul makes a renewed appeal to the pragmatic test of the Spirit. He says, "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" In violation of strict grammatical sequence, though with true Christian courtesy and brotherliness, Paul associates himself for a moment with his readers (cf. "our hearts"), as one who shares this spiritual experience of theirs. He, too, is a lost son who has been redeemed and adopted.²⁵ And then, passing from the plural to the singular (4:7), as if he were addressing each of his readers personally, Paul concludes with the reminder that even though sonship has been attained by adoption, nevertheless a man who has received the Spirit is in the fullest sense a son, and as such God has marked him as an heir; it is his privilege to share in the inheritance which God promised of old to Abraham and his seed and in the blessings which are the prerogative of the sons of God.

Thus Paul triumphantly reaffirms the conclusion to which

²⁵Duncan, op. cit., p. 130.

he had come in 3:29, viz. that the heirs of the divine blessing promised by God to Abraham and his seed are those who are Christ's, those who through Christ, the Son of God, the one true offspring of Abraham, have come into a relationship of sonship to God, the Father. The whole section from 3:6 onwards has been a closely reasoned argument; step by step the apostle has advanced, fighting every inch of the way, and positions captured by one line of reasoning have been confirmed by advances along another. But at various points in the progress we have been reminded (e.g., by the sudden changes to the second person) that for Paul this is not merely an argument but a passionate appeal. Paul's ultimate concern is not to establish a theological position (although of necessity he does this); it is to save the souls of his converts with the gospel of Christ.

Apparently occurring to Paul as an afterthought is the fact that he might make his thought clearer and more persuasive by an allegorical or, better, typical interpretation of the story of Abraham and his two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, the former being born in the course of nature only, the other in fulfillment of a divine promise.²⁶ Paul says, "Tell me, you who desire to be under law, do you not hear the law?" (4:21). Paul then goes on to show by means of the allegory that the

²⁶Burton, op. cit., p. 251.

law itself, that is, the Torah, of which the Judaizers make so much, will teach them that the true children of Abraham, the true inheritors of the promise, are not those who have their bond of union with God in the law, but those who have attained spiritual freedom in Christ. He wants to induce the Galatians to see that by their present action they are joining the wrong branch of the family of Abraham. Luther's comment as to the actual polemical value of the allegory is interesting and apropos.

Allegories do not strongly persuade in divinity, but as certain pictures, they beautify and set out matter. For if Paul had not proved the righteousness of faith against the righteousness of works by strong and pithy arguments, he should have little prevailed by this allegory. But, because he fortified his cause before in invincible arguments, taken of experience, of the example of Abraham, the testimonies of the scripture and similitudes, now, in the end of his disputations, he addeth an allegory to give beauty to all the rest. For it is a seemly thing sometimes to add an allegory, when the foundation is well-laid, and the matter thoroughly proved; for as painting is an ornament to set forth and garnish a house already builded, so is an allegory the light of a matter which is already otherwise proved and confirmed.²⁷

Having thus stated his case for vindicating the truth of his gospel, Paul rounds off his argument on a triumphant note with a simple direct appeal to the Galatians, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (5:1; AV). With that note of triumph still resounding, Paul passes now to exhort his converts 1) not to sacrifice that freedom wan-

²⁷Luther, op. cit., p. 392.

tonly (5:2-12); 2) but to realize what that freedom involves for them in daily life (5:13ff.) and more especially in their social relationships (5:25-6:10).

Paul was undoubtedly faced with the contention that, if the law were no longer in force, morality must certainly be weakened by the gospel. And so, in order to check any misunderstanding on this issue (*ΜΟΝΟΝ ΜΗ*, v. 13), Paul states that Christian freedom is not to be interpreted as the removal of restraint upon the flesh, but paradoxically enough, it implies that we are servants to one another through love, and in this manner fulfill the whole law. The Galatians' security for such conduct would be guaranteed if they walked and were led by the Spirit (5:16,18).

Paul's exhortation to love and good works, in the last two chapters, then, are indirectly polemical. They vindicate his gospel from the charge of antinomianism, while they guard Christians from giving occasion to the charge. They protect from exaggeration and abuse the liberty already defended from legalistic encroachments.²⁸

²⁸G. G. Findlay, The Epistle to the Galatians (New York: A. G. Armstrong and Son, 1895), pp. 334-335.

CHAPTER V

WAS PAUL'S APPROACH EVANGELICAL?

Paul is never far removed from his readers throughout the epistle. He never appears as a hierarchical cleric who desires to impose his dogmatic beliefs upon his converts, but, in establishing his theological position, he is always sympathetic with the Galatian problem. The writer has endeavored to demonstrate this fact by pointing out the fairness of Paul's appeal to Scripture, the warmth of his appeal to their common Christian experience and the winning combination of his apostolic authority and personal humility (ch. 1). The writer, however, has purposely left one stone unturned in this respect, since due consideration was to be given it in the concluding chapter. The section to which the writer is referring is 4:12-20.

Brethren, I beseech you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong; you know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first; and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. What has become of the satisfaction you felt? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? They make much of you, but for no good purpose; they want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. For a good purpose it is always good to be made much of, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you; I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

In this section, argumentation gives place to an open-hearted personal appeal. Nothing in all that Paul has written, unless it be certain passages in II Corinthians (e.g., 6:11-13), illustrates as fully as this passage does the anguish that the apostle suffered through the Galatians' estrangement from God and the passionate desire of his soul to get the roots of such estrangement removed. Paul begins his entreaty with an affectionate *ἀδελφοί*. The apostle desires the Galatians to emancipate themselves from the bondage of the law, as he had done, and appeals to them to do this on the ground that he, who possessed the advantages of the law, had foregone those advantages and become a Gentile, in relation to the law, with them.

Then Paul continues, "You did me no wrong," i.e., "I have no complaint against you." Here Paul is seeking with his whole soul to assure his converts that, despite their having turned away from the gospel and despite the tone he had to adopt in this letter, he harbors no ill-feeling toward them. There is no reason why he and they should not once again hold the same view, understanding and trusting one another as fully as they have done at the beginning.

Such was Paul's plea; and in support of this plea, Paul becomes reminiscent of a past visit. Here we wish we could understand the references as clearly as the Galatians would have done. But all through this section the very intimacy of the appeal, so self-revealing to the original readers who

knew all the inner history of the case, leaves the modern reader guessing at the precise point of some of the references.

Paul's display of tender affection reaches its height in v. 19. "My little children," he calls them. And just as in I Thessalonians he regards his relation to his converts as that of a nursing-mother (I Thessalonians 2:8) or a father (I Thessalonians 2:11), so here he likens himself to a mother in childbirth, who must endure over again the pangs of travail with children who will not be ready to be brought to the birth until Christ is formed in them. This latter phrase does not, of course, suggest that the Galatians in turn are like a mother in whose womb Christ is being formed; it merely means that they themselves are not ready to be born in the Christian life until it is true of them that it is not they who are to live, but Christ who is to live in them (2:20). The metaphor, therefore, may not be applicable in every detail, but it certainly conveys the love and yearning and pain which the apostle felt for his weak and wayward converts. Those same feelings come to expression in the words which follow (4:20). He laments the fact that he cannot be near them. "I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you." Yes, if he could only be with them, how easy it would be for them to understand one another.

The reason for all this loving concern on the part of Paul toward the Galatians is to be found in this one fact - "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (2:20).

For Paul, Christ was everything. Self was relegated to the background, while Christ, Whose Spirit authors Christian love in the hearts of men, was uncompromisingly set forth as the only hope of righteousness. This being Paul's creed, he could most sincerely say, "Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world." (6:11).

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