

PERSUASIVE CONFLICT:  
AN HERMENEUTICAL MODEL FOR INTERPRETING GALATIANS  
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN CHURCH

THESIS

Submitted in Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
MASTER OF THEOLOGY  
of Rhodes University

by

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January 1990

## ABSTRACT

This study looks at how to interpret Paul's letter to the Galatians in the contemporary South African church. It aims to provide a Bible study method for doing this which accounts both for the context in which interpretation takes place and for the requirements of exegesis. To this end, use is made of a combination of contextual Bible study methods and a recent multidimensional exegetical model, all of which are currently employed in South Africa.

Initially, the study surveys a range of recent critical approaches to the Pauline epistles, particularly as these are employed by South African scholars working on Galatians. The fact that different exegetical approaches focus on different dimensions of the text, reveals the usefulness of a multidimensional exegetical model. The multidimensional exegetical model of Rousseau, which functions within a communication paradigm, is then introduced as an exegetical guide.

To meet the second requirement of this study, the question of contextual exegesis is examined. Particular use is made of the hermeneutical approach of liberation theology, with its three mediations of social analysis, theological reflection and practical implementation.

The central part of this study explores the implications of contextual interpretation and multidimensional exegesis of Galatians. The pre-canonical, canonical and contemporary contexts which affect the understanding of Galatians are discussed, and the multidimensional exegetical model is used to introduce the Galatian letter as a whole.

The last part deals with the practical questions of group Bible study. The exegetical and hermeneutical theory developed earlier is simplified to provide a contextual Bible study method and this method is applied to three pericopes from Galatians.

The task of bridging the gap between the university and the church is not an easy one, nor one which is solved by a single Bible study method. The exegetical and hermeneutical questions raised here point to the need for ongoing interaction between South African community of biblical scholars and those involved in the everyday life of the South African church.

I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly,  
nor let us answer. Till that word can be dug out  
of us, why should they hear the babble that we  
think we mean? How can they meet us face to face  
till we have faces?

C. S. Lewis, Till We Have Faces.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The financial assistance of the Institute for Research Development towards this research is hereby gratefully acknowledged. Opinions expressed in this work, or conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not to be attributed to the Institute for Research Development.

In addition to the above, I would like to acknowledge the help, encouragement and support of the following people:

- \* members of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa for encouraging me to pursue further biblical studies, in particular members of St Hugh's, Port Elizabeth, All Saint's, Somerset East and the Bishop of Port Elizabeth, the Rt Revd Bruce Evans;

- \* students and staff of the Department of Biblical Studies at the University of Port Elizabeth, especially Dr Jacques Rousseau and Mrs Helena Glanville;

- \* my present supervisor in the Rhodes Faculty of Divinity, Prof Pieter G. R. de Villiers;

- \* a number of scholars, both in South Africa and in the USA who graciously responded to requests for information: Prof John de Gruchy, Dr William Domeris, Prof A. B. du Toit, Dr James Hester, Prof B. C. Lategan, Dr Richard Lemmer, Dr Abraham Malherbe, Dr Nancey Murphy and Dr Wilfred Sebothoma;

- \* friends in pastoral ministry who have evaluated and used the Bible study method proposed in Part Three: the Revd Brian Jackson, the Revd Casper de Villiers and Ds Frederick Marais, to name but a few;

\* above all, my wife and daughters, Patricia, Sarah and Elinor, who share with me the task of learning and living out the gospel.

CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

The field of biblical hermeneutics has absorbed a wide range of new perspectives in the last two decades. Biblical scholars have not only explored and utilized the resources of many other disciplines, but they have focused renewed attention on neglected dimensions of biblical texts. A variety of new exegetical approaches have been developed, reflecting the shift of scholarly attention away from questions relating to the origins of the biblical texts, to questions of their literary structure and function and the nature and sociological context of their original reception. At the same time there has been renewed interest in exploring the various ways in which they may be read and understood today.

In the field of New Testament literature, the Pauline corpus has been one of the major areas in which many of these new approaches have been developed and applied. The reason for this is obvious: they constitute the single most important collection of primary documents of early Christianity by a single author. In addition, as canonical documents, they continue to function as a primary source of authoritative teaching for millions of contemporary Christians.

Within the Pauline corpus, Galatians has frequently been used for testing new lines of approach. It is relatively brief, indisputably Pauline, and deals with

issues relating to the essential nature of the Christian faith. It is also of interest to New Testament exegetes because it contains a number of celebrated exegetical cruxes which invite re-examination. It is of great importance to the church, particularly the churches of the Reformation, for whom it is their "freedom charter".

This study aims to review the recent developments in exegesis and hermeneutics and to examine how they have been applied to Galatians. In particular, it seeks to combine these approaches into a multi-dimensional exegetical model in a way which does justice to contemporary perceptions of the nature of the biblical text.

The matter of contemporary perceptions raises the hermeneutical question which underlies all exegesis. The positivistic assumption that exegesis may be performed in a vacuum is no longer tenable. Contemporary biblical scholarship recognizes that all exegesis is influenced by the person(s) by whom and for whom it is done. This is not to imply absolute relativism, but only that the nature of exegetical data and the way this data is interpreted, is affected by the exegete and his or her context.

This study has been conducted in the context of the South African church. It has been undertaken by someone who lives and works within that context. It is motivated by a desire to show how the newer exegetical tools developed by biblical scholars may be used by non-specialists to allow the Bible to address the needs of contemporary South African society.

The need for socio-political liberation has been judged by many South African Christians to be one of the

most pressing issues facing both the nation and the church. There is thus a need for the Bible to address this question. This, and the fact that liberation theology has articulated the most cogent call for the importance of context in the exegetical process, has led me to attempt to do multi-dimensional exegesis within the context of liberation theology.

My justification for bringing such apparently diverse areas of interest and practice together is that they both already coexist as determinative elements within the South African church. "Those whom God has joined together, let not man put asunder!" At this moment, it is not as important to ask whether such approaches to scripture ought to be brought together as to see whether they can be of mutual benefit to one another.

The theory underlying various exegetical and hermeneutical options is examined in some detail, while the resultant Bible study method proposed is relatively concisely presented and illustrated. This demonstrates that substantial theoretical considerations may undergird a simple and practical Bible study method. The ultimate aim of this study is, in some small way, to be useful to the contemporary South African church.

The study is arranged in the following way. Part I considers the problem of how to approach a text such as Galatians and surveys a variety of recent approaches to it. The question of a multi-dimensional approach is considered and two complementary paradigms are proposed to enable multi-dimensional exegesis and contextual hermeneutics to work together: communication and liberation.

Part II explores the various ways in which context can be said to affect interpretation. All the contexts which have affected the interpretation of Galatians, from those of Paul and the Galatian churches to those of contemporary South African Christians are considered. Galatians is then re-introduced, using a multi-dimensional exegetical model.<sup>1</sup> This part ends by returning to the need for a contextual hermeneutic to enable the letter to address concrete socio-religious problems within the South African context.

Part III proposes a method of contextual Bible study based on the above discussion, and illustrates how this can be used to study three different pericopes in the Galatian letter. The study concludes with a brief review of the argument and findings of the thesis.

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<sup>1</sup>The text followed is that of Hē Kainē Diathēkē, ed. G. D. Kilpatrick, 2d ed. (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1958). There are not many differences between this and the twenty-sixth edition of the Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece, and these are listed by Hans Dieter Betz in Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 13. The English translation used is the New International Version, 2d ed. (Cape Town: Bible Society of South Africa, 1981).

PART I  
CRITICAL APPROACHES

## CHAPTER 2

PROBLEMS FACED BY  
THE CONTEMPORARY READER OF GALATIANS

Exegesis easily becomes ideology when it is always done from the same dominant perspective, when there can be no interplay between competing exegetical perspectives.

Christine E. Gudorf, "Liberation Theology's Use of Scripture: A Response to First World Critics."

Galatians is a difficult letter. Contemporary South African Christians who turn to the resources of biblical scholarship for help, are faced with a bewildering array of critical methods. If we wish to assist them by providing an appropriate hermeneutical model, we need first to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the exegetical resources currently being used by South African scholars, and note their hermeneutical implications.

Biblical scholars have, over the last three hundred years, developed a wide variety of critical methods, from textual criticism to deconstruction and beyond.<sup>1</sup> Many of these methods have been applied to Galatians in recent South African scholarship. This does not mean that they are all

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<sup>1</sup>An indication of what this "beyond" might look like is given in Stephen D. Moore, "Rifts in (a Reading of) the Fourth Gospel, or: Does Johannine Irony Still Collapse in a Reading that Draws Attention to Itself?" *Neotestamentica* forthcoming. He asks whether the kind of divisions or other data discerned by deconstructive criticism are actually "in" the text, or whether they are products of certain ways of "framing" it. He suggests the latter and makes the tentative conclusion that the pendulum of literary theory may swing back to a recognition of the integrity and opacity of the text.

equally suitable for this purpose. None is philosophically or ideologically neutral. Each arose out of particular historical circumstances, during a particular phase in the history of New Testament research, to answer particular questions.<sup>2</sup> This means that each critical method needs to be used with due "suspicion" of its hermeneutical origins.<sup>3</sup>

Exegetical problems also arise through the over- or under-interpretation of a single dimension of the biblical text. Exegesis needs to balance the textual, historical and theological dimensions of the scriptures.<sup>4</sup> To achieve this,

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<sup>2</sup>" . . . it essential to acknowledge that speaking and writing and interpreting are human actions that arise within specific contexts." Roger Lundin, Anthony C. Thiselton and Clarence Walhout, The Responsibility of Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Exeter: Paternoster, 1985), ix.

<sup>3</sup>The notion of "hermeneutical suspicion" derives from liberation theologians such as Juan Luis Segundo and José Miguez Bonino. Fiorenza summarizes the hermeneutics of suspicion as follows: "Since theology is explicitly or implicitly intertwined with the existing social situation, according to Segundo the hermeneutical circle must begin with an experience or analysis of the social reality that leads to suspicion about our real situation. In a second step we apply our ideological suspicion to theology and to all other ideological superstructures. At a third level we experience theological reality in a different way, which in turn leads us to the suspicion that 'the prevailing interpretation of the Bible has not taken important pieces of data into account.'" Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Towards a Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics: Biblical Interpretation and Liberation Theology," in A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 370. Her reference is to Juan Luis Segundo, The Liberation of Theology (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976), 9 and José Miguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 86-105.

<sup>4</sup>Referring to these three dimensions of the text, Lategan says, "An important goal for theological hermeneutics at this stage is to deepen its understanding of the phenomenon of the text and to gain as clear an insight as possible into the interrelatedness of the three aspects mentioned above. It must be remembered that they never function in isolation or in abstracto, but as part of a dynamic process of communication." Bernard C. Lategan, Text

Rousseau and others have argued for an exegetical approach integrating all three dimensions.<sup>5</sup>

Inadequate critical awareness of these hermeneutical and exegetical factors has meant that biblical interpreters have often overemphasized or overlooked aspects of the text. Thus, in South Africa, Christians within the Reformed tradition have tended to over-emphasize the theological dimension of the Letter to the Galatians and to assume that the heart of this dimension is a timeless message of justification by faith alone.

The failure to criticize venerable exegetical traditions philosophically and methodologically inhibits the creative reinterpretation of a text to meet changing circumstances. The text is effectively insulated from those who need it to address their contemporary historical situation.<sup>6</sup>

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and Reality: Aspects of Reference in Biblical Texts  
(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 5-6.

<sup>5</sup>Rousseau has developed an illustrated such an approach in Jacques Rousseau, "A Multidimensional Approach towards the Communication of an Ancient Canonized Text: Towards Determining the Thrust, Perspective and Strategy of 1 Peter" (D.D. diss., University of Pretoria, 1986). He comments: "Biblical scholars in general were seduced by positivism (Schneiders 1982:52-59) and a method monism (cf. Loader 1978:3-6) which reduced the interpretation of the New Testament to one 'universal' (whether it be linguistic, historical or theological). These 'universals' and their corresponding methods which were philosophically absolutized, tyrannically reduced and ultimately distorted the complex phenomenon of textual communication to one mode or dimension." Rousseau, "Multidimensional Approach," 23.

<sup>6</sup>This tendency can even be discerned in the popular exegetical work of a leading Pauline scholar such as Lategan. Thus, in the introduction to his popular commentary, he suggests that justification by faith is the essence of the gospel. Bernard C. Lategan, Die Brief aan die Galasiërs (Cape Town: N. G. Kerkuitgewers, 1986), 12. In another popular context, he speaks of Christian faith using strongly positivistic presuppositions: "Dit is nie 'n

In the past, South Africa has functioned theologically as a First World country, following and participating in debates originating largely from Western Europe and North America.<sup>7</sup> However, this is changing, both as a result of pressing local and regional issues which have needed to be addressed theologically,<sup>8</sup> and also because of the rise of influential Third World theologies, notably in Asia and Latin America.<sup>9</sup> As we consider the wealth of exegetical

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ander werklikheid wat naas die 'normale' werklikheid staan nie, maar dit is die eintlike werklikheid - die eintlike doel wat God met hierdie wêreld gehad het, die eintlike waardes waarvolgens geleef moet word, die eintlike prioriteite wat die mens se optrede moet bepaal . . . ." Bernard C. Lategan, "Die Krisis in Galasië" in Eenheid en Konflik: Eerste Beslissinge in die Geskiedenis van die Christendom, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach (Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel, 1986), 21.

<sup>7</sup>A. S. van Niekerk drew up a sociological profile of the authors of the missiological journals Lux Mundi and Missionalia over the period 1968 to 1987. He found them to be ". . . overwhelmingly male, White, holding down an academic post (rather than ministering in a congregation or in some other practical missionary situation), likely to have travelled or studied in Europe or the USA (seldom in Africa); living in a White suburb (seldom in a Black township or a Black rural area), reading works of Western theologians (rather than Africans)." A. S. Van Niekerk, "The Kingdom Dimension in the Church's Mission," Missionalia 15 (November 1987): 124.

<sup>8</sup>One thinks, for example of the Kairos and National Initiative for Reconciliation movements. De Gruchy points out that these two movements represent alternative approaches to the same "paradigm shift in the Christian response to apartheid," which had taken place by the mid-1980s. See John de Gruchy, "The Church and the Struggle for South Africa," in Hammering Swords into Ploughshares: Essays in Honour of Archbishop Mpilo Desmond Tutu, eds. B. Tlhagale and I. Mosala (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1986), 198-206.

<sup>9</sup>For an introductory survey of liberation theologies, including African liberation theology, see Deane William Ferm, Third World Liberation Theologies: An Introductory Survey (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986).

methods which have been developed, we will also need to ask how they may be appropriately used in the contemporary South African context.

This chapter functions as a survey of critical approaches to Galatians, especially as they have been used in South Africa. The survey aims to illustrate the need for some kind of multi-dimensional exegetical model to account for all the dimensions of the Galatian letter. If it seems to raise more problems than it solves, it may be helpful to recognize, with van Huyssteen, that

even the development of a sophisticated problem-solving consciousness, and from that the identification--albeit approximately, tentatively, and provisionally--of a specific theological problem, can be seen as definite progress.<sup>10</sup>

#### Historical Approaches

The historical approach to Galatians may be discerned in the history of New Testament exegesis as early as Marcion:

The Galatians are Greeks. They first received the word of truth from the apostle, but after his departure they were tempted by false apostles to turn to the law and circumcision. The apostle recalls them to belief in the truth, writing to them from Ephesus.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Wentzel van Huyssteen, Theology and the Justification of Faith: Constructing Theories in Systematic Theology, trans. H. F. Snijders (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 191.

<sup>11</sup>Prologue cited by F. F. Bruce, "The History of New Testament Study," in New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1977), 23-24. See, too, Betz, Galatians, 4, 12.

After a long period in which exegesis was dominated by the "fourfold sense" of Scripture, the Renaissance and Reformation began a return to the plain meaning of the text as seen in its historical context. F. F. Bruce credits John Colet with being one of the initiators of this return to the historical approach.<sup>12</sup>

As the critical study of the New Testament developed in Western Europe and Britain from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, the historical approach took up a dominant position in Western theological exegesis.<sup>13</sup> That it is still regarded as fundamental to New Testament exegesis may be seen by this introductory comment from a recent addition to the International Critical Commentary series,

Like a nation or a person, a text is its history. To a large degree it is conditioned, if not determined, by that history, knowledge of which is necessary for its full understanding.<sup>14</sup>

While the historical approach has been challenged in the twentieth century by the "new hermeneutic" and by text-immanent and reception-oriented approaches, it remains an essential dimension of any comprehensive exegetical

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<sup>12</sup>Bruce, "History," 29.

<sup>13</sup>This is evident, both in the more radical approaches of the Tübingen school initiated by F. C. Baur and the religionsgeschichtlich approach represented by Richard Reitzenstein, and in the more orthodox contributions of the Cambridge school of Westcott, Hort and Lightfoot. Barrett has said, "It might not be too inaccurate to say that Baur asked the right questions, and that Lightfoot set them in the right historical perspective." C. K. Barrett, "Joseph Barbour Lightfoot," The Durham University Journal 64 (1972): 203, quoted in Bruce, "History," 43.

<sup>14</sup>W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, vol. 1, Introduction and Commentary on Matthew I-VII (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 3.

procedure. This is evident from the role it plays in the fields of ancient epistolography, rhetorical criticism and sociological exegesis. The challenge facing the exegete is to use the historical approach without allowing it to replace the text as the centre of our attention. Beverly Gaventa comments pointedly that,

If we habitually read a text only to learn about matters that exist outside it, then we lose sight of issues within the text that may be of equal importance. Indeed, we lose sight of the text altogether and read it as if it were not there.<sup>15</sup>

It was the desire to allow the text itself to speak which led South African scholars to adopt discourse analysis so enthusiastically in the 1970s.<sup>16</sup> The desire to allow the text to address the contemporary South African context is now expressed by enthusiasm for reception criticism in various forms and the rhetorical approach advocated by Wilhelm Wuellner.<sup>17</sup>

### The Historical-Critical Method

The term "historical-critical method", is really a whole

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<sup>15</sup>Beverly R. Gaventa, "Galatians 1 and 2: Autobiography as Paradigm," Novum Testamentum 28 (1986): 312.

<sup>16</sup>This is illustrated by the fact that the New Testament Society of South Africa devoted two entire congresses to it (1977 and 1982) and applied it to the entire gospel of Matthew.

<sup>17</sup>Wilhelm Wuellner, "Hermeneutics and Rhetorics: From 'Truth and Method' to 'Truth and Power'," Scriptura S3 (1989): 1-54. See Jan Botha, "On the 'Reinvention' of Rhetoric," in Koninkryk: Gees en Woord, ed. J. C. Coetzee (Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel, 1988), 1-18 and Dirkie J. Smit, "The Ethics of Interpretation--New Voices from the USA," and "The Ethics of Interpretation--and South Africa," unpublished articles.

cluster of critical methodologies which were developed by biblical scholars, particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>18</sup> In South African universities, textual criticism, source criticism, form criticism, tradition history and redaction criticism form part of the exegetical procedure taught to undergraduates.<sup>19</sup> While these critical methodologies will not be surveyed in detail here,<sup>20</sup> it is important to recognize that they are not superseded by the newer approaches. Rather, they underlie them. This is illustrated, not only in the discussion in

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<sup>18</sup>Textual criticism of course ante-dates the other disciplines by about two hundred years (the period between the English Geneva Bible of 1560 and Semler and Michaelis, who both died in 1791).

"The impact of history on the [historical-critical] method is evident from its methods and technical vocabulary. It asks: what is the history of the text, its Formgeschichte, Redaktionsgeschichte? Then, to fix the text in its milieu, history is appealed to again. The exegete must know the history of Israel, of the ancient Near East, the history of religions, archaeology, and the Sitz im Leben. Finally, for the content and the message of the text, appeal is made to the Heilsgeschichte and to the historical Jesus." Augustine Stock, "The Limits of Historical-Critical Exegesis," Biblical Theology Bulletin 13 (January 1983): 28.

<sup>19</sup>It constitutes the second step of text-historical analysis, following the first step of linguistic analysis. See, for example, Jacques Rousseau, "New Testament Exegesis: Theory and Methodology," Biblical Studies 1 Course Notes (University of Port Elizabeth, 1983), 36-38.

<sup>20</sup>They are described briefly at the start of Chapter 4. See Bruce, "History," 36-59, and J. H. Roberts, "The Scope of New Testament Study," in Guide to the New Testament. Vol. 1, Preamble to New Testament Study--Basic Standpoints and Survey of the Field, ed. A. B. du Toit, trans. D. Roy Briggs, 47-74. Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel, 1979.. This will also be covered in detail in Guide to the New Testament. Vol. 3, New Testament Methodology: Textual Criticism, Hermeneutics, Exegetical Methods, ed. A. B. du Toit, trans. D. Roy Briggs, Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel, forthcoming.

this chapter, but also in Chapter 3, where a multi-dimensional exegetical model is introduced.

### New Testament Introduction

New Testament Introduction is that sub-discipline of biblical studies which deals with the particular historical circumstances which lie behind the writing of a particular text: background, date, destination, integrity and authorship.<sup>21</sup> Tuckett rightly observes that, "The subject of New Testament Introduction really arises from the nature of the historical-critical method."<sup>22</sup> It has often been noted that the term "Introduction" is a misnomer for a discipline demanding a high degree of linguistic and historical skills from those who wish to make critical use of it<sup>23</sup> and it is a measure of the dominance of the historical approach that such introductory questions are still placed on many first-year theological curricula.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>D. Guthrie discusses each of these considerations in "Questions of Introduction," in New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods, ed. I. Howard Marshall, (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1977), 105-116.

<sup>22</sup>Christopher Tuckett, Reading the New Testament: Methods of Interpretation (London: SPCK, 1987), 41.

<sup>23</sup>Tuckett comments that "any beginner starting biblical studies by trying to read Kümmel's Introduction from cover to cover would probably give up in despair very rapidly!" Tuckett, Reading the New Testament, 41.

<sup>24</sup>Barrett reflects the ambivalent attitude of New Testament students to the place of New Testament Introduction when he says of Galatians, "I shall avoid as far as possible the familiar questions that some of us had to get up in our first year's study of Theology--Was the epistle written early in Paul's career, or in the middle period, along with Romans and the Corinthian letters? What did Paul mean by Galatia . . . ? These old questions have their importance not because it matters much where we write Galatia on the map but because it matters a great deal whether the Judaizing movement, the opposition to Paul, sprang up quickly as the result of an honest mistake on the

As we have already noted, South African scholars and clergy are still largely dependent on theological resources originating in the Western world, particularly, Germany, Britain, Holland and North America. A notable supplement to this is the six volume Guide to the New Testament series, originally written in Afrikaans.<sup>25</sup> Thus, for the purpose of providing an Introduction to Galatians, the standard commentaries consulted would include those of Luther, the older critical commentaries of Lightfoot and Burton, that of Schlier and the newer standard works of Bruce and Betz.<sup>26</sup>

Even the most recent of these deal extensively with the usual introductory questions. The commentary on the

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sprang up quickly as the result of an honest mistake on the part of good men, and was as quickly ended, or was the work of a convinced and organized anti-Pauline party, prepared to go to any lengths to destroy the apostle's work. That is in fact just the kind of significant historical question that is inseparable from theology and therefore of contemporary relevance, for the divisions and controversies of the first Christian generation are not unrelated to those of our own." C. K. Barrett, Freedom and Obligation: A Study of the Epistle to the Galatians (London: SPCK, 1985), 6.

<sup>25</sup>The Pauline letters are dealt with in: Guide to the New Testament. Vol. 5, The Pauline Letters--Introduction and Theology, ed. A. B. du Toit, trans. D. Roy Briggs. Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel, 1985.

<sup>26</sup>Many other commentaries could be mentioned, particularly of a more popular nature. In addition to those mentioned in my list of works cited, one could add those of G. S. Duncan (1934), C. J. Ellicott (1867) and H. N. Ridderbos (1953). Because of the limited exegetical scope of this study, I have not consulted the commentaries of J. B. Lightfoot, The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians (London: Macmillan, 1865), Martin Luther, A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians ed. Philipp S. Watson (London: Clark, 1953) or Heinrich Schlier Der Brief an die Galater, 14th ed. KEK 7 (Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971).

Greek text by Bruce<sup>27</sup> and the Introductions of Kümmel and Guthrie<sup>28</sup> are examples of this. Betz's commentary<sup>29</sup> also deals with these questions, but he is more sceptical about how much historical information we can obtain from the internal evidence, and doubts the historical reliability of Acts.<sup>30</sup> This reminds us of the need to be suspicious of the presuppositions underlying such widely differing assessments of the historical reliability of a source such Acts.

In the brief survey of historical questions below, we take Betz's introduction as our point of departure, against the background of the traditional approach to introductory questions represented by the commentaries of de Witt, Bruce and Fung and the Introductions of Klijn, Kümmel and Guthrie.<sup>31</sup>

The authorship question is the only historical question which is unequivocally settled by historical means: the letter is by Paul. Kümmel comments, "That Gal. is a real, genuine letter is indisputable," and few have ever

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<sup>27</sup>F. F. Bruce, The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster, 1982). He is followed by Ronald Y. K. Fung, The Epistle to the Galatians, NICNT, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

<sup>28</sup>W. G. Kümmel, Introduction to the New Testament (London: S.C.M., 1973) and Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction (London: Inter Varsity Press, 1970).

<sup>29</sup>Betz, Galatians.

<sup>30</sup>Betz, Galatians, 4.

<sup>31</sup>Ernest de Witt Burton, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921) and A. F. J. Klijn, An Introduction to the New Testament, trans. M. van der Vathorst-Smit with a foreword by P. S. Minear (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967)

disagreed with him.<sup>32</sup> Yet the fact that the letter is indisputably Pauline has not protected Galatians from generating a wide range of historical questions which are difficult to answer with any certainty. James Hester has even recently suggested on rhetorical grounds that Paul may have left the composition of the letter to a secretary "carefully versed in rhetoric."<sup>33</sup> We know relatively little about Paul's circumstances at the time of writing, his opponents, or even the "Galatians".

As we would expect, Betz states that we cannot be sure who the Galatians were, beyond saying that they were the people living on the central plateau of Asia Minor.<sup>34</sup> Neither, in his view, is there any final clarity about whether they lived in the northern territory or the southern province of Galatia. He argues that the arguments used on both sides are mostly speculative.<sup>35</sup> With regard to the

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<sup>32</sup>Kümmel, Introduction, 304. One modern author, J. C. O'Neill, has argued "that Paul's original letter has been both glossed and interpolated, though rarely altered." However, his assumption that Galatians ought to have a perfectly logical and coherent flow, is curious. It also fails to recognize that Galatians both conforms to the canons of ancient epistolography and has individual characteristics which are readily attributable to its author and to the circumstances under which it was written, as far as they can be known. See J. C. O'Neill, The Recovery of Paul's Letter to the Galatians (London: SPCK, 1972), 7. For a detailed criticism of O'Neill's argument see John Drane, Paul: Libertine or Legalist? (London: SPCK, 1975), 92-94.

<sup>33</sup>See James D. Hester, "The Use and Influence of Rhetoric in Galatians 2:1-14," Theologische Zeitschrift 42 (1986): 388-389, 408.

<sup>34</sup>Betz, Galatians, 1. For a fuller discussion of this and other historical issues relating to Galatians, see the section on the Pre-Canonical Contexts of Galatians in Chapter 4 below.

<sup>35</sup>See Betz, Galatians, 5.

identity of Paul's opponents in Galatia, he contends that we have to reconstruct who they were and what they believed "primarily on the basis of Galatians alone."<sup>36</sup> This, however, introduces all the dangers of mirror-reading, for there are limits to how far it is possible to reconstruct a viewpoint solely on the basis of a document written to oppose it.<sup>37</sup> In the light of this danger, rather than rejecting the external information we have, it seems wiser to make use of it, with due caution.

In Betz's view, historical information on dating the letter is also general and limited. "The historical situation which gave rise to the letter to the Galatians can be determined only generally. . . . In fact the cause of the letter (1:6-7) could have occurred at almost any time after Paul's departure."<sup>38</sup> "Establishing an internal

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<sup>36</sup>Betz, Galatians, 5.

<sup>37</sup>"Mirror-reading', i.e. the deduction of the views of opponents from the statements of an author is a hazardous process." Ernest Best, Paul and His Converts (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 123, where he refers also to G. Lyons' Pauline Autobiography: Towards a New Understanding, SBL Dissertation Series, 73 (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1985).

Raymond Brown makes a similar warning in his discussion of the identity of the group which "went out" from the Johannine community. "Who were they . . . ? I remind the reader that we are looking at them from the author's point of view when we call them adversaries, secessionists or schismatics . . . .

"Our only knowledge of them is derived from the assumption that they held opinions against which the author of 1 John argues and such a mirror-image approach has many perils. For instance it is uncertain that every idea the author opposes in the Epistle is accepted by the secessionists. The author may be using the Epistle to correct wrong ideas no matter who had them." Raymond E. Brown, The Community of the Beloved Disciple (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1979), 103-104.

<sup>38</sup>Betz, Galatians, 9.

chronological order among the intact letters of Paul is another unresolved problem. With regard to Galatians, there is little evidence to go on." "Galatians can be dated only approximately. . . . It should be noted that the guesses are mostly speculative and are based upon other, unproven hypotheses or upon arguments from silence."<sup>39</sup>

Thus, in Betz's view, the historical approach alone cannot adequately introduce Galatians to the contemporary reader. However, we may suspect that he is over-influenced by his European heritage, with its strong rejection of the historicity of Acts, following the lead of E. Haenchen and H. Conzelmann.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, his standpoint encourages a critical re-examination of the usual way historical matters are argued in Introductions to Galatians, and is to be welcomed. He encourages us to respect the limits of our historical knowledge and reminds us that exegetical problems are not soluble by historical means alone.

We need to attend to the textual and theological dimensions of Galatians as well.

### History and Theology

Of course the historical dimension can also be under-emphasized or ignored. In this way the letter is treated as if it did not have an historical origin. Such an approach is often accompanied by problematic assumptions of biblical

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<sup>39</sup>Betz, Galatians, 11-12.

<sup>40</sup>Marshall reminds us that Hengel has challenged this consensus and has defended Luke as an ancient historian. I. Howard Marshall, The Acts of the Apostles (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1980), 35.

inspiration and inerrancy:<sup>41</sup>

. . . theology and historical criticism are haunted by problems which inhere in the connexions between history, revelation and the testimony of Scripture. . . . the history of biblical studies demonstrates the urgency of fashioning a concept of revelation which incorporates insights from historical criticism such as the development of traditions in the OT and NT and the differing perspectives of various writings within the canon.<sup>42</sup>

Thus the interpretation of a New Testament letter such as Galatians always requires an historical investigation of the text to be conducted first.

Daniel Patte argues that such an historical investigation does not communicate anything directly about the faith perspective of the letter. He contends that historical exegesis only communicates knowledge about the biblical text from the point of view of what he calls the "historians' faith".<sup>43</sup> Again, the hermeneutics of suspicion

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<sup>41</sup>"The 'theological dimension' of the Bible was so overemphasized, especially in the middle ages, but also more recently in orthodox and fundamentalistic circles, that it was seen as a timeless, heaven-produced truth which failed to take the classical and metaphorical nature of the Bible into account." Jacques Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis and Theology: Communication Theory and Biblical Interpretation [1]," paper read at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature, Chicago, November 1988.

<sup>42</sup>Archie L. Nations, "Historical Criticism and the Current Methodological Crisis," Scottish Journal of Theology 36 (1983): 69-70.

<sup>43</sup>"[Historical exegesis] may disclose some characteristics of the biblical faith expressed in those texts. But, interestingly enough, such faith will be recognized as valid only by those who embrace 'historical convictions.' So the biblical faith is subordinated to the historians' faith (their convictions). The faith communicated or nurtured is the 'historians' faith,' that is, convictions about what is truly meaningful for historians, rather than the biblical faith." Daniel Patte, Preaching Paul (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 14.

require us to question the basis for Patte's ahistorical bias. We may suspect that his conception of biblical faith is itself rooted in Bultmannian existentialism and his preference for text-immanent structuralist exegesis.

It is thus worth reaffirming that while a multi-dimensional approach to exegesis wishes to guard against an historical over-emphasis, it recognizes the fundamental importance of historical enquiry for exegesis.

This is particularly true of Galatians. Barrett notes that history and theology are distinctively interrelated and blended within this letter: "lacking, it may be, the depth and range of Romans but even more alive because nearer to the heat of controversy in which Paul's theology was forged."<sup>44</sup>

In Part II, we shall see how important historical data is in determining all the contexts which influence a contemporary interpretation of Galatians, whether these contexts are pre-canonical, canonical or contemporary.

In the sub-section dealing with the Pre-Canonical Contexts of Galatians, we will return to the history that lies behind Galatians. We will do so with the important proviso that neither Galatians nor Acts is fully satisfactory as an historical source. "Since the evidence is incomplete different students will make different guesses to fill the gaps, and these different guesses will lead them to give different interpretations of the evidence we do have."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Barrett, Freedom and Obligation, 3-4.

<sup>45</sup>Barrett, Freedom and Obligation, 5.

Text-Immanent Approaches

One need not approach Galatians historically and diachronically. One may choose to read it synchronically<sup>46</sup> and as a textual phenomenon.

As a text, its structure may be explored linguistically, via structuralism, or along the lines of South African discourse analysis. As a letter, its form may be compared with the forms of other letters of the same historical period. As a literary work, it may be studied using the techniques of literary criticism,<sup>47</sup> and also studied for its stylistic and rhetorical features.

All these approaches emphasize, to a greater or lesser extent, the autosemantic nature of texts. As a consequence, they all run the danger of under-emphasizing the historical dimension of Galatians. Nevertheless, this line of approach does enable the contemporary reader to avoid some of the impasses which are arrived at through over-emphasis of the historical dimension. We note here some of the advantages of the various text-immanent exegetical approaches to Galatians.

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<sup>46</sup>A synchronic approach has been defined as "an explanatory principle by which the internal logic of the system as a whole is sought: the function of the whole being sought by means of the interrelationship of its terms." James D. Hester, "Epistolography in Antiquity and Early Christianity: A Proposal for a Pacific Coast Region/Society of Biblical Literature Seminar," mimeographed paper supplied by the author (1975): 5.

<sup>47</sup>The work which has pioneered the application of literary criticism to New Testament letters is Norman R. Petersen's, Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

### Structuralism

Structuralist exegesis is a misunderstood and relatively little-used approach within the South African theological scene. Two recent articles on the subject which appear in the same theological journal come to radically opposing conclusions about its usefulness: one author claiming that it robs the Word of God of its power and the other suggesting that the time has come for it to take its place within a comprehensive textual model.<sup>48</sup> Both authors give relatively similar accounts of its origins (in the linguistics of de Saussure, the anthropology of Lévi-Strauss and the literary theories of Propp and Greimas) and manner of application. Both, too, recognize that it has positive as well as negative aspects to it.

Their differing conclusions are the result of differing assessments of those aspects. Structuralist exegesis certainly does require the exegete to master a new and complex methodology,<sup>49</sup> aspects of which cannot easily be transposed from its roots in the world of Russian folk tales to the world of the New Testament. It is also potentially reductionistic: all structures discerned may turn out to be binary through the omission of crucial elements which do not

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<sup>48</sup>The former view is expressed by L. F. Schulze in "Strukturalisme en Eksegese," Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif 29 (April 1988): 139-153, and the latter by H. J. B. Combrink in "Strukturalisme, is 'n Herwardering Nodig?" Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif 29 (April 1988): 129-138.

<sup>49</sup>For example, Hendrikus Boers refers to such esoteric terms as "discursivisation" and "actorialisation" in his "The Meaning of Christ in Paul's Writings: A Structuralist-Semiotic Study," Biblical Theology Bulletin 14 (October 1984): 132.

fit the binary patterning.<sup>50</sup> Further, biblical scholars have tended to focus on certain structuralist techniques without placing these within a wider theoretical framework. This is especially true of Greimas' technique of actantial analysis.<sup>51</sup>

However, it is also true, that structuralist analysis does help to point to structures below the surface of the text. With reference to biblical studies, Combrink suggests that this can help to indicate the underlying unity and coherency of the various books of the Bible.<sup>52</sup> Structuralist exegesis also points to the important role of the reader in structuring the text during the reading process.

A structuralist approach to Galatians would thus aim to identify the basic logical structure and anthropological categories underlying the letter. Daniel Patte provides an

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<sup>50</sup>This is a criticism raised by Ong. He continues: "Moreover, the binary structures, however interesting the abstract patterns they form, seem not to explain the psychological urgency of a narrative and thus they fail to account for why the story is a story." Walter J. Ong, Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), 164.

<sup>51</sup>For example, R. Scheiffer writes in the Introduction to A. J. Greimas' Structural Semantics: An Attempt at Method, trans. D. McDowell et al. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), xli that most commentators on Greimas have taken his actantial analysis as the central feature of his semantics of discourse, rather than as "a structure which both crowns and supports its neighbouring structures in a kind of geodesic dome". See Tremper Longman, Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation, ed. Moisés Silva, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Academie Books and Leicester: Apollos, 1987), 35.

<sup>52</sup>Combrink, "Strukturalisme," 137. Greimas works with three structural levels: deep intermediate and surface. See Longman, Literary Approaches, 36.

example of this in Paul's Faith and the Power of the Gospel: A Structural Introduction to the Pauline Letters.<sup>53</sup>

Patte focuses on Paul's faith as a system of convictions, rather than theological ideas. He explains how this faith functioned, enabling Paul to interrelate all his experiences into a faith pattern.<sup>54</sup> The result of his exegesis leads Patte to the conclusion that "Paul's faith is most fundamentally characterized by three interrelated features. It is charismatic, typological and eschatological."<sup>55</sup>

Combrink argues that Patte successfully provides a structural introduction to the letters of Paul. Another example of how Patte's work relates to Galatians may be seen in his structural reading of Gal 1:1-10, in which he reveals the mythical structure underlying Paul's conflict with his opponents. Patte first reveals the mythical elements by means of a syntagmatic analysis. Then, by means of a paradigmatic analysis, he shows how these mythical elements are structured. Christ is revealed to be the mediator between God and man.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Daniel Patte, Paul's Faith and the Power of the Gospel: A Structural Introduction to the Pauline Letters (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

<sup>54</sup>"This faith pattern can be found in the way in which Paul perceives the relationship between God and human beings. Yet it is also expressed more concretely in the way in which Paul perceives the relationship between Christ and the Jews, between Paul and his churches, and so forth." Patte, Preaching Paul, 16.

<sup>55</sup>Patte, Preaching Paul, 16 and Paul's Faith, 233-241.

<sup>56</sup>Daniel Patte, What is Structural Exegesis? (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 71, cited in Combrink, "Strukturalisme," 133.

Thus, as Tuckett observes, structural exegesis can be seen to provide "a more detailed justification for results which we would simply assume as self-evident in other contexts." It explains what we already know intuitively and clarifies why we do so.<sup>57</sup> This indicates that it has a valid role to play within the cluster of synchronic approaches to Galatians, its focus on the deep structure complementing the surface structure analyzed by means of discourse analysis.<sup>58</sup>

### South African Discourse Analysis

A discourse analysis of Galatians takes a different approach to the structure of the letter. Discourse analysis provides a description of the "surface structure".

It does not, or ought not to, claim to be a description of the structure of Galatians. J. P. Louw, one of the originators of the method in South Africa, has pointed out that this form of linguistic structure analysis is only one of twenty-four facets of textual interpretation.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Tuckett, Reading the New Testament, 165 and 163.

<sup>58</sup>In addition, the actantial model of Greimas has been adopted and adapted by exegetes for a variety of purposes. Petersen and Rousseau, for example, use his concept of actants to identify master symbols in their literary-sociological analysis of the textual perspective of a biblical letter.

<sup>59</sup>Jan Botha, Semeion: Inleiding tot die Interpretasie van die Griekse Nuwe Testament, 2d ed. (Potchefstroom: Departement Grieks, Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys, 1989), 88-90, 194, referring to a paper given by J. P. Louw to a seminar for lecturers in Greek in 1986.

As noted earlier, discourse analysis was adopted by South African New Testament scholars with enthusiasm in the 1970s. Some important corrective comments were made by Deist in 1978. He made it clear that it is only able to analyze static structural elements within the text, and that it cannot therefore legitimately be used to address historical questions such as the unity of the text. It is a descriptive, rather than heuristic model: " 'n Struktuuranalise kan hoogstens 'n argument wees waarom ek die teks só en nie só nie interpreteer."<sup>60</sup>

Discourse analysis, as developed in South Africa, is based on sentence analysis or colon division, using the fact that every sentence has both a nominal and a verbal part.<sup>61</sup> This analysis can be applied to small textual units, such as a pericope and large units, such as an entire text. Two aspects of the surface structure of the text can be noted: colon configuration (how the cola may be grouped) and cluster configuration (the relationships between the

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<sup>60</sup>Ferdinand E. Deist, "Ope Vrae aan die Diskoersanalise," Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif 19 (Sept 1978): 264.

<sup>61</sup>"In de bovengenoemde kring van de NTWSA wordt een colon in linguïstische termen gedefinieerd als S→NP VP, d.w.s. als een syntactische eenheid, bestaande uit een zelfstandige zin, die op zijn beurt nul of meer ingebedde zinnen domineert (S=sentence; NP=noun phrase; VP=verb phrase; V=verb). Uitgangspunt is dusz het onafhankelijke 'verbum finitum', dat een afgeronde syntactische constructie impliceert. In de sin S→NP VP kan de NP feitelijk onbeperkt uitgebreid worden door toevoeging van ingebedde zinnen of frasen. . . . Anders gesteld: in een colon hebben wij met één zelfstandige matrix-zin te maken, die op verschillende punten uitgebreid kan worden." Bernard C. Lategan, "Het motief van de dienst in Galaten 1 en 2," in De knechtsgestalte van Christus: Studies door collega's en oud-leerlingen aangeboden aan prof. dr. H. N. Ridderbos, ed. H.H. Grosheide and others (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1978), 78.

different sub-groups or structural elements). Thus, in Galatians, the letter-opening corresponds with the letter-closing, the basic premise corresponds with its conclusion, and so on.<sup>62</sup>

Earlier enthusiasm for discourse analysis has given way to a more sober assessment of its value.<sup>63</sup> Its primary value is that it encourages a close reading of the text. When thus used as the first exegetical step, it correctly provides for the priority of synchronic analysis over diachronic analysis. Moreover, it provides a reasoned basis for further literary, historical and theological exegesis.<sup>64</sup>

One weakness of this method lies in the fact that there is no clear consensus amongst practitioners concerning

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<sup>62</sup>Appendix 1 contains my own discourse analysis of the New International Version translation of Galatians. I have compared it with the provisional discourse and macrostructural analyses of Galatians made by members of the Pauline sub-group of the NTSSA and discussed at the Mini-congress on 24 November 1989. (I am grateful to Prof Bernard C. Lategan and Dr Richard Lemmer for making these draft documents available to me.) The correspondences between my analysis of an English translation of Galatians and the NTSSA analysis of the Greek text indicates that discourse analysis is based on semantic as well as linguistic criteria.

<sup>63</sup>A.B. du Toit commented in 1983, "Die beoefening van redevoeringsanalise het ongemerk 'n nuwe fase binnegegaan. Die aanvanklike opgewondenheid oor hierdie belowende nuwe eksegetiese hulpmiddel het plek gemaak vir die wil om dit krities te evalueer, wetenskaplik beter te verantwoord en te beskryf en op 'n verantwoorde wyse te verfyn en uit te bou." Cited in Botha, Semeion, 195, no bibliographical source given.

<sup>64</sup>Botha provides a salutary warning when he says, "Dikwels word ander (waarskynlik belangriker) eksegetiese en hermeneutiese probleme op baie naïewe wyse hanteer wanneer 'n struktuurontleding as uitsluitlik 'basis' of as bepalende 'verwysingsraamwerk' vir die eksegetiese proses gebruik word." Botha, Semeion, 194.

criteria for pericope demarcation.<sup>65</sup> Betz's 1975 study of "The Literary Composition and Function of Paul's Letter to the Galatians" already indicated the need to look further afield for criteria to demarcate the sections of the letter.

Nearly all commentaries and Introductions to the New Testament contain such an outline, table of contents or paraphrase of the argument. However, despite an extensive search, I have not been able to find any consideration given to possible criteria and methods for determining such an outline.<sup>66</sup>

The fundamental difference (apart from the fact that one is of a contemporary English translation of Galatians) between the discourse analysis provided in Appendix 1 and that provided by the NTSSA is at the level of pericope demarcation. However, du Toit's detailed discussion of the development of the line of thought and construction of Galatians often mentions features which could justify alternative pericope divisions.<sup>67</sup>

Pericope demarcation is not the only problem which is not solved by discourse analysis. In Steyn's critique of

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<sup>65</sup>Richard Lemmer, commenting on contemporary criteria for the pericope demarcation of Galatians, writes that Professors du Toit and Pelser of the University of Pretoria ". . . basically used the approach of the NTSSA, which in turn adopted and adapted the method developed by prof. J.P. Louw. . . . I do not know of anyone who has put all these criteria into one handy document though." (Personal letter, dated 12 June 1989)

<sup>66</sup>Hans Dieter Betz, "The Literary Composition and Function of Paul's Letter to the Galatians," New Testament Studies 21 (1975): 353.

<sup>67</sup>A.B. du Toit, "Analise van die Gedagtegang en Opbou van die Galatebrief," paper read at the Mini-congress of the Pauline Sub-Group of the New Testament Society of South Africa, 24 November 1989. An example of this, whether there is a division between Gal 3:22 and Gal 3:23, is mentioned in Chapter 6, below.

Combrink's Structural Analysis of Acts 6:8-8:3, he argues that it "cannot be done properly without considering Psycholinguistic and Text-linguistic contributions, such as Memory, Expectation . . . Context (understood as Setting, Sociotext, Co-text and Situation) and the relation Ancient Producer - Modern Reader."<sup>68</sup> Deist's critique is even more fundamental. For example, he points out a number of linguistic problems inherent in the use of semantic equivalences as the major criterion for describing structure.<sup>69</sup> He calls for more empirical textual studies, so that texts themselves can indicate the appropriate criteria for studying textual cohesion, and also notes the urgent need for a comprehensive textual theory.<sup>70</sup> This

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<sup>68</sup>Jacques Steyn, "Some Psycholinguistic Factors Involved in the Discourse Analysis of Ancient Texts," Theologia Evangelica 17 (June 1984): 51 (abstract). The reference is to H. J. B. Combrink, Structural Analysis of Acts 6:8-8:3, Stellenbosch Theological Studies 4 (Cape Town: Dutch Reformed Church Publishers, 1979).

<sup>69</sup>"Die probleem is dus nie alleen dat 'n stel kriteria van een taalkundige probleemstelling en niveau oorgedra is op 'n ander nie, maar verder ook dat die kriteria vir gestruktureerdheid toevallig is en dus nie op geldigheid kan aanspraak maak nie." Deist, "Ope Vrae," 266.

<sup>70</sup>". . . 'n omvattende teksteorie wat op 'n gereflekteerde wetenskapsteoretiese grond staan en wat 'n veelvoud van kriteria aanlê vir strukturele teksanalise." Deist, "Ope Vrae," 267-268. With the shift in emphasis in recent biblical studies away from syntactic and semantic studies to pragmatics, this has been tackled on a pragmatic, rather than a syntactical level. Combrink notes that the model supplied by Hernadi provides the basis for such a theory, supplemented by that of Eco, "who accommodates in his model the insights from different theoretical frameworks, including the important characteristic of both an intensional and an extensional approach." H. J. B. Combrink, "The Changing Scene of Biblical Interpretation," in A South African Perspective on the New Testament: Essays by South African New Testament Scholars Presented to Bruce Manning Metzger During his Visit to South Africa in 1985, eds. J. H. Petzer and P. J. Hartin, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 14.

highlights the fact already noted that discourse analysis only deals with one syntactic aspect of the text. It cannot therefore be used to arrive at semantic conclusions. It is also unable to indicate the rhetorical role of textual elements.<sup>71</sup> For this, other exegetical tools need to be used, within a comprehensive textual theory.

### Ancient Epistolography

The 1970s saw a resurgence of interest in the form of ancient letters.

The letter is one of the oldest and most common types of written texts. Letters have long been recognized as important documentary sources for most branches of historical research. Less attention has been paid to the ancient history and phenomenology of letter writing, in spite of some pioneering works, but interest in epistolography is increasing amongst biblical and other scholars.<sup>72</sup>

In the period 1975 to 1979, the Ancient Epistolography Group of the Society of Biblical Literature studied the conventions governing the opening, closing and body of the ancient Greek letter. We summarize some of their findings below.

The forms of the letter opening and closing were found to be stereotyped, particularly because they shared the same

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<sup>71</sup>" 'n Struktuuranalise toon bloot die volgorde van [die] elemente in die brief aan, maar die vraag na die funksie . . . van die elemente ten opsigte van mekaar, kom nie noodwendig aan die orde nie." Botha, Semeion, 195.

<sup>72</sup>Nils A. Dahl, "Letter," in Interpreter's Dictionary to the Bible, Supplementary Volume, 1976. See, too, the bibliographical details in note 1 of Hester, "Rhetoric in Galatians," 386.

function: "the ongoing, and general, aspect of the correspondents' relationship."<sup>73</sup> However, the body of the ancient letter often seemed ". . . to lack identifiable conventions. Nonetheless, the Ancient Group made some progress in classifying the message portion of the letters, largely on the basis of subject matter."<sup>74</sup> They identified two broad types: (1) commands from superiors or requests from inferiors and (2) the communication of information. Each of these two functions was expressed by stereotyped means: commands or requests were often introduced by sketching the background to the request<sup>75</sup> or stock phrases reminded an inferior that he had been remiss in some duty. Such features have obvious parallels in Paul's letters. However, Paul's letters have already been classified according to content and, to a lesser extent, function. In any event, such classification leads us away from purely epistolographic considerations.

Roetzel presents the results of this research in The

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<sup>73</sup>John L. White, "The Ancient Epistolography Group in Retrospect," Semeia 22 (1981): 7.

<sup>74</sup>White, "Epistolography Retrospect," 9-10.

<sup>75</sup>"Hence, in Greek letters, the petitioner frequently stated the day, and time of day, on which the infraction was committed and/or described the extenuating circumstances of the situation and/or identified explicitly, usually at the start, the one who had wronged him . . . Letters of commendation, another type of request, are structurally similar to petitions and equally stereotyped in the use of conventions. Hence, directly following the opening address/salutation, the sender introduces the letter carrier to the recipient (=the background to the request). Thereupon, he requests the recipient to assist the recommended person. The writer customarily closes the body by stating that he will be favoured if the recipient attends to the request." White, "Epistolography Retrospect," 10.

Letters of Paul.<sup>76</sup> In his discussion of the letter structure, he identifies the main formal elements which are common to both the typical Greek papyrus letter and the short Pauline letter to Philemon:<sup>77</sup>

Table 1.--Formal Elements Common to the Structure of Both the Greek Papyrus Letter and the Pauline Letter

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I	<u>Salutation</u>
A	Sender
B	Recipient
C	Greeting
II	<u>Thanksgiving</u> (prayer)
III	<u>Body</u>
IV	<u>Closing Commands</u> (parenesis)
V	<u>Conclusion</u>
A	Peace Wish
B	Greetings
C	Kiss
D	Close (grace, benediction)

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The parallels are obvious, but not especially helpful for the exploration of the structure of the most important part, the body, which is the largest single section in all of Paul's letters (even Philemon). Roetzel points to certain "landmarks" which occur in the body section of each of Paul's letters: a request or disclosure formula, an autobiographical section or report and an announcement of travel plans.<sup>78</sup> However, while it is important to identify such common elements, they are not of much help for

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<sup>76</sup>Calvin J. Roetzel, The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context 2d ed. (London: SCM, 1982). See also David E. Aune, The New Testament in Its Literary Environment (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 183-191.

<sup>77</sup>Roetzel, Letters of Paul, 30-31.

<sup>78</sup>Roetzel, Letters of Paul, 34-35.

outlining the structure of the single most important element, the letter-body, because they are represented in most sections of the letter. This confirms the opinion expressed by Wuellner that,

Hellenistic and Near Eastern epistolographic studies, no matter how exacting they will be (sic) executed, cannot solve the problem of Romans or that of any other letter of Paul. Such studies will clarify the letter frame, and the conventions of letter frames, but they cannot solve the problem of the letter structure, or the problems connected with the "body" of the Pauline letters.<sup>79</sup>

Epistolography does yield valuable socio-cultural background information relating to a letter such as Galatians, such as the circumstances under which it was written, sent and received. For example, the postal system of the Roman Empire was available only for administrative and official business. The rich were able to use slaves or employees as letter couriers, but the ordinary people were dependent on friends, business travellers or strangers to carry their post. This explains why many Greek non-literary letters "show evidence of having been written less from actual need than from the opportunity of writing because someone happened to be travelling in the direction of the letter."<sup>80</sup> Many personal letters were written not to communicate information, but to keep in touch. "These letters consist solely, or largely, of conventions and

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<sup>79</sup>Wilhelm Wuellner, "Paul's Rhetoric of Argumentation in Romans: An Alternative to the Donfried-Karris Debate over Romans," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 38 (July 1976): 334.

<sup>80</sup>John L. White, "The Greek Documentary Letter Tradition: Third Century B.C.E. to Third Century C.E.," Semeia 22 (1981): 103 and White, "Epistolography Retrospect," 2.

sentiments that are characteristic of the opening and closing, the 'keeping in touch' aspect of letter writing."<sup>81</sup> Here, the conventional structure is itself the message.

An aspect of epistolography which is closely related to ancient rhetoric, is the study of ancient epistolary theory. Malherbe's introduction to this is particularly useful in view of the fact that

no convenient, systematic treatment of ancient epistolary theory is available in English. Nor have the major treatises dealing with the subject ever been translated into a modern language, nor any successful attempt been made to place letter writing in its exact context in rhetorical theory or in school instruction.<sup>82</sup>

The earliest proper discussions of epistolary theory date from the first century B.C.: De Elocutione and Typoi Epistolikoi, treatises both wrongly attributed to Demetrius of Phalerum, and treatises by Cicero and Seneca. Typoi Epistolikoi is an early example of the kind of handbooks which were produced to train professional letter writers. It provides descriptions of twenty-one different kinds of letters and examples of each type. If we consider Malherbe's summary of the epistolary theory contained in

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<sup>81</sup>White, "Epistolography Retrospect," 11-12.

<sup>82</sup>Abraham J. Malherbe, "Ancient Epistolary Theorists." Ohio Journal of Religious Studies 5 (1977): 3-77. Repr. Ancient Epistolary Theorists. Sources for Biblical Study, forthcoming. (The discussion of epistolary theory given here draws on this work. However, no page references to it will be given, as it was only available to me in laser proof form.) Malherbe refers to two monographs, covering papyrus and literary letters respectively: H. Koskenniemi, Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400 n. Chr., Annales Academiae scientiarum fennicae, Series B, vol. 102,2 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1956) and K. Thraede, Grundzüge griechisch-römische Briefftopik, Monographien zur klassischen Altertumswissenschaft 48 (Munich: Beck, 1970).

these works, we can see that Paul's Galatian epistle complied with the theory of his day:

1. Definition of a letter

A letter is one half of a dialogue, or a surrogate for an actual dialogue. In it one speaks to an absent friend as though he were present. The letter is, in fact, a speech in the written medium. It reflects the personality of its writer.

2. Subject Matter

Letters should be real communications and not technical treatises.

3. Types of Letters

Cicero distinguishes between public and private letters and adopts different styles for each. He distinguishes between simple, factual letters and letters communicating the mood of the writer, which are divided into the genus familiare et iocosum and the genus severum et grave.

4. Epistolary Style

Letters must be concise, clear, adapted to the circumstances and mood of their addressees and written in the most appropriate style.<sup>83</sup>

Such insights provide useful cultural-historical background material for the interpretation of Galatians. However, they do not provide us with conclusive answers to

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<sup>83</sup>Malherbe, "Summary of Epistolary Theory," in Ancient Epistolary Theorists.

the question of how the structure of Galatians is to be analyzed.<sup>84</sup>

There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, formal literary and thematic analyses have their limits. Secondly, some of the most helpful general insights from ancient epistolography are pointers to the social and historical circumstances of letter writing, rather than to the structure of the letters themselves.

Thirdly, and most importantly, Paul's letters cross many of the classifications established by the study of other ancient letters: they are longer and more literary, yet with an oral style more akin to speeches than sermons, they have an official tone in keeping with Paul's apostolic status, they are communal and intended for reading aloud in a worship setting. Thus, Paul was himself the founder of a new letter tradition: the apostolic letter, itself the antecedent of the pastoral and encyclical letter-tradition.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>The insistence of the ancient theorists that letters are a form of communication and dialogue, should be a further endorsement of recent rhetorical and pragmatic approaches to Paul's letters as acts of communication, argument, interaction and persuasion. See J. N. Vorster's "Toward an Interactional Model for the Analysis of Letters," and "the Argumentative Situation of Galatians," papers presented at the Mini-Congress of the Pauline Sub-Group of the New Testament Society of South Africa on 24 and 25 November 1989.

<sup>85</sup>John L. White, "Saint Paul and the Apostolic Letter Tradition," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 45 (July 1983): 436, 444. See too Hester, "Rhetoric in Galatians," 387 and 389, where he refers to B.H. Brinsmead's suggestion that concern for epistolary forms and formulas in Paul may be inadequate to the task of understanding the structure of Paul's letters (in "Galatians--Dialogical Response to Opponents," SLBDS 65 (1982): 37-55).

Moreover, a collection of Paul's letters, and the other letters attributed to him, "formed an early nucleus for the developing New Testament canon."<sup>86</sup> Here, the study of epistolography leads the reader's critical attention away from formal features to another important dimension: the historical and theological ones implied in the notion of canonicity.

### Literary Criticism

Finally, within the cluster of formalist, text-immanent approaches, we consider the contribution of stylistic and literary studies to the understanding of Galatians in contemporary South Africa. Literary criticism is a very broad term, and has the added disadvantage of also already having an older specialized meaning in biblical studies as a synonym for source criticism. However, the alternatives (aesthetic or rhetorical criticism) introduce other confusions. Moreover, the term has gained currency in biblical studies as a synonym for "close reading". This is defined by Deist as

a detailed and subtle analysis of the interrelationships among the component parts of a literary work, paying special attention to the artistic and literary structure of the work, including the role played by literary and stylistic devices.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>David E. Aune, The New Testament in Its Literary Environment (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987), 204-205.

<sup>87</sup>Ferdinand E. Deist, A Concise Theological Dictionary of Theological Terms: with an English-Afrikaans and an Afrikaans-English List (Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik, 1984), s.v. "Close Reading".

The literary work considered here may be any "significant text".<sup>88</sup>

Longman provides a recent survey of literary-critical approaches to the Bible. He distinguishes between author-centred, text-centred and reader-centred theories, and points both to and beyond deconstruction.<sup>89</sup> Author-centred theories are those of traditional (secular) literary criticism prior to 1940 and are paralleled in biblical studies by the diachronic approaches of the historical-critical method. Text-centred approaches originated in the New Criticism of the 1940s and 1950s and in structuralism. Reader-centred theories he associates with "ideological readers" such as liberation theologians and feminist scholars. Here the emphasis is on the role of the pre-understanding which the reader brings to the text. Deconstruction questions the grounds of all these approaches: "It demonstrates the difficulties of any theory that would define meaning in a univocal way: as what an author intends, what conventions determine, what a reader experiences."<sup>90</sup> Moore's critique of deconstruction; to

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<sup>88</sup> . . . it is no doubt best to regard literature as consisting of a family or cluster of features which tend to be present in varying degrees in what might be called 'significant texts'. Such texts would no doubt involve a significant theme, usually of existential relevance, and would be effectively structured so as to provide both impact and appeal for important insights on various levels." E.A. Nida, J.P. Louw, A.H. Snyman and J. van W. Cronjé, Style and Discourse: With Special Reference to the Text of the Greek New Testament (Cape Town: Bible Society, 1983), 153. Structuralism, however, does not recognize or require this definition of literature.

<sup>89</sup> Longman, Literary Approaches 13-45.

<sup>90</sup> J. Culler, On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 131, cited by Longman, Literary Approaches, 41.

which we have already referred, asks in turn, ". . . is what we see purely a function of the ways in which we frame the text--frames that are less individual creations than the products of a certain comprehensive situatedness (disciplinary, socioeconomic, ideological, cultural, historical, etc.)?"<sup>91</sup>

Longman's method of analyzing prose passages involves the consideration of three major aspects: (1) genre, (2) the dynamics of narrative and (3) style. We will discuss style here and include the other two aspects in our discussion of reception-orientated approaches below.

A number of insights into the way Paul organized and marshalled his thoughts have been obtained through the study of his literary style. For example, James Fischer identifies antithesis or paradox as the central verbal and thought pattern in Paul's letters.<sup>92</sup> J. van W. Cronjé identifies devices of estrangement or defamiliarization as the dominant stylistic feature of Galatians, and illustrates the different figures which can be grouped under this category: rhetorical questions, metaphors, anacoluthons, paradoxes, parentheses, hyperbole and hyperbaton.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>Moore, "Rifts," no page number.

<sup>92</sup>". . . the key concept is paradox both as a form of expression and an underlying thought pattern used by Paul for gaining insight into the meaning of the Jesus event." James A. Fischer, "Pauline Literary Forms and Thought Patterns," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 39 (April 1977): 212.

<sup>93</sup>J. van W. Cronjé, "Defamiliarization in the Letter to the Galatians," in A South African Perspective on the New Testament: Essays by South African New Testament Scholars presented to Bruce Manning Metzger during his visit to South Africa in 1985, eds. J. H. Petzer and P. J. Hartin (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), 214-227.

Cronjé uses twentieth century Russian formalist theory of ostranenie (defamiliarization) and its counterpart automatization (habitualization) to make his analysis. This reminds us of the need to check discoveries made using modern theories, with other historical data, so that we avoid reading an ancient letter such as Galatians anachronistically. It is fair to say of Cronjé's study that his observations are not dependent on this formalist theory and that he does substantiate certain details with references to "Antiquity" (e.g. Demetrius and Dionysius of Halicarnassus<sup>94</sup>).

However, stylistic features cannot be adequately understood apart from their historical and socio-cultural context. Thus, Fischer places his observations concerning Pauline paradox within the context of biblical wisdom literature and Semitic thought patterns. The context in which stylistic data are interpreted therefore needs to be carefully determined for it decisively influences the way in which this data is understood by the reader.<sup>95</sup> This is an important reminder of the dependence of ahistorical critical approaches on historical data.

Text-centred literary approaches have in recent years been subsumed within other approaches, notably those which

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<sup>94</sup>Cronjé, "Defamiliarization," 219, 223.

<sup>95</sup>Fischer is therefore critical of Betz's interpretation of Galatians according to Hellenistic models and argues strongly that Paul's background remained fundamentally Semitic. "That both Semitic and Hellenistic influences bear on Paul seems a reasonable and judicious statement. However, it may easily conceal a confusion over basic methodology. One or other of the influences is dominant and must be used as a starting point." Fischer, "Pauline Literary Forms," 217.

focus on the reader and those which focus on the sociological world in which the text was written and read.<sup>96</sup> We will thus make further reference to the use of literary criticism in those contexts below.

### Reception-Oriented Approaches

There is a third cluster of critical approaches which needs to be evaluated for its contribution to a contemporary understanding of Galatians. The approaches in this cluster focus attention on various aspects of the reception of texts: the process of interaction between text and reader.

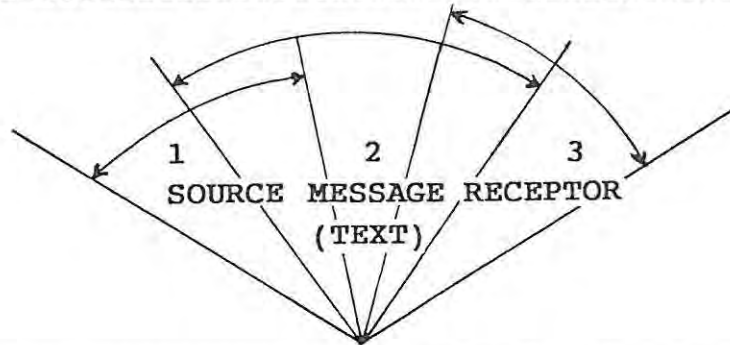
This is the most recent emphasis in New Testament criticism. Lategan has shown how the shift from historical, to text-immanent, to receptive and interpretive concerns can be represented by a simple communication model. "The first element (source) has mainly to do with origins and text production, the second with text preservation and mediation, the third with reception and interpretation."<sup>97</sup> He points out that this model "does not necessarily reflect a chronological sequence," though "it is possible to relate major shifts in the history of interpretation" to its various sectors.

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<sup>96</sup>Petersen's Rediscovering Paul is an important example of how literary-critical and sociological insights have been combined to study the relationship between narrative and social worlds.

<sup>97</sup>Bernard C. Lategan, "Current Issues in the Hermeneutical Debate," Neotestamentica 18 (1984): 3.

Table 2.--The Location of Hermeneutical Issues within an Elementary Communication Model



Just as the historical and textual clusters of methodologies do not totally exclude aspects of the text outside their sphere of interest (or do so to their detriment), so the reception-oriented approaches also do not exclude historical and text-immanent perspectives either. However, reader-centred approaches introduce a new critical focus: the reception of the text by original, secondary and contemporary readers.

The SBL Seminar on "The Form and Function of the Pauline Letters" (1970-1975) also generated new interest in Paul as a letter-writer who sent particular messages to particular groups of readers. Renewed interest in the social factors governing the formation, transmission and reception of the letters bearing these messages led some scholars on to investigate rhetorical factors influencing the processes of letter-writing and letter-reading.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>The activities of this SBL seminar group (and related activities in the Pacific coast Regional Group) have been outlined in Hester's twenty three page mimeographed paper "Epistolography in Antiquity and Early Christianity" (1975) and Wuellner's "Paul's Rhetoric of Argumentation," 332-335. Betz's seminal article "The Literary Composition and Function of Paul's Letter to the Galatians," 354 also acknowledges the influence of the SBL seminar group.

While Nils Dahl, as a leading member of the group, was the first to raise the question of the rhetorical genre of

Such rhetorical criticism has taken various forms and two broad emphases have emerged: (1) that proposed by Kennedy, developed out of a knowledge of Hellenistic-Roman rhetorical textbooks, and (2) that proposed by Wuellner, studying the Pauline letters as examples of social discourse. He urges rhetorical critics to go beyond the identification of rhetorical units, situations, dispositions and techniques, to trace the dynamics of personal and social identification and transformation. In other words, he calls for rhetorical criticism to become a theory of reading.<sup>99</sup>

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Galatians in his monograph-sized paper written for the Seminar in 1973, his paper was never published and Betz's different approach to this matter became the standard point of departure. Ironically, the kind of approach to rhetorical genre in Paul which Dahl favoured is now coming to be preferred: "[Dahl was] simply not convinced that Paul had 'ideal' letter genres or structures that he used when addressing certain situations. Rather, depending greatly on the situation Paul had to address, he evidently chose elements from several models of letters and styles available to him and constructed from these a letter to meet his need at the time." Hester, "Epistolography in Antiquity," 14.

<sup>99</sup>See George A. Kennedy, New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1984) and studies by his students, such as Robert G. Hall's "The Rhetorical Outline for Galatians: A Reconsideration," Journal of Biblical Literature 106 (1987): 277-287 and Duane F. Watson's "A Rhetorical Analysis of Philipians and its Implications for the Unity Question," Novum Testamentum 30 (1988): 57-88. Jan Lambrecht provides a brief recent survey of the field and its major practitioners in "Rhetorical Criticism and the New Testament," Bijdragen, tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie 50 (1989): 239-253.

For representative articles by Wilhelm Wuellner, apart from "Paul's Rhetoric of Argumentation," see also "Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?" Catholic Biblical Quarterly 49 (July 1987): 448-463, "Hermeneutics and Rhetorics," and "The Rhetorical Structure of Luke 12 in its Wider context," Neotestamentica 22 (1988): 283-310.

Related, but not identical to this, are the theories of reception aesthetics and reader-response. These are essentially theories of reading, aimed at understanding how reading takes place and therefore how documents such as Paul's letters might have been read at the time, or might be read today. Again, there is a wide range of emphases and interests within this approach.

South African scholars, because of their recent predisposition towards formalist approaches to the New Testament, have expressed considerable interest in reception-centred criticism. However, following Wuellner, a number of scholars are now calling for a "reinvention" of rhetoric. Thus, Botha calls for ". . . a recognition of the second level of discourse: the rhetoric of our interpretation of these texts within our social and historical situation."<sup>100</sup> There is, in these critics, a concern for the dialectical effects of rhetoric, not only within texts, but also within exegetical communities. These communities, because of their social function and interests, inevitably influence the way a text such as Galatians is understood. Such influences, whatever their nature, need to be recognized.

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<sup>100</sup>Botha, "'Reinvention' of Rhetoric," 1-18. Dirkie J. Smit, "Responsible Hermeneutics: A Systematic Theologian's Response to the Readings and Readers of Luke 12:35-48," Neotestamentica 22 (1988): 441-484, "The Ethics of Interpretation--New Voices from the USA," and "The Ethics of Interpretation--and South Africa," unpublished (1988) and P.G.R. de Villiers, "New Testament Scholarship in South Africa," paper delivered at the NTSSA Congress 1989, forthcoming in Neotestamentica.

### The Communication Process

Reader-oriented approaches arise out of renewed awareness of the communication process in biblical interpretation.<sup>101</sup> The simplest communication model consists, as we have seen, of:

SENDER -> MEDIUM -> RECEPTOR

This illustrates the basic point that the communication process is completed with the reception and interpretation of the sender's message.

Satisfactory reception itself depends upon three groups of factors.<sup>102</sup> Firstly, it depends on the physical, psychological and cognitive phenomenon of perceiving (or hearing) signs (or sounds).

Secondly, it depends on an integrated interpretation of lexical, syntactic and rhetorical codes, that is: the choice of words and idioms, how they are syntactically combined into structures and how these structures are strategically deployed. Accompanying non-linguistic codes, such as the activities of worship or study, are also important here. Thus, both the setting in which a text is prepared, and that in which it is heard are important.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>"It is especially the application of communication paradigms within semiotics, linguistics, literary science and rhetorics which opened fascinating alternatives to traditional text theories in the biblical sciences." Jacques Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 1.

<sup>102</sup>Here I follow the helpful outline of aspects of the interpretive process in Nida, et al., Style and Discourse, 147-152.

<sup>103</sup>Strangely, for those working in the field of Bible translation, Nida, et al. overlook the setting in which a text is received and refer only to "the circumstances in which a source prepared a text for a particular

The context of a text needs to be noted in every respect, including its co-text within the document and its socio-cultural setting.

Thirdly, for satisfactory reception, the referents of a discourse need to be determined; these will be discovered at every level, from the smallest unit of a sentence or a paragraph, through to the largest unit, the entire discourse. These units will be related to one another, semantically and structurally.

Finally, different degrees of involvement of the reader with the text need to be noted: the immediate response which is prior to reflection; the informed response, which is observant of features in the text and its contexts; and the understanding response, which sees the implications of the meaning of the text for its hearers. Here the concept of "critical openness" is helpful in understanding the completion of the reception process in learning.<sup>104</sup>

Thus, a communication model not only provides a useful overview of all the factors required in the successful transmission of the message of Galatians (and hence the valid place of all exegetical procedures in aiding the understanding of it), but it also usefully focuses attention

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constituency." Style and Discourse, 149.

104". . . because documents from the past require constant re-interpretation, critical openness is a central feature of hermeneutics." "Critical openness suggests listening, respecting, being interdependent, being in relation . . . ." See John Hull, "Christian Nurture and Critical Openness," Scottish Journal of Theology 34 (1981): 18, 20.

on the receivers of the message.<sup>105</sup> In both respects, this makes the communication process a valuable paradigm<sup>106</sup> for the contemporary interpretation of Galatians, as we shall see in Chapter 3.

### Reception Aesthetics and Reader-Response Theory

The relationship between the letter to the Galatians and its receivers can be examined using approaches developed in literary science known as reception aesthetics and reader-response criticism.

While these approaches are not sharply distinguished in current exegetical practice, it is useful to note that they originated in differing circumstances.

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<sup>105</sup>Bernard C. Lategan, "Reader Clues in the Text of Galatians," Journal of Literary Studies 3 (March 1987): 47-59, provides a helpful example of this with reference to the readers of Galatians, both the original readers and all subsequent ones.

<sup>106</sup>The technical term "paradigm" derives from the philosophy of science where it refers to fundamental theoretical models governing the largely unquestioned framework of what Kuhn calls 'normal science'. Kuhn is the philosopher responsible for its current meaning. He defines paradigms as "universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners." It refers both to the complete set of convictions, values and techniques used by a scientific community, and also to particular solutions to problems which act as important examples for solving related problems. See Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions 2nd. ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970), viii, 175, Richard L. Gregory, ed. The Oxford Companion to the Mind (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), s.v. "Paradigm,". Van Huyssteen, Justification of Faith, 47-67, discusses the usefulness of the term in systematic theology. See, too, the papers collected in Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future, eds. Hans Küng and David Tracey (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989).

### Reception Aesthetics

Reception aesthetics (Rezeptionsaesthetik) originated in Germany at the University of Constance in the 1960s. It was the fruit of an attempt by Hans Robert Jauss and his colleague Wolfgang Iser to revitalize and give new relevance<sup>107</sup> to literary studies.

As a literary movement, it was itself the result of four related developments. Firstly, investigation into the social effect of literary texts by sociologists of literature. Secondly, the insight from philosophical hermeneutics that the meaning of a text is produced by a continual process of successive readings (Gadamer's concept of the Wirkungsgeschichte, or the "history of the effects" of a text). This led, thirdly, to attempts to write a history of literature from the viewpoint of its readership. Fourthly, there was the influence of the Prague structuralists, who went beyond Russian formalism to identify the role of the reader in actualizing the structure of the written text.<sup>108</sup>

Jauss' theory of reception (Rezeptionstheorie) is based more on the investigation of the social and historical factors governing the reception of actual texts by particular social groups of readers, while Iser's theory of

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<sup>107</sup>"German relevance then derived from the social sciences and not from the traditional humanities." Bruce J. Malina, "Reader-Response Theory: Discovery or Redundancy," Creighton University Faculty Journal 5 (1986): 57.

<sup>108</sup>These influences are well summarized by Bernard C. Lategan in "Inleidende Opmerkings oor Resepsieteorie en die Uitleg van Bybelse Materiaal," Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif 28 (April 1987): 113.

response (Wirkungstheorie) is a theoretical<sup>109</sup> exploration of reader reaction. Thus, while Jauss uses Gadamer's concept of the horizon of expectation to explain the historical process by which readers receive and evaluate a new text, Iser uses the phenomenological approach of Husserl to trace the way an individual mind follows and interprets a text.

The influence of reception aesthetics has been predominantly confined to Germany, though the works of Iser are usually cited in North American and South African discussions of reader-response theory.<sup>110</sup>

Iser's concept of the reading process has three aspects: firstly, the text with its layers of determination and places of indeterminacy<sup>111</sup>; secondly, the reader's active reading of the text, through which he or she builds a consistent and cohesive aesthetic object; and, thirdly, the conditions which govern the text-reader interaction.

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<sup>109</sup>Iser says explicitly in his Preface to The Act of Reading that his theory has not undergone any empirical tests. "As neither empirical reality nor history provides well-articulated answers of its own accord, we must begin our investigations by formulating the precise questions we wish to put to reality and history." Wolfgang Iser, The Act of Reading (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University, 1978).

<sup>110</sup>Wolfgang Iser's most influential works are The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University, 1974) and The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University, 1978)

<sup>111</sup>"Hierdie gestruktureerde oop plekke spoor die leser tot optrede aan, lok hom uit om die ontbrekende inligting self te voorsien om sin te maak van wat geskryf is." Lategan, "Resepsieteorie," 115.

The reader grasps the meaning of the text by considering one viewpoint after another (that of the narrator, the various characters, the plot and that marked out for the implicit reader in the text). Thus, the reader's attention "wanders" from one perspective to another. However, the perspective on which he or she is focusing at any one moment is the foreground, while the other perspectives constitute the horizon. The reading process is thus one of creative interaction between text and reader in which the reader actively realizes the meaning of the text by following the set of instructions contained within it. This approach is clearly a shift away from the autonomy of the text advocated by New Criticism.

#### **Reader-Response Theory**

North American reader-response criticism shares this commitment to textual autonomy, and has built on the work of Iser, making particular use of his concept of the implied reader.

Literary critic Seymour Chatman distinguishes between real author, implied author, narrator, narratee, implied reader and real reader in order to explore "the interrelation of the several parties in the narrative transaction."<sup>112</sup> These distinctions are used and even expanded further by biblical scholars using reader-response criticism. Norman Petersen, for example, makes the

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<sup>112</sup>Seymour Chatman, Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (Ithaca and London: Cornell University, 1978), 147; quoted in Robert Fowler, "Who is 'The Reader' in Reader Response Criticism?" Semeia 31 (1985): 10.

following distinctions:<sup>113</sup>

Table 3.--Distinctions Made by Reader Response Critics

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	text (written)							
context	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding-right: 10px;">implied author (a)</td> <td style="width: 50%; padding-left: 10px;">/implied reader (r)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 10px;">narrator (n)</td> <td style="padding-left: 10px;">/narratee (n)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 10px;">encoded a/n</td> <td style="padding-left: 10px;">encoded r/n</td> </tr> </table>	implied author (a)	/implied reader (r)	narrator (n)	/narratee (n)	encoded a/n	encoded r/n	context(s)
implied author (a)	/implied reader (r)							
narrator (n)	/narratee (n)							
encoded a/n	encoded r/n							
actual author →		← actual reader (1) authorial (2) other						
	language							

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What do these distinctions signify? The actual author and reader are the actual producer and consumer of the text. The implied author and reader are the ideas the author has of him or herself and the reader. The narrator and narratee are the persons who are supposedly telling and listening to the story.<sup>114</sup> While the actual author and reader are extratextual persons, the others are all "intratextual literary functions, the different descriptions of which represent the different forms of their presence and functioning in the text."<sup>115</sup> Finally, the encoded author/narrator and reader/narratee are "encoded" in the sense of being "linguistically present in the form of first and second person pronouns or their equivalents in the subjects and predicates of verbs."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup>Norman R. Petersen, "The Reader in the Gospel," *Neotestamentica* 18 (1984): 39. He comments (or warns!), "there are numerous others, but these will suffice for my purposes."

<sup>114</sup>Fowler, "Who is 'The Reader'?" 10-11.

<sup>115</sup>Petersen, "The Reader in the Gospel," 39.

<sup>116</sup>Petersen, "The Reader in the Gospel," 39.

In Galatians, the encoded author and reader are the author and the addressees: Paul and the churches of Galatia. The "I" and "you" in the letter refer to Paul and the Galatian churches respectively.

These distinctions may appear to be either obvious or over-elaborate. However, Fowler shows how they can facilitate critical discussion of reading.<sup>117</sup> Firstly, the distinction between the implied reader and the narratee enables the actual reader to differentiate between what he or she ought to be (as implied readers) and what he or she may be (as narratees). In Galatians, this would be the difference between being a "brother" and one of the "foolish Galatians". Secondly, it provides the critic with "the vocabulary necessary to explore the myriad variations of distance that can exist between implied reader and narratee, between implied author and narrator, and, moreover, between any of these four entities and characters in the story."<sup>118</sup> Thirdly, these distinctions enable us to talk about the process of dialogue, both intratextually, between these entities themselves and extratextually, between them and the actual readers.

A further reader who is sometimes posited by reader-response theory is the ideal reader. This person is an abstract, idealized version of the implied reader. The suggestion that such a reader exists, is in fact a rhetorical pose adopted by the reader-response critic: the critical pretension "to supersede the text, one's critical

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<sup>117</sup>Fowler, "Who is 'The Reader'?" 12-13.

<sup>118</sup>Fowler, "Who is 'The Reader'?" 12.

community and its history of reading and even one's own self."<sup>119</sup>

Apart from the contribution which these critical distinctions make to the discussion of the reading process, reader-response criticism has one further advantage to offer contemporary interpreters of Galatians: it emphasizes the fact that reading is a process which takes place in time.

Iser's concepts of anticipation and retrospection remind us of the dynamic nature of reading, while oral critic Walter J. Ong reminds us of the temporal character of texts composed for public recitation.<sup>120</sup> Paul's letter to the Galatians was a substitute for his presence and would, in turn, have been read aloud in the Galatian churches.<sup>121</sup> The dynamic, oral, temporal and interactive aspects of Paul's letters are explored further by rhetorical criticism.

Reception aesthetics and reader-response theory have not been without their detractors: on the conservative side

<sup>119</sup>Fowler, "Who is 'The Reader'?" 16. The need for such a critical pretension merely recognizes the Aristotelian priority of "ethos" (credibility with one's audience) over "logos" (logical argument) in rhetoric, of which literary and biblical criticism is a part.

<sup>120</sup>"Manuscript culture in the west was always marginally oral, and, even after print, textuality only gradually achieved the place it has today in cultures where most reading is silent. We have not yet come to full terms with the fact that from antiquity well through the eighteenth century many literary texts, even when composed in writing, were commonly for public recitation, originally by the author himself . . . ." Ong, Orality and Literacy, 157.

<sup>121</sup>"According to Hellenistic epistolography, the letter is a substitute for the oral conversation (littera pro lingua)." Betz, Galatians, 236. See also Werner H. Kelber, The Oral and Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul and Q (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

there are those who wish to guard against uncontrolled subjectivism. Thus, Anthony Thiselton speaks of ". . . the kind of hermeneutical radicalism and theoretical scepticism that characterize the work of Jacques Derrida and Richard Rorty."<sup>122</sup> At the other extreme, deconstructionists and others have accused reception aesthetics of not accepting and following through the consequences of their position, that is of not giving way to absolute subjectivism.<sup>123</sup>

Bruce Malina, a prominent advocate of sociological exegesis, raises the question of whether all the insights offered by reader-response criticism are not already available via sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, psychology and the social sciences.<sup>124</sup> He also discusses the legitimate methodological problem of biblical scholars using methods developed for "literary texts, and literary texts of a unique type, those written to be read by single and solitary readers."<sup>125</sup>

However, as a branch of literary studies, reception criticism in its varied forms deals with questions about readers and the reading process raised by these other disciplines in a composite way not previously current

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<sup>122</sup>Anthony C. Thiselton, "Reader-Response Hermeneutics, Action Models and the Parables of Jesus," chap. in The Responsibility of Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 103.

<sup>123</sup>Reception theorists explain this by distinguishing two stages in the reading process, one in which the text is seen as a closed system of signs, and a second in which the reader's sign system is taken into account. See Lategan, "Resepsieteorie," 116.

<sup>124</sup>Malina, "Discovery or Redundancy," 59-64.

<sup>125</sup>Malina, "Discovery or Redundancy," 58.

amongst literary and biblical scholars. In this respect it is neither a "discovery" nor a "redundancy", but a helpful meeting place for a variety of disciplines, and one which in turn suggests further interdisciplinary lines of approach.<sup>126</sup> This confirms the value of multi-dimensional approach to interpreting Galatians.

### Rhetorical Criticism

Rhetorical criticism in its different forms constitutes one of the most important recent critical approaches to Galatians for the contemporary South African interpreter. This is not because there is one integrated model of rhetorical criticism (for there is not), but because of the constructive, and sometimes subversive,<sup>127</sup> questions which this approach poses.

Rhetorical criticism arose through a rediscovery of both ancient and modern rhetoric in the 1970s by biblical

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<sup>126</sup>"It is very encouraging to see how the interdisciplinary approach is growing and if literary critics have any doubts about the usefulness and viability of their particular discipline, they should take heart in what is happening amongst exegetes." Lategan, "Reader Clues," 48.

<sup>127</sup>Some rhetorical-critical approaches, like those of Wuellner and Botha, function in a way which resembles a tradition of philosophy which Richard Rorty calls "edifying." "Edifying philosophy" is reactive, suspicious of epistemological pretensions and dreads the thought that its vocabulary should ever be institutionalized, or its writing seen as commensurable with the tradition. "Its cultural role is to help us avoid the self-deception which comes from believing that we know ourselves by knowing a set of objective facts." (Examples of edifying philosophers are Goethe, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, and the later Wittgenstein and Heidegger.) Richard Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 366, 369, 373.

scholars.<sup>128</sup>

Setting aside popular misunderstandings, such as that Rhetoric is the enemy of truth, or that rhetoric has a merely ornamental function,<sup>129</sup> rhetoric may be defined as:<sup>129a</sup>

the use of language by a speaker or writer in a particular situation of human interaction so as to convince the hearers or readers of the truth of a particular viewpoint, and/or to persuade them to take a particular course of action.

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<sup>128</sup>The major classical handbooks which have relevance for New Testament readers are: Aristotle's Rhetoric, Rhetoric to Herennius written by one Cornificius, Cicero's On Invention and Partitions of Oratory and Quintilian's On the Education of the Orator. There have also been two influential modern compilations of rhetorical theory: Heinrich Lausberg's Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik and Josef Martin's Antike Rhetorik: Technik und Methode as well as a number of now standard works by George Kennedy, including his New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism. Wilhelm Wuellner has been particularly influenced by the "new rhetoric" of Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca in The New Rhetoric: A Treatise in Argumentation, trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 1969).

<sup>129</sup>"Luister 'n mens egter na die antieke retorici se siening van retoriek, kom 'n mens gou agter dat retoriek nie teenoor die waarheid staan nie maar juis die waarheid wil dien, maar dan nie die waarheid in die Platoniese Ideale sin nie. Eerder gaan dit om die waarheid van die situasie." J.N. Vorster, "Retoriek by Paulus as Kommunikasie Strategie," two lectures delivered at the postgraduate New Testament seminar, University of Port Elizabeth (1987): 2-4.

Betz mis-states the relationship between rhetoric and truth, by assuming that truth can only be conceived of objectively. "Rhetoric, as antiquity understood it, has little in common with the 'truth,' but it is the exercise of those skills which make people believe something to be true. For this reason, rhetoric is preoccupied with demonstration, persuasive strategy, and psychological exploration of the audience, but it is not interested in establishing the truth itself." Betz, "Composition and Function of Galatians," 378, and Galatians, 24. See also Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 146.

<sup>129a</sup>Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 10.

Thus broadly defined, rhetoric is everywhere: it is a "universal facet of human communication."<sup>130</sup>

Rhetorical theory, as taught at the ancient equivalent of contemporary high school level, was applied in every area of oral and written communication in Greco-Roman times. Moreover, although rhetoric has a cultural dimension, it differs "more in matters of arrangement and style than in basic devices of invention."<sup>131</sup> Thus, it is of abiding importance to all studies of human communication, including the study of Pauline letters. To read Galatians using Kennedy's understanding of rhetorical criticism is to read it,

. . . as it would be read by an early Christian, by an inhabitant of the Greek speaking world in which rhetoric was the core subject of formal education and in which even those without formal education necessarily developed cultural preconceptions about appropriate discourse.<sup>132</sup>

How is such "classical" rhetorical criticism practised by Betz, Kennedy and others? Space does not permit us to review their method in detail, but we may judge its potential usefulness to contemporary interpreters by its increasing application to Galatians and other Pauline letters.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 10.

<sup>131</sup>Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 8.

<sup>132</sup>Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 5.

<sup>133</sup>Thus even Fung, Galatians, who advocates a traditional approach to Galatians, adds a brief introductory section on the rhetorical genre of the epistle (28-32).

Kennedy's method may be described briefly as follows. It involves a circular cycle of stages.

Firstly, the determination of the rhetorical unit by seeking signs of opening and closure.

Secondly, the definition of the rhetorical situation, the author's idea of the situation (people, events, objects, relationships, place and time) as gleaned from the text.<sup>134</sup>

Thirdly, related to the second step, the identification of the rhetorical problem perceived by the author.

Fourthly, the determination of the rhetorical genre (or species), whether forensic/judicial, deliberative/political or epideictic/demonstrative (each of which has characteristic features).

On the basis of these preliminary conclusions, the arrangement of material in the text is considered.

Finally, the textual unit as a whole is reviewed to see whether it effectively addresses the matter for which it was composed and to consider what actions it called the speaker and hearers to.<sup>135</sup>

What is gained by applying this exegetical method to Galatians? At first glance, the results appear disappointing. Although Betz's analysis re-opened the question of how Galatians should be sub-divided, his rhetorical analysis appears at first glance simply to

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<sup>134</sup>". . . it must be recognized and taken with full seriousness that the opponents and the charges that they make are never fully recoverable because they are, in the last instance, creations of Paul's argumentative situation." James D. Hester, "Rhetoric in Galatians," 394-395.

<sup>135</sup>See Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 33-38 and, with modifications, Vorster, "Retoriek by Paulus," 18-23.

provide rhetorical terms for the traditional divisions. Moreover, his identification of Galatians as a forensic apologetic letter has been questioned, while his invocation of the "magical letter" genre to solve his problem of the relationship of rhetoric to truth has not been widely accepted.<sup>136</sup>

However, Betz's commentary on Galatians has indicated the potential fruitfulness of looking at Galatians from the perspective of classical rhetoric. As we have noted, this has led him to respect the limits of historical enquiry and to re-examine the structure, composition and function of the letter much more fully and to point out the kind of rhetorical concerns which might have shaped Paul's

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<sup>136</sup>The species of Galatians has, with equal substantiation, been identified as deliberative by Kennedy in New Testament Interpretation, 144-152, Hall in "Rhetorical Outline," 277-287 and Joop Smit in "The Letter of Paul to the Galatians: A Deliberative Speech," New Testament Studies 35 (1989): 1-26 and as deliberative with some apologetic features by Aune, New Testament Environment, 198-208. James D. Hester, while formerly identifying Galatians as apologetic-forensic in "The Rhetorical Structure of Galatians 1:11-2:14," Journal of Biblical Literature 103 (1984): 223-233 and "Rhetoric in Galatians," 387-388, has since abandoned the position that it is forensic but identifies the epideictic species in Galatians 1 and 2. See his Placing the Blame: The Presence of Epideictic in Galatians One and Two (forthcoming). Betz's "magical letter" category has not been widely accepted. Fischer, "Pauline Literary Forms," 217, describes it as one of the "interesting extremes" arising from trying to interpret Paul using Hellenistic models, while Childs retorts: "Not only is the category of 'magical letter' in itself highly suspect, but its application to Galatians is tenuous in the extreme." See Brevard S. Childs, The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 302. However, it has found a sympathetic response amongst scholars using the tools of cultural anthropology, such as Jerome H. Neyrey in "Bewitched in Galatia: Paul and Cultural Anthropology," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 50 (1988): 92-100.

theological argument. While future approaches to Galatians need not, and will not, be limited to Betz's rhetorical conclusions, Hester's comment underlines the importance of his contribution to our understanding of Galatians: "Since Betz, it is incumbent on those of us who struggle with Pauline literature to become rhetorical critics."<sup>137</sup>

### Sociological Approaches

As this survey of critical approaches is only partially chronological, we consider here another cluster of approaches which have recently developed concurrently with interest in reception criticism. These cover a wide spectrum, from socio-historical description to the employment of modern social science models. However, they do share a broad aim:

to show how the New Testament message is related to the everyday life and societal needs and contexts of real human beings, how the texts cannot be separated from social dynamic without truncating the reality of both speaker and reader (including the reader today).<sup>138</sup>

Like rhetorical criticism, the sociological study of the New Testament is a new discipline with a renewed awareness of the historical and social factors behind the text.<sup>139</sup> E. A. Judge, whose The Social Pattern of Christian

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<sup>137</sup>Hester, "Rhetoric in Galatians," 388.

<sup>138</sup>Robin Scroggs, "The Sociological Interpretation of the New Testament: The Present State of Research," in The Bible and Liberation, ed. N. K. Gottwald (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983), 350.

<sup>139</sup>Social approaches to the New Testament can be traced back to the turn of the century to the work of Troeltsch, Lohmeyer, von Harnack, Deissman, and the Chicago school of New Testament studies led by Shirley Jackson Case. These roots are important, but need not detain us here. See Pieter G. R. de Villiers, "Renaissance van die Sosiologiese Teksanalise," Theologia Evangelica 15 (1982):19 and Wayne A. Meeks, The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the

Groups in the First Century was the first recent study in this area, noted that it was the result of a shift in focus from the writers to the readers of the documents.<sup>140</sup> Margaret MacDonald, author of a recent sociological study, insists, in turn, on the importance of historical and literary studies as a means of control and correction.<sup>141</sup> Thomas Best notes three convictions shared by the proponents of this approach. Firstly, a concern to discover the concrete historical realities of the first Christians, rather than a general and abstract "early church". Secondly, a desire to rediscover the great differences between the early Christian movements and the church today. Thirdly, the conviction that we need a new set of disciplines to explore the "marginal, sectarian, millennialist, oppressed, and alienated" aspects of those movements.<sup>142</sup>

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Apostle Paul (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 5.

<sup>140</sup>E.A. Judge, The Social Pattern of Christian Groups in the First Century (London, 1960), 9, cited by Thomas F. Best, "The Sociological Study of the New Testament: Promise and Peril of a New Discipline," Scottish Journal of Theology 36 (1983): 183.

<sup>141</sup>"The New Testament student who hopes to engage in sociological modes of interpretation of New Testament texts is completely dependent on the findings of the historian. Sociological conclusions must not contradict or exceed the historical data. In addition, the text itself must provide the primary starting point and focus . . . . Exegetical study involving linguistic and literary analysis remains fundamental." Margaret Y. MacDonald, The Pauline Churches Monograph Series (Society for New Testament Studies) 60 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 24.

<sup>142</sup>Best, "Sociological Study of the New Testament," 183-184.

Having noted these broad areas of agreement, we need to distinguish the three lines of approach which have been taken by New Testament critics. At the one extreme are the social historians. At the other, are scholars using theoretical models derived from sociology and cultural anthropology. There is certain amount of distrust and hostility between these two extremes, revealed sometimes in invective which goes beyond the bounds of scholarly disagreement,<sup>143</sup> so it is as well that there is a group in the middle, who, noting that there is no comprehensive theory of human behaviour, makes pragmatic and eclectic use of the tools of social science. We turn now to a closer examination of how scholars from these three positions have approached Galatians.

### Social History

The social history approach is represented by scholars such as Judge, Aune, Malherbe and others.<sup>144</sup> These scholars draw

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<sup>143</sup>See for example David Aune's criticism of "those combining shallow NT scholarship with sociological naiveté ('let the reader understand')" and Bruce Malina's criticism of representatives of what he terms the Received View: "a disdain for theory; a remarkable unconcern for defining the terms under discussion . . . ; a passion for up-to-date historical bibliography, the more esoteric the better; a sort of hand count assessment of previously published work generally beginning with the historical 'stars' of the past who most often turn out to be German in training and/or primary enculturation." David E. Aune, "The Social Matrix of the Apocalypse of John," Biblical Research 26 (1981): 16 and Bruce J. Malina, "The Received View and What It Cannot Do: III John and Hospitality," Semeia 35 (1986): 176.

<sup>144</sup>See E. A. Judge, Social Pattern and other more recent historical publications such as "St. Paul and Classical Society," Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum 15 (1972), The Conversion of Rome: Ancient Sources of Modern Social Tensions (North Ryde, N. S. W.: Macquarie Ancient History Association, 1980), "The Social Identity of the First Christians: A Question of Method in Religious History," Journal of Religious History 11 (1980): 201-217,

on historical and literary data to recreate the social background of a particular text. They aim, according to Aune, to "unravel the social history of the text." To do so, they use "a particular text as a window through which to view the social realities of which it was a part, or the social dimensions of the text . . . with a view to providing a more adequate understanding of the text itself."<sup>145</sup> No conscious<sup>146</sup> use is made of sociological models. Instead,

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Rank and Status in the World of the Caesars and St. Paul (Christchurch: The University of Canterbury, 1982) and "Cultural Conformity and Innovation in Paul: Some Clues from Contemporary documents," Tyndale Bulletin 35 (1984): 3-24; Aune, "Social Matrix"; Abraham J. Malherbe, Social Aspects of Early Christianity, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) and Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); Robert Grant, Early Christianity and Society: Seven Studies (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977); Stanley Kent Stowers, "Social Status, Public Speaking and Private Teaching: The Circumstances of Paul's Preaching Activity," Novum Testamentum 26 (1984): 59-82; Ronald Hock, The Social Content of Paul's Ministry (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); Gillian Clark, "The Social Status of Paul," The Expository Times 96 (January 1985): 110-111; Norman H. Young, "Paidogogos: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor," Novum Testamentum 29 (1987): 150-176; Cilliers Breytenbach, "Die Identiteit van 'n Christenmens--in Aansluiting by Paulus," in Church in Context: Kerk in Konteks, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach (Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel, 1988). (Note: the references given here and in footnotes 151 and 160 are intended to illustrate the range of relevant work done by each scholar. They have not all been consulted for the purpose of this study and are therefore not all included in the list of Works Cited.)

<sup>145</sup>Aune, "Social Matrix," 16-17.

<sup>146</sup>Elliott, quoting Carney, points out that all scholars use thought models of some kind or another. "Our choice rather lies in deciding whether to use them consciously or unconsciously." John H. Elliott, "Social-Scientific Criticism of the New Testament: More on Methods and Models," Semeia 35 (1986): 6, citing T. F. Carney, The Shape of the Past: Models and Antiquity (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1975), 5.

scholars use studies of ancient epistolography, classical rhetorics, literary criticism, pragmatics, tradition-historical criticism, genre and form criticism and make inferences about social groups from the use of particular words in particular literary contexts. Thus, this approach has close affinities with Kennedy's method of rhetorical criticism.

Inasmuch as it is based on close examination of primary historical and literary data, this approach does contribute to our understanding of the social background of the New Testament and thus to our particular interest in Paul, his associates, his churches and his opponents. Research into specific aspects of Paul's social setting, such as that done by Stowers and Young<sup>146a</sup>, is particularly helpful in building up an understanding of the pre-canonical contexts of a letter such as Galatians.

However, social historians have been criticised by social scientists for being "neither social enough nor historical enough."<sup>147</sup> Malina distinguishes the Received View of the social historians from the Social Science View held by him and others in a helpful table (here abbreviated):<sup>148</sup>

Table 4.--The Received View and the Social Science View

<u>THE RECEIVED VIEW</u>	<u>THE SOCIAL SCIENCE VIEW</u>
* Full bibliography	* Adequate bibliography
* Mathematical word counts	* Statistical word counts
* Theological focus	* Ideological focus
* Ideas relevant to	* Ideas relevant to authors

<sup>146a</sup>See note 144 above.

<sup>147</sup>Malina, "Received View," 175.

<sup>148</sup>Malina, "Received View," 174-175.

<p>scholars</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Culture resembles present</li> <li>* Bible an essential inter-textual referent</li> <li>* Dogmatic in presentation</li> <li>* Offers assertions for interpretation</li> <li>* History based on intuitive scholarly insight</li> <li>* Leading view based on authoritative consensus</li> </ul>	<p>and readers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Culture foreign to present</li> <li>* Bible as intertextual referent requires proof and testing</li> <li>* Open in presentation</li> <li>* Offers wider frame of reference and models for interpretation</li> <li>* History based on a articulate, testable hypotheses</li> <li>* Leading view depends on probability fit with increasingly refined models</li> </ul>
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These criticisms are cogent and need to be heard by the social historians, even where the alternatives offered by the social scientists also need to be critically evaluated. (The use of models always carries with it the danger of reductionism, and social scientists need to be careful of making positivist epistemological assumptions.)<sup>149</sup> In view of the sharp distinction between the two approaches, Malherbe's insistence on calling his historical approach "sociological" is unnecessarily confusing, as a number of scholars have noted.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup>"The pretension of biblical studies to 'scientific' modes of enquiry that deny their hermeneutical and theological character and mask their historical-social location prohibits a critical reflection on their rhetorical theological practices in their sociopolitical contexts." Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship," Journal of Biblical Literature 107 (1988): 3-17. We have already noted the rhetorical and socio-political conflict between social-historical and social-scientific critics.

<sup>150</sup>See Malherbe, Social Aspects, 20 and 122, Malina, "Received View," 181 and John G. Gager, "Social Description and Sociological Explanation in the Study of Early Christianity: A Review Essay," in The Bible and Liberation ed. Norman K. Gottwald (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983). 435-437.

### Sociological Exegesis

The strict social science approach, also termed "sociological exegesis", is represented by Gager, Malina, Elliott and Neyrey.<sup>151</sup> As noted already, these scholars adopt explicit social science models in their analysis of New Testament texts. For example, Gager uses the cognitive dissonance model of Festinger to explain the survival of the Jesus movement organization, while Malina suggests that Mill's model of normative inconsistency may provide a better explanation of the data.

Malina favours the use of the symbolic model:

In terms of this model, biblical interpreters would do well to seek out what roles, significant symbols, gestures, and definitions of situations are expressed or implied in the texts. What symbols embody the cultural cues of perception? What sort of interaction takes place between persons of lesser or higher rank, and how

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<sup>151</sup>See John G. Gager, Kingdom and community: The Social World of Early Christianity (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), reviewed in three articles by Bartlett, Smith and Tracy in Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science 13 (1978); Bruce J. Malina, The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), "The Social Sciences and Biblical Interpretation," Interpretation 32 (1982): 229-242, Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology: Practical Models for Biblical Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1986), "Normative Dissonance and Christian Origins," Semeia 35 (1986): 35-59, "Received View," 171-194, "'Religion' in the World of Paul: A Preliminary Sketch," Biblical Theology Bulletin 16 (1986): 92-101 and, with Jerome Neyrey, Calling Jesus Names: The Social Value of Labels in Matthew (Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1988); John H. Elliott, A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy (London: S.C.M. Press, 1982) and "Social-Scientific Criticism," 1-33; Jerome H. Neyrey, "Witchcraft Accusations in 2 Cor 10-13: Paul in Social Science Perspective," Listening 21 (1986): 160-170, "Body Language in 1 Corinthians: The Use of Anthropological Models for Understanding Paul and his Opponents," Semeia 35 (1986): 129-170, "Bewitched in Galatia," 72-100.

do people define themselves in their various rankings?<sup>152</sup>

Elliott uses conflict theory in his study of 1 Peter<sup>153</sup> and Neyrey uses the anthropological "witchcraft society" model of Mary Douglas<sup>154</sup> and applies it fruitfully to Galatians in "Bewitched in Galatia."

The explicit use of models by these scholars raises important questions about the role and function of models in biblical exegesis. Models are basic conceptual tools arising out of the metaphorical nature of language.<sup>155</sup> If critics cannot do without them, it is obviously preferable for them to be conscious of which models they are using and why:

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<sup>152</sup>Malina, "The Social Sciences," 236 and The New Testament World, 122-151.

<sup>153</sup>"1 Peter is a circular letter and speaks of social conflict common to the Christian movement 'throughout the world' (5:9). Accordingly, the causes and features of this conflict must be sought in the social conditions which characterized the interaction of Christians and the society of Asia Minor as a whole." Elliott, A Home for the Homeless, 62, and, for a discussion of his understanding of conflict theory, 112-118. Elliott has subsequently expressed dissatisfaction with his own failure "to sufficiently explicate, clarify and justify the sociological perspectives adopted and the models employed." Elliott, "Social-Scientific Criticism," 26.

<sup>154</sup>Neyrey compares a number of New Testament groups with contemporary societies in which witchcraft accusations occur. Such societies exhibit the following features: "clearly drawn external boundaries, confused internal relations, close and continual interaction, poorly-developed tension-relieving techniques, weak authority and disorderly but intense conflict." Malina and Neyrey, Calling Jesus Names, 23-25. See also, Neyrey, "Bewitched in Galatia," 91-94.

<sup>155</sup>". . . in theology, as in all sciences, metaphoric speech gives rise to models which enable us to formulate certain theories or networks of theories." van Huyssteen, Justification of Faith, 138.

. . . they can bring hitherto unconscious levels of thought into awareness; they enlarge our control over data. Models can also facilitate understanding for the reader by clearly identifying the writer's frame of reference and by making it more readily available for criticism. The use of models can lead to greater comprehensiveness when doing interpretations by providing categories and suggesting relations between categories.<sup>156</sup>

Models therefore, play an essential role in biblical criticism. However, models may be large or small, complex or simple, abstract or concrete and appropriate or inappropriate. The mere fact that a critic makes his or her model explicit does not mean that it automatically makes a constructive contribution to the debate. As an "abstract, simplified representation of some real world object, event or interaction" it may fail in its purpose of aiding "understanding, control or prediction".<sup>157</sup> It may fail because of reductionism, over-complexity, methodological inappropriateness or simply because of a paucity of suitable data.<sup>158</sup> It is reservations of this sort which have led some New Testament scholars to make more moderate and eclectic use of sociological models.

However, well-chosen social science models<sup>159</sup> can make

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<sup>156</sup>MacDonald, The Pauline Churches, 26.

<sup>157</sup>The definition is by Malina, cited in Elliott, "Social-Scientific Criticism," 4.

<sup>158</sup>Malina, "Social Sciences," 237-239 and Scroggs, "Sociological Interpretation," 339-341 discuss these problems.

<sup>159</sup>Malina lists the following minimum criteria for a good social science model: ". . . (1) it should be a cross-cultural model, accounting for the interpreter as well as those interpreted in some comparative perspective; (2) it should be of sufficient level of abstraction to allow for the surfacing of similarities that facilitates comparison; (3) the model should be able to fit a larger sociolinguistic frame for interpreting texts; (4) it should derive from

an important contribution to our understanding of the behaviour described in biblical texts such as Galatians, and can protect us from simply reading ourselves, and our contemporary social situation, into the text.

### Eclectic Use of Sociological Models

The third social scientific approach adopts a mediating position between the two extremes discussed above. The leading figures here are Theissen and Meeks.<sup>160</sup> Critical reception of the major works of Theissen and Meeks in this area has been very positive, recognizing them to be major contributors to the study of the Pauline social world.<sup>161</sup>

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experiences that match what we know of the time and place conditioned (sic) biblical world as closely as possible; (5) the meanings it generates should be irrelevant but understandable to us and our twentieth century . . . society; (6) the application of the model should be acceptable to social scientists (even if they disagree about the validity of the enterprise)." Malina, "Social Sciences," 241.

<sup>160</sup>Gerd Theissen, The First Followers of Jesus: A Sociological Analysis of the Earliest Christianity trans. John Bowden (London: S.C.M. Press, 1978) and The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth trans. and ed. John H. Schütz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982); Wayne A. Meeks, "The Stranger from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," Journal of Biblical Literature 91 (1972): 44-72, "The Social Function of Apocalyptic Language in Pauline Christianity," in Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979 ed. David Hellholm (Tübingen: Mohr, 1982), "The Social Context of Pauline Theology," Interpretation 32 (1982): 266-277. See also Petersen, Rediscovering Paul, Francis Watson, Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological approach Monograph Series (Society for New Testament Studies) 56 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) and MacDonald, The Pauline Churches.

<sup>161</sup>E. V. Gallagher speaks of the coming of age of contemporary sociological analysis of the New Testament. He notes that while Theissen emphasizes tensions and conflicts, Meeks focuses on growing cohesion in the Pauline churches. Gallagher, "The Social World of Saint Paul," Religion 14

Their approach is represented in our analysis of the pre-canonical contexts of Galatians in Chapter 4 below.

While Theissen and Meeks make very important contributions to our understanding of the social world of Paul, it may be argued that their works do not quite fulfil the expectations they raise. Thus, Meeks suggests in his introduction to The First Urban Christians that he is going to answer the question, "What was it like to become and be an ordinary Christian in the first century?" However, by the end of the book, the reader may ask whether he or she really has been enabled "to glimpse their lives through the typical occasions mirrored in the texts", or whether he or she has simply gained valuable knowledge of "the collectivities to which they belonged".<sup>162</sup> It may be argued that more "thick description" is needed to bring these ordinary Christians to life for the contemporary reader.<sup>163</sup>

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(1984): 91-99. Elliott called The First Urban Christians a milestone, if not a turning point, in Pauline studies. Review Article in Religious Studies Review 11 (1985): 329-334.

<sup>162</sup>Meeks, First Urban Christians, 2.

<sup>163</sup>Walter Hollenweger is one such scholar who does enable the reader to understand a little of what it was like to be an ordinary first century Christian in Corinth by means of narrative exegesis. Drawing on sociological studies such as those of Theissen and his own contemporary studies of Pentecostal movements, he recasts sociological and exegetical data back into a narrative form. In this way his story "Conflict in Corinth" reveals the people and social relations behind 1 Cor 12-14. See Walter J. Hollenweger, Conflict in Corinth and Memoirs of an Old Man: Two Stories that Illuminate the Way the Bible Came to be Written (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 3-35.

However, the works of Theissen and Meeks are exceedingly valuable in focusing and clarifying our generalizations about the social factors governing the life of the members of the Pauline churches: environment, level, groups, behaviour and beliefs. Their use of social scientific theories provides structure and control to their socio-historical descriptions and to their scholarly intuitions.

Meeks makes no apology for his "eclectic" and "piecemeal" use of social theory.

This pragmatic approach will be distasteful to the purist; its effect will be many rough edges and some inconsistencies. Nevertheless, given the present state of social theory and the primitive state of its use by students of early Christianity, eclecticism seems the only honest and cautious way to proceed.<sup>164</sup>

Theissen also uses a basic functionalist approach to marshal his "wealth of social data and luxuriant use of a number of sociological models."<sup>165</sup> His use of social theory also tends to be idiosyncratic and intuitive, in that he does not make explicit, or account for, his particular choice of sociological models.<sup>166</sup>

In an essay entitled "The Sociological Interpretation of Religious Traditions," Theissen explains how it is possible to derive sociological statements from essentially non-sociological forms of expression. The constructive method draws on direct, pre-scientific sociological statements, the analytic method includes what can be

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<sup>164</sup>Meeks, First Urban Christians, 6.

<sup>165</sup>Scroggs, "Sociological Interpretation," 346.

<sup>166</sup>For example, he devotes less than five pages of The First Followers to describing his aims and methods.

inferred about the social setting from passages that do not refer directly to the social situation, that is it looks beneath statements for the underlying realities and motivations of social community life, while the comparative method compares early Christian sources with texts which do not originate from, or describe, early Christian groups.<sup>167</sup>

One important sociological perspective employed by Meeks is that of the sociology of knowledge. Meeks studies "the social world<sup>168</sup> of early Christianity", distinguishing the world they shared from the world they constructed. The particular understanding of the sociology of knowledge which has influenced Meeks, is that of Berger and Luckmann.<sup>169</sup> The fact that Berger and Luckmann have been criticized on epistemological grounds<sup>170</sup> does not prevent their insights from being used, as Meeks and MacDonald do, as heuristic

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<sup>167</sup>Theissen, Social Setting, 00, cited by MacDonald The Pauline Churches, 21-22.

<sup>168</sup>"[The term] has a double meaning, referring not only to the environment of the early Christian groups but also to the world as they perceived it and to which they gave form and significance through their special language and other meaningful actions." Meeks, First Urban Christians, 8. "One's 'world' in the sociology of knowledge is understood as the symbolic universe within which one functions, which has 'objectivity' because it is constantly reinforced by the structures of the society to which it is specific." W. A. Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," Journal of Biblical Literature 91 (1972): 70, cited in Tuckett, Reading the New Testament, 141.

<sup>169</sup>Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge (Harmondsworth: Penguin University Books, 1971). This is in turn based on the approach of Alfred Schutz.

<sup>170</sup>R. Gill, Theology and Social Structure (London and Oxford: Mowbrays, 1977), 18-25.

devices.<sup>171</sup> Thus, Meeks explores the relationship between the language of Paul's letters and the social reality they represent and create.<sup>172</sup> This relationship between language and beliefs on the one hand, and social structures on the other, is dialectical: ". . . in the early church, not only do ideas shape social reality, but also, social reality affects the construction of ideas."<sup>173</sup>

The conscious use of insights derived from the social sciences distinguishes this approach from historical-criticism or social description. However, the eclectic use of sociological models, as suggestive rather than analytical tools, means that exponents of this approach must rely more heavily on historical-critical methods of verification than the sociological exegetes do.<sup>174</sup> While this may be wisely cautious, like all caution it also inhibits new insights. However, there is no doubt that, thus far, it is the

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<sup>171</sup>MacDonald, The Pauline Churches, 20.

<sup>172</sup>See Scroggs, "Sociological Interpretation," 347 and Meeks, First Urban Christians, 90-91: "A group of people who strongly hold a set of beliefs about what is real and valuable, different in some salient aspects from beliefs commonly held in the general society, . . . naturally find communication with one another easier and more satisfying . . . Furthermore, . . . the more frequently and intensively the members interact, the more strongly these common, distinctive patterns of belief will be reinforced." See also "Patterns of Belief and Patterns of Life," chap. in First Urban Christians, 164-192.

<sup>173</sup>MacDonald, The Pauline Churches, 9.

<sup>174</sup>For example, only 44 out of 617 bibliographical entries in Meeks Urban Christians refer to works of social theory or applications of such theory to modern social situations. See Petersen, Rediscovering Paul, 17-30 for a discussion of alternatives to the historical sociology of early Christianity.

scholars using this approach, who have made the greatest contribution to the sociological study of Galatians.<sup>175</sup>

This concludes our survey of various critical approaches to Galatians. We have not discussed the question of the "theological message" of the letter, for this an hermeneutical, rather than an exegetical question. We will see, in Chapter 4, that different contexts raise different questions, and hence different theological answers.<sup>176</sup> This hermeneutical principle is dealt with in the second half of Chapters 3 and 5 and in Chapter 6.

Many of the critical methods which have been mentioned here will be applied and evaluated as components of the multi-dimensional approach to Galatians in Chapters 3 and 5.

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<sup>175</sup>Perhaps this is because they are better able to make provision for the faith-dimension of the New Testament texts. "Sociology as such considers only the human dimension in human behaviour, and systematically eliminates trans-human factors. Yet these are essential to the data itself; from the point of view of the actors in the drama, there would be no early Christian movement without God's self-revelation in Jesus, and this factor must be given full consideration in analyzing both the self-understanding and the social structures produced by the early church." See Best, "Sociological Study of the New Testament," 192

<sup>176</sup>In addition, liberation theology reminds us that the interpretation of text and of context go hand in hand. "It is only through the mediation of hermeneutics that the theological criteria emerge for our reading, as Christians, of the socio-analytical text (reality): what God has to say to us in the social problems which we previously understood, quite accurately and objectively, by way of scientific reasoning. For this, reason is not enough; faith is required. Through faith--that is to say, through recourse to Scripture and tradition . . . we perceive in social reality the presence or absence of God." Leonardo Boff, "The Contribution of Liberation Theology to a New Paradigm," in Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future, eds. Hans Küng and David Tracey (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 420.

In addition, other critical tools, such as the various forms of canonical criticism,<sup>177</sup> will also be introduced and used.

From now on, the focus of this study shifts away from the comparison of individual critical methods, to the question how their particular strengths can best be harnessed together to enable contemporary South African readers to hear and respond to the Galatian letter as fully as possible.

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<sup>177</sup>Tuckett, Reading the New Testament, 168-174, discusses the approach of Brevard S. Childs and distinguishes it from that of E. P. Sanders. "As opposed to Childs' interest in the end-product of the completed canon, Sanders' interest is in the process by which later writers (some within the present canon) used earlier authoritative traditions creatively. In terms of method, it seems doubtful if Sanders' approach can be classified as very different from traditional form and redaction criticism. He is above all concerned with the meaning of the texts of historical authors, though concentrating on particular aspects of texts, viz. a later author's creative use of the tradition." Tuckett, Reading the New Testament, 182.

CHAPTER 3  
CONSTRUCTIVE AND CONTEXTUAL SOLUTIONS

. . . the rationality of a given theory must be defined in terms of its progressiveness, and not the other way round, as is normally assumed.

Wentzel van Huyssteen, Theology and the Justification of Faith.

The previous chapter sketched the problems presented by various critical methods currently being used to understand Galatians. We saw how problems emerged whenever one particular approach was made absolute and used independently of others. This suggests the need to find ways of allowing these approaches to function interdependently. There is a need for models which acknowledge all the dimensions of the text and account for the way they are interrelated within the communication process. In this chapter we discuss a recent multi-dimensional exegetical model, and suggest how it may be used within a contextual hermeneutical paradigm.

Multi-Dimensional Exegesis  
within a Communication Paradigm

A work of art is always multidimensional, is never made up of empty abstractions.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, interview in Time 24  
July 1989.

A Communication Paradigm

The survey in the previous chapter suggested that the field of communication theory could provide a suitable paradigm within which to understand the distinctive contributions of

each of the critical approaches. There are a number of reasons for this.

Firstly, communication models provide useful frameworks for classifying and combining critical methods. A number of communication models have been used by exegetes in this way. The one used by Rousseau, which is followed here, is a combination of the models of Maletzke, Plett and Grosse.<sup>1</sup>

Botha favours the simpler model of Jakobson, which distinguishes six poles in the communication process,<sup>2</sup> while de Villiers uses Hernadi's rather differently organized model for the similar purpose of representing the relationships between different exegetical methods.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Table 5 below.

The model of Maletzke is contained in Communication Models for the Study of Mass Communication, eds. D. McQuail and S. Windahl (New York: Longman, 1981), 36-41 and the models of Grosse and Plett in E. U. Grosse, "Was ist Semiotik? (Teil 1): Eine Exemplifizierung am Novellenwerk Maupassants," Linguistica Biblica 52 (1982): 87-113 and H. F. Plett, Textwissenschaft and Textanalyse: Semiotik, Linguistik, Rhetorik (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1975), 40-46. See Rousseau, "A Multidimensional Approach," 32-74.

<sup>2</sup>The six poles, with their corresponding linguistic functions are: (1) Sender (emotive); (2) Receiver (conative); (3) Text (poetic); (4) Code (metalinguistic); (5) Context (referential); and (6) Channel (phatic). Botha, Semeion, 28-30.

<sup>3</sup>"Die sosiologiese ondersoek is een spesifieke perspektief van waaruit 'n teks ondersoek kan word. Dit is 'n ondersoekmetode in eie reg wat tog raakpunte vertoon met ander nie-literêre en literêre analyses van tekste. Dit is belangrik om ten slotte die verhouding daarvan tot ander metodes te bepaal om oormatige aansprake van die metode te voorkom. 'n Baie nuttige hermeneutiese model, wat hier as uitgangspunt gebruik word, is dié van Paul Hernadi . . . ." De Villiers, "Renaissance van die Sosiologiese Teksanalise," 29-30. Hernadi's model can be found in P. Hernadi, "Literary Theory: A Compass for Critics," Critical Inquiry 3 (1976): 369-383.

Secondly, communication may be considered to refer to a particular type of rationality which is concerned, not so much with technical control, as with the practice of human life.<sup>4</sup> This is an important factor in our choice of a particular model. An over-emphasis on the role of the medium, rather than the roles of the sender and receiver, does not do justice to the process of human communication.

Human communication, verbal and other, differs from the 'medium' model most basically in that it demands anticipated feedback in order to take place at all. In the medium model, the message is moved from the sender-position to receiver-position. In real human communication, the sender has to be not only in the sender position but also in the receiver position before he or she can send anything.<sup>5</sup>

Thirdly, as Jürgen Habermas has pointed out, there are a number of implicit claims in every act of communication: "the intelligibility of its content, its truth claims in relation to the external world, or its normative claims in relation to the social world, and its truthfulness in relation to the expressivity of the speaker."<sup>6</sup> These claims, too, clearly relate to the process of interpreting an ancient canonical text. Thus, in many respects,

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<sup>4</sup>"Besides a means-ends rationality, there is a rationality of the substantial issues of human life as embedded in the cultural, ethical and religious tradition's history of humanity. This rationality is a communicative rationality." Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Theory and Practice: Theological Education as a Reconstructive, Hermeneutical, and Practical Task," Theological Education 23 (1987): 125.

<sup>5</sup>Ong, Orality and Literacy, 176.

<sup>6</sup>Jürgen Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action Vol. 1 (Boston: Beacon, 1981), 8-141, cited in Fiorenza, "Theory and Practice," 127.

communication provides a sufficiently broad paradigm for a multi-dimensional hermeneutical approach to Galatians.

Rousseau is one of a number of scholars who have been drawn to the field of modern communication studies in the quest for a model to fulfil the need for a multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary approach to the New Testament.<sup>7</sup>

His rationale<sup>8</sup> for this is as follows: reality is multi-dimensional. Biblical exegetes must therefore be careful not to employ a single approach, which favours only one dimension of reality at the expense of the others. With the increasing use of the communication paradigm in the fields of semiotics, linguistics, literary science and rhetorics,<sup>9</sup> there is a need for biblical scholars to study the way the different dimensions of textual communication

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<sup>7</sup>See Jacques Rousseau, "A Multidimensional Approach", " 'n Multidimensionele Benadering tot die Kommunikasie van Ou Gekanoniseerde Tekste <1>." (Paper delivered at the New Testament Postgraduate Seminar, University of Port Elizabeth, 1987), Meestersimbole van God: Die Kosmologiese Perspektief en Meestersimbole van die Nuwe Testament: Deel 1, (Port Elizabeth: Woord & Wêreld, 1988) and "Beyond Exegesis."

<sup>8</sup>See Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 2-3. For the sake of simplicity, I confine my references to the paper which most explicitly relates communication theory and biblical interpretation and is itself a recent summary of "A Multidimensional Approach."

<sup>9</sup>"The multidimensional parameters of this communication model are not only confirmed by the research history of semiotics, linguistics, literary science and the Bible sciences, but also by rhetorical, verbal, non-verbal, oral and written theories on communication." Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 6. He cites Vorster, "Antieke Retoriek," (no page numbers) as an example of this.

function and interrelate.<sup>10</sup>

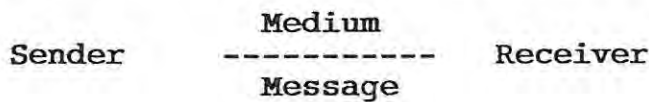
**Multi-Dimensional Exegesis**

Rousseau's exegetical model has three components: a static component, representing the basic elements of communication, a dynamic component, indicating the particular contributions of each element in the process, and a dialectic component, which represents the dialectical relationship which exists between the elements in the communication process. These components correspond with the three subdivisions of semiotics: syntactics, semantics and pragmatics.<sup>11</sup> He presents these three components schematically as follows:<sup>12</sup>

Table 5.--The Communication Model Used by Rousseau

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(A) Static Component (the basic elements of communication)




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<sup>10</sup>Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis, 2. He cites H. F. Plett, Textwissenschaft und Textanalyse: Semiotik, Linguistik, Rhetorik (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1975), 11-13 and T. A. van Dijk, Textwissenschaft: Eine interdisziplinäre Einführung (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1980), 1-3.

<sup>11</sup>See Botha, Semeion, 92-94 and the diagrams reproduced there from R. van den Broeck and A. Lefevère, Uitnodiging tot de vertaalwetenschap (Muiderberg: Dick Coutinho, 1984), 31.

<sup>12</sup>Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 3-4.

(B) Dynamic Component (the contribution of each element to the communication process)

Sender	Receiver
1. Perspective	1. Perspective
2. Psychological background	2. Psychological background
3. Sociological background	3. Sociological background

**Medium**

1. Code
2. Medium
3. Convention
  - \* Micro
  - \* Macro

(C) Dialectical Component (the relation of the elements to each other)

**Sender-Medium**

1. **Sender's Coding**
  - \* Selection and organizing of message and medium
  - \* Social and psychological perspectives and conventions
2. **Constraints of Message and Medium on Sender**
  - \* Linguistic and literary conventions
3. **Noise regarding 1 and 2**
  - \* Poor coding and/or violation of conventions

**Receiver-Medium**

1. **Receiver's Decoding**
  - \* Selection and distortion of message and medium
  - \* Social and psychological perspectives and conventions
2. **Constraints of Message and Medium on Receiver**
  - \* Linguistic and literary conventions
3. **Noise regarding 1 and 2**
  - \* Poor decoding and/or ignorance of conventions

**Sender-Receiver**

1. **Implied dialectic within the text**
  - \* Implied sender's relationship with implied receiver, and vice versa
2. **Real dialectic outside the text**
  - \* Real sender's relationship with real receivers, and vice versa
  - \* Real receiver's relationship with implied sender and receivers, and vice versa
3. **Noise regarding 1 and 2**
  - \* Noise between the senders (real and implied) and receivers (real and implied)
4. **Feedback regarding 1, 2 and 3**
  - \* Ongoing communication between all the senders and the receivers (real and implied)

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In what way does this communication model guide the construction of a multi-dimensional exegetical model?

### Analysis of the Static Component

Firstly, this model points to the priority of the static text.<sup>13</sup> This is the only place the contemporary reader can meet the people involved in the primary communication transaction. We have no direct access to Paul, the real sender of Galatians. However, in his absence, his letter functions as a "secondary sender".<sup>14</sup> Similarly, contemporary readers also have no direct access to the original readers, the "Galatians". We only have access to the secondary, implied readers encoded within the text.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the model indicates that the place to begin the search

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<sup>13</sup>This would seem to contradict the point made by Ong cited earlier, concerning the priority of a "human" over a "media" model of communication. However, in studying a human tradition in which the writing and receiving of letters was important, for example as a means of exercising apostolic authority, we need to allow for what Ong terms "chirographic conditioning". This implies that the culture accepts and understands the "media" model to a degree. "First, chirographic cultures regard speech as more specifically informational than do oral cultures . . . . Second, the written text appears prima facie to be a one-way informational street, for no real recipient (reader, hearer) is present when the texts come into being." Ong, Orality and Literacy, 177.

<sup>14</sup>"It is however important to note that in the communication of written texts the identity of the sender (author) is absorbed in his work. Therefore the writing becomes a 'secondary' sender. With ancient texts . . . the original authors have been dead for centuries and there is no way to give account of the real sender as part of the communication process." Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 5.

<sup>15</sup>While we must try and discover what kind of people they were using the tools of history and social science, we have to begin by asking what the text itself reveals about its first readers, who are now the implied readers.

for the sender(s) and receiver(s) of the letter is in the medium, the text itself.<sup>16</sup>

An analysis of the static textual dimension seeks to understand how the text has been structured by the author. Rousseau uses the metaphor of "mapping" the syntactic "relief" of a text. Certain text-immanent critical methods are suited to this process: discourse analysis, which traces the chronological structure of successive cola and cluster analysis, which indicates its hierarchical structure.<sup>17</sup> While Rousseau distinguishes these, they are really only two aspects of one critical approach: that of discourse analysis.<sup>18</sup> Aspects of the order and composition of the text are also revealed through a source analysis of the pattern of sources and traditions used and a pragmatics analysis of the aesthetic and stylistic features<sup>19</sup> which

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<sup>16</sup>In saying that the historical approach ought to follow the text-immanent one, we do not of course deny that in practice they function interdependently and interact with one another. It is a fallacy of New Criticism to assume that an exegete can come to a text, particularly a biblical text, without prior historical assumptions.

<sup>17</sup>Rousseau terms this structural analysis, but this term may be confused with structuralism. The term cluster analysis, is used here to refer to the cluster configurations of individual pericopes and also to the macrostructural configuration of the entire text.

<sup>18</sup>Steyn, in accordance with usage in international text linguistic circles, prefers to call discourse analysis cluster analysis. However, the term discourse analysis is retained here in accordance with its usage by the New Testament Society of South Africa. Steyn, "Some Psycholinguistic Factors," 51.

<sup>19</sup>For example, in his study of 1 Peter, Rousseau identifies the oxymoron "elect strangers" as a key to the relief. The paradox expressed in this stylistic feature is also expressed in an "indicative-imperative dialectic which underlies the aesthetics of the whole letter." Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 8.

have been used to shape the text.

Such an analysis of the thrust of the text reveals that it encourages certain lines of approach and discourages others.<sup>20</sup>

### Analysis of the Dynamic Component

Secondly, the model points us specifically to the letter as an act of human communication between people with different perspectives. If we wish to understand the text, we need answers to historical questions concerning their views and commitments. Questions such as: what is most important to them? How do they think and operate, as individuals and as part of the groups they belong to?

This involves a search for cosmological perspectives. The cosmological perspective of the author is the ultimate referent around which his or her message is organized and to which it refers. In aiming to persuade his or her readers to adopt this perspective, the writer has to take cognisance of the perspectives of his or her readers. To discover these perspectives, Rousseau analyzes the way the writer redescribes and reorientates the central metaphors, actants and tradition material of the text, using theological analysis (of the perspective and master-symbols), sociological analysis (of the actants and their world), historical analysis (of the way traditional material has been reworked),<sup>21</sup> and canonical analysis (of the faith

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<sup>20</sup>"The successful author will choose and organize his material in such a way that the text thrust will strategically nudge the reader in a certain direction" Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 11 (my emphasis).

<sup>21</sup>For example, how culturally important metaphors and "master-symbols" have been appropriated and re-interpreted in terms of an overall cosmological perspective.

commitment of the document as part of the New Testament canon).

The cosmological perspectives of the sender and receivers play a fundamental role in the communication process. This means that whatever the original historical factors were which led to the canonization of a particular biblical document, that document continues to be considered important and authoritative because of its perspectives, not because it contains traces of earlier tradition or was written by a traditionally authoritative person. Hence, the overall cosmological perspective reflected in Galatians is important and authoritative, even when parts of the letter appear to be 'more Pauline than Paul'.<sup>22</sup>

#### **Analysis of the Dialectic Component**

Thirdly, the communication model requires us to ask how the different elements of the communication process interrelate. Why does the sender choose and use a particular medium (for example, the letter form)? How does the receiver "decode" (read or hear) the message? How, ultimately, do the

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<sup>22</sup>"Galatians is the most 'Pauline' of all the Pauline letters--so much so, indeed, that those who derive their understanding of Paulinism exclusively, or even mainly, from this letter are apt to present a lop-sided construction of the apostle's teaching--to become 'more Pauline than Paul', like Marcion in the second century . . . . But even in this most Pauline letter the careful student may discern how much of the essential gospel Paul had in common with those who were apostles before him and, above all, how much he had in common with Jesus himself." Bruce, *Galatians*, 42. What Bruce terms "the essential gospel" is the cosmological perspective which Galatians shares with the other canonical New Testament texts.

sender and the receivers interact, both "inside" and "outside" the world of the letter?

These questions point to the persuasive process which the text initiates once it has been received. The process may be described as a conflict between perspectives. Rousseau analyzes this metatextual dimension by means of text-functional analysis<sup>23</sup> (of functions such as group-identificative or "appellative" functions), form and redaction analysis (of the choice of genre) and reception analysis (of the process of acceptance or rejection of the perspective of the text). It will be noted that most of these elements are dealt with in various forms of rhetorical analysis.

Although, according to this model, every reader will be nudged in the same direction, this does not imply a "media" type view of communication, in which an identical message is received by all. The same perspective means different things for different groups of readers, living at different times, in different contexts. We may talk of a Christ-centred perspective, but even this "Christ-centredness" only has meaning as it determines priorities and directs behaviour in a particular context where there are other perspectives also competing for attention and support. For example, important Galatian perspectives such as slavery to the "basic principles of the world" (Gal 4:3) and "sonship through faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal 4:7) only become visible and meaningful when they are lived out in specific contexts.

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<sup>23</sup>Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 11, cites Grosse, Text und Kommunikation (no page references) for this approach.

Rousseau's multi-dimensional exegetical model may be summed up as follows. The textual dimension and syntactic mode of a text is analyzed first. This focuses on the static shape of the text. Secondly, the historical dimension and semantic mode is analyzed. Here the focus shifts to the dynamic world-view of the author and the readers. Thirdly, the theological dimension and pragmatic mode are analyzed. The goal of the communication process, the dialectic conversation or conflict between text and reader, is analyzed here.

Although Rousseau consistently thinks of his model as three-dimensional, on the analogy of Rubic's cube,<sup>24</sup> it may be asked whether the third dimension (the static, dynamic and dialectic components) is realized. These components do not so much represent a separate dimension as combinations of the other two, as when the textual dimension and the syntactic mode form the static component of the model. The model may then be said to plot a number of points in two dimensions as in the graph below.

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<sup>24</sup>"I would imagine that within a multi-dimensional communication paradigm one could probably distinguish additional levels for the cube of textual communication (especially if one is 'serious' enough to give account of the fact that Rubic's cube has six levels!" Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 6.

Table 6.--The Three Components of Rousseau's Exegetical Model

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	Pragmatic		<u>Dialectic</u>
<u>MODES</u>	Semantic		<u>Dynamic</u>
	Syntactic	<u>Static</u>	
		Textual	Historical    Theological
		<u>DIMENSIONS</u>	

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This is, I believe, consistent with his own summary of the communication process as it applies to biblical texts:<sup>25</sup>

Table 7.--The Communication Model Applied to Biblical Texts

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<b>Sender &amp; World:</b> <u>Author</u>	<coding> <writing>	<b>Medium:</b> <u>OT &amp; NT</u> <u>Books</u>	<decoding> <reading>	<b>Receiver &amp; World:</b> <u>Readers</u>
2. Old texts with <u>author's</u> <u>perspective</u>		1. Writings with a <u>textual</u> <u>thrust</u>		3. Canonized texts with a <u>reader</u> <u>strategy</u>
<u>Dynamic</u> orientating/ re-describing ( <u>semantic heart</u> )		<u>Static</u> structuring/ relief-mapping ( <u>syntactic chart</u> )		<u>Dialectic</u> persuading/ reorienting ( <u>pragmatic</u> <u>duel</u> )

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The strength of Rousseau's model, is that it enables us to

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<sup>25</sup>Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 6.

take account of the cosmological perspective advocated by the structure and orientation of a text. This is most important for the study of a canonical letter such as Galatians, because the goal of such a letter is to persuade its readers to adopt the authoritative, apostolic perspective of its author.

Its primary weakness is that, while it explores the reorientation of primary readers in terms of the cosmological perspective of the text, it makes no provision for the exploration of the social worlds and contexts of any secondary readers. This weakness requires us to modify the model from an exegetical one to a hermeneutical one, by adding another modern paradigm to the communication paradigm already employed: that of liberation.

**Contextual Hermeneutics  
within a Liberation Paradigm**

[Liberation] defines the spirit of our epoch, of the times in which we live. Modern humankind is in quest of liberation, of a 'liberated' life, which for the poor has to come through the humble sacraments of bread, a roof over their heads, health and peace.

Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, Introducing  
Liberation Theology.

In proposing the addition of a paradigm of liberation to our search for an adequate contemporary hermeneutical model, we are not suggesting that paradigms can be multiplied endlessly. The concept of a paradigm, as developed by Kuhn, implies a single coherent research tradition adhered to by a particular scientific community at a particular time. It is an important part of his theory that such a paradigm is always incompatible, and usually incommensurable, with its

predecessors.<sup>26</sup>

However, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has pointed out that research paradigms are not necessarily exclusive of one another in their search for new ways of looking at old data and problems. "They can exist alongside each other, until they are finally replaced by a new paradigm."<sup>27</sup> It is in this sense of research paradigm that we propose to combine the paradigms of communication and liberation. The liberation paradigm enables us to use the exegetical data made available to us by the communication paradigm. In the process of such usage we will have to reconsider whether the issue of incommensurability makes this combination of paradigms methodologically legitimate or not.<sup>28</sup>

The concepts of "liberation paradigm" and "contextual hermeneutic" are used somewhat interchangeably in this section. While both concepts originate in the field of liberation theology, the distinction introduced here anticipates our broader use of the terms "liberation" and "context" than orthodox liberation theology allows.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>"The crux of Kuhn's position on the incommensurability of paradigms is that competing paradigms differ fundamentally on what should be seen as problematic or as data." Van Huyssteen, Justification of Faith, 58.

<sup>27</sup>Fiorenza, "Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics," 363-364.

<sup>28</sup>Hans Küng uses the terms "paradigm" and "model" interchangeably. He argues that the discussion of paradigm change in theology is provisional and "holds only under certain assumptions and within certain limits; [it] does not in principle exclude other projects, but always grasps reality only comparatively objectively, in a particular perspectivity and variability." Küng, "Paradigm Change in Theology," 10.

<sup>29</sup>"When we talk about liberation, this word therefore expresses a precisely defined option, which is not concerned with progress in either a reformist or a progressivist sense, but whose liberation (sic) implies a breach with the present status quo." Leonardo Boff, "The Contribution of

### A Liberation Paradigm

The rise of liberation as a major paradigm in theology dates from the 1960s. This is not the place to rehearse all the historical factors leading to the birth and growth of liberation theology in Latin America.<sup>30</sup> The shift to this new paradigm is vividly symbolized by an action of Gustavo Gutiérrez in 1969. He was invited to address a SODEPAX consultation in Switzerland on "In Search of a Theology of Development" and was asked to speak on the meaning of development. However, "in his preparation for the speech he

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Liberation Theology to a New Paradigm," in Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future, eds. Hans Küng and David Tracy (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 414.

<sup>30</sup>Major milestones in this process were: the recognition by theologians that countries in Latin America were being maintained in a state of underdevelopment; the renewal of the Roman Catholic Church as result of Vatican II; the CELAM conferences of Latin American Catholic bishops at Medellin in 1968 and Puebla in 1979; papal encyclicals such as Paul VI's Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975) and John Paul II's Redemptor Hominis, which may be translated "Liberator of Humanity", (1979). Theological development began with the Church and Society in Latin America (ISAL) group containing such figures as Gutiérrez, Galilea, Segunda, Castro, Alves and Míguez Bonino.

Leonardo and Clodovis Boff outline the process of theological formulation in four stages: a foundational stage, marked by Gutiérrez's all-important Teología de la liberación (1971); a building stage, in which the horizons of this new paradigm were opened up; a settling-in stage, characterized by a search for a sound epistemological base for the theology and a closer link between the intellectuals and the base communities of the church and, at present, a formalization stage, in which the whole spectrum of pastoral needs are being addressed in a planned series of fifty-five volumes entitled Theology and Liberation. See Boff and Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology, 66-77 and Salvation and Liberation: In Search of a Balance between Faith and Politics (Maryland: Orbis, 1984), 14-24 and 30-43, and Ferm, Third World Liberation Theologies, 3-15.

determined to reject the title itself (the First World's 'agenda'!) and prepared instead a paper entitled "Notes for a theology of liberation."<sup>31</sup>

In the context of Latin American liberation theology, the liberation paradigm has a very specific frame of reference: "There is only one point of departure--a reality of social misery--and one goal--the liberation of the oppressed."<sup>32</sup> The paradigm is founded on pre-theological experiences of oppression and poverty,<sup>33</sup> which are rightly regarded as fundamental.<sup>34</sup> However, in this study we attempt to do theology within this paradigm without defining poverty and oppression exclusively in Third World terms.<sup>35</sup> Apart

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<sup>31</sup>Juan Stam, "The Hermeneutics of Liberation Theology," Bangalore Theological Forum 11 (1979): 124.

<sup>32</sup>Boff and Boff, Salvation and Liberation, 24.

<sup>33</sup>"Rather than introducing a new theological method, liberation theology is a new way of being a theologian. Theology is always a second step; the first is the 'faith that makes its power felt through love' (Gal. 5:6)." Boff and Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology, 23.

<sup>34</sup>"The theologian of liberation opts to see social reality from a point of departure in the reality of the poor--opts to analyze processes in the interests of the poor, and to act for liberation in concert with the poor." This entails a political decision, an ethical option and an evangelical (gospel-based) definition. Boff and Boff, Salvation and Liberation, 48.

<sup>35</sup>The translator and Consultant Editor for the English language edition of the Liberation and Theology series, Paul Burns recognizes the need for this when he comments in the Editor's Foreword to Boff and Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology, vi, "Although the author's main point of reference is the Third World, they show how Liberation Theology is equally relevant to the developed First World. The oppressions from which the First World stands in need of liberation have different names--atheism, materialism, consumerism, individualism--but are equally real."

This need has also been expressed by conservative evangelical Biblical scholars. R. T. France concludes an exegetical study of liberation in the New Testament by saying, ". . . oppressing, exploiting, affluent man is in

from varied First World needs for liberation,<sup>36</sup> there are a great variety of Third World needs as well.<sup>37</sup> Thus, while drawing deeply on the way the liberation paradigm has been developed theologically in Latin America, we do not wish to institutionalize their understanding of liberation. People of all kinds need liberation from all kinds of oppression. The liberation paradigm, once acknowledged, invites critical analysis of all oppressive systems, and invites a wider definition of "the oppressed" than just those of the Third World.

This study will not therefore suggest that the New Testament, or Galatians in particular, urges a radical socio-economic transformation of South Africa into a socialist society. However, it does maintain that Paul's theology arose out of and addressed concrete human problems. A letter such as Galatians encourages us not only to see

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need of liberation too, at the deepest level," and Clark Pinnock calls for the liberation of North American Christians from "bondage to Mammon". R. T. France, "Liberation in the New Testament," The Evangelical Quarterly 58 (January 1986): 23.

<sup>36</sup>Such as, the particular the need for white liberation in South Africa, as expressed in the words of Desmond Tutu: "You will never be free until we blacks are free. So join the liberation struggle." Ferm, Third World Liberation Theologies, 66.

<sup>37</sup>"Who has the right to speak in the Third World? Why are there so many absent, so many forgotten? Is it too early to invite the Australian aborigines? The blacks of Brazil, and the native Latin Americans . . . where are their representatives? What about their way of encountering Christ or turning from him, of their way of building, and living, church, (sic) of being the people of God--who will tell us of all this if they are absent?" Engelbert Mveng, cited by Ferm, Third World Liberation Theologies, 73-74.

life from his faith perspective, it also encourages us to imitate his faith in practice.<sup>38</sup>

A functionalist analysis of social problems is considered inadequate by Latin American theologians of liberation because of its assumption that it is possible to solve some human problems without a radical social restructuring.<sup>39</sup> While this may be a valid objection in the Latin American or even South African context on a macro-economic level, there are many problems on the smaller level of the individual or the community which also need to be tackled. At the very least, this study benefits from the radical insistence that theologians need to share in experiences of human suffering, and encourage the ordinary church member to identify and tackle the causes of that suffering. Thus, while the hermeneutical model developed in this study is not radical in its definition of liberation, it derives its strong emphasis on praxis by drawing on a paradigm which is.

The liberation paradigm contains two other elements of hermeneutical importance: the importance of community and of praxis. In liberation theology it is the oppressed

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<sup>38</sup>"I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you." (Gal 4:12)

<sup>39</sup>In the first step of "socio-analytical mediation", liberation theology distinguishes three levels of awareness of reality, and three corresponding forms of action. (1) Empiricism, which fails to go beyond an awareness of the facts of a situation. (2) Functionalism, which goes from an awareness of the facts and a critical awareness of social structure, to reformism. (3) Dialectical structuralism, which moves from structure, to radical critical awareness of the roots of the social problem, to liberation. Liberation is defined as a radical shift from a capitalist to some form of socialist form of economy. See L. and C. Boff, Salvation and Liberation, 5-8 and Boff, "Contribution," 412-420.

community itself which engages in theological reflection.<sup>40</sup> Theologians have a supportive and secondary role. They introduce critical questions into the discussion and relate the discussion to wider philosophical and interdisciplinary issues. But they do not direct or determine the interpretive process.

Similarly, in the liberation paradigm, the process of interpretation is begun and ended in praxis.<sup>41</sup> This determines the nature of the problems discussed and the type of answers arrived at. The result is theological debate which is at once more spiritual and more concrete<sup>42</sup> than

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<sup>40</sup>"For Latin Americans, Scripture is aimed at groups and has collective meaning. Personal messages abound within the collective meaning." Christine E. Gudorf, "Liberation Theology's Use of Scripture: a Response to Third World Critics," Interpretation 41 (January 1987): 5-6. Gudorf identifies six ways in which the differences between the social contexts of the United States and Latin America result in different approaches to reading Scripture: (1) personal versus collective meaning; (2) awareness versus ignorance of critical methods; (3) reliance on experts versus self-reliance in interpretation; (4) personal consolation versus collective inspiration; (5) differences in the degree of ability to relate Scripture to daily life; (6) differences in the degree of critical reflection on reality.

<sup>41</sup>"For Liberation Theology, theory is not an end in itself but a function of praxis. Praxis (history-transforming action) is the decisive starting point and final goal of reflection. Theology proceeds in triadic rhythm from praxis to reflection and back to praxis." Stam, "The Hermeneutics of Liberation Theology," 127.

<sup>42</sup>Carlos Mesters tells of how a member of a basic Christian community naturally related the freeing of the apostles by an angel (Acts 17:19) to the way a little girl was able to save a bishop from the security police by slipping in and out of the bishop's house unnoticed. Carlos Mesters, "The Bible in Christian Communities," in The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities, ed. Sergio Torres and John Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1982), 206-207, cited by Gudorf, "Use of Scripture," 14.

that which takes place exclusively within the historical-critical paradigm with its roots in post-Enlightenment rationalism.<sup>43</sup>

### Contextual Hermeneutics

All theology is related to the context in which it develops. As we have seen with regard to liberation theology, this context determines the kind of problems which are perceived as important and the kind of solutions which are sought.<sup>44</sup>

When theology is practised in a context of extreme suffering and poverty, and the causes of this suffering are analyzed to be endemic, the liberation paradigm calls for radical socio-economic solutions. Thus, a liberation paradigm results in a particular kind of contextual hermeneutics.<sup>45</sup> Here both the context and the Bible are read in such a way that "a picture emerges of an

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<sup>43</sup>"According to James Barr, in this [historical-critical] paradigm 'a biblical account of some event is approached and evaluated primarily not in terms of significance but in terms of correspondence with external reality. Veracity as correspondence with empirical actuality has precedence over veracity as significance.'" Fiorenza, "Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics," 365. The reference is to James Barr's Fundamentalism (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 49.

<sup>44</sup>"The context in which a vital and dynamic systematic theology develops is at the same time the context(s) (sic) to which it is inseparably bound, from which it relationally draws its problems, and to which it attempts to give maximal meaning through topical and valid answers to actual problems." Van Huyssteen, Justification of Faith, 163-164.

<sup>45</sup>"If the task of responsible hermeneutics is to seek the faithful meaning of Scripture in and for a particular cultural-geographical-historical situation, then from the very beginning it must derive its own proper methodology, agenda, criteria and language from within that specific context." Stam, "Hermeneutics of Liberation Theology," 125.

interpretation of the gospel as it really works itself out in history in [a] particular time and place."<sup>46</sup>

This reading takes place via three stages or "mediations", similar to the See-Judge-Act method used in Roman Catholic pastoral practice by the Young Christian Students and the Young Catholic Workers.<sup>47</sup> The three mediations, as developed by Clodovis Boff, may be outlined as follows:<sup>48</sup>

The first mediation involves the analysis of social reality. Epistemological obstacles, such as "empiricism" (as described above) or "bilingualism" and "semantic commixture" (in which social analysis and theological reflection are wrongly mixed together), are removed. Then a Marxist dialectical analysis of the phenomenon of

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<sup>46</sup>"A recent study of Chilean Pentecostalism, for instance, researches the mechanisms of authority and control operative in these communities in relation to secular models prevailing in the society: the caudillo (leader), the paternalistic landowner, the democratic model. It compares the behaviour of Chilean society to money, work, and politics with reference to classic Protestant models." José Míguez Bonino, "Hermeneutics, Truth and Praxis," in A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 350.

<sup>47</sup>"This 'Review of Life' method has been used successfully by YCW and YCS; John XXIII said of it: 'It is important for our young people to grasp this method and practise it. Knowledge acquired in this way does not remain merely abstract, but is seen as something that must be translated into action.' (Mater et Magistra, 237)" See Albert Nolan and Richard F. Broderick, To Nourish Our Faith: The Theology of Liberation in Southern Africa (Hilton: The Order of Preachers, 1987), 97.

<sup>48</sup>Boff and Boff, Salvation and Liberation, 4-12 and 48-56. The method is developed more fully in Clodovis Boff, Theology and Practice: Epistemological Foundations (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987).

oppression, as embodied in particular social circumstances, is conducted.<sup>49</sup>

The second mediation is the hermeneutical one. The goal here is a theological reading of the social reality under investigation. The Bible is read as a book which belongs and speaks to the poor. This is not unusual. Most readers come to the Bible expecting it to address them in some way. Thus, it is not surprising that, in seeking themes and passages which are particularly relevant to the poor, liberation theology should focus on themes such as liberation from oppression and the Kingdom of God, and passages from Exodus, the prophets, the gospels and Revelation.<sup>50</sup>

Reading the Bible from the perspective of the poor means reading it from within their social context. These contexts differ from city to city and continent to

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<sup>49</sup>This adherence to a Marxist ideological position has been widely discussed and criticised. See, for example the recent critique by M. J. Oosthuizen in "Scripture and Context: The Use of the Exodus Theme in the Hermeneutics of Liberation Theology," Scriptura 25 (1988): 9-11. Liberation theologians defend this usage on pragmatic grounds. See Boff and Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology, 28.

<sup>50</sup>"The hermeneutics of liberation stresses these veins, but not to the exclusion of everything else. They may not be the most important themes in the Bible (in themselves), but they are the most relevant (to the poor in their situation of oppression). But then it is the order of importance that determines the order of relevance." L. and C. Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology, 32-33. Gudorf comments: "In fact, no liberation theologian devotes any great space to Exodus, certainly not as much as to kingdom, crucifixion, or resurrection. Nor are there any new claims about it. In the eleven pages of Gutierrez's 308-page book A Theology of Liberation which mention Exodus, five of those eleven pages deal with Exodus as the connecting link between creation and redemption, as the fulfillment of promise, as only properly understood within the covenant." Gudorf, "Use of Scripture," 17.

continent. Within Latin America, these contexts have lent certain distinctive features to this reading process.<sup>51</sup>

(1) There is a preference for application, rather than explanation, arising from the conviction that Scripture is only understood as it is obeyed.

(2) The practical meaning of the Bible is sought: "the important thing is not so much interpreting the text of the scriptures, as interpreting 'life according to the scriptures'".<sup>52</sup>

(3) The aim is to release the transforming power inherent in the messianic and eschatological nature of the Biblical message. The emphasis is on reading the Bible for personal conversion and social transformation.

(4) The social context of the text is carefully examined to see what appropriate correspondences can be discovered between that context and the context of the reader.

In all these steps, the aim is to see the social circumstances from the perspective of faith. "By faith one sees all things as ordered to God or deviating from God. All things fall under the dispensation of salvation or perdition."<sup>53</sup> The justice or injustice of a particular situation is in this way plotted within absolute theological categories, such as the Kingdom of God and eternal life.

Thus, the task of hermeneutics, in Latin American liberation theology, "is to serve Christian obedience in the

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<sup>51</sup>Boff and Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology, 33-34.

<sup>52</sup>Boff and Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology, 34.

<sup>53</sup>Boff and Boff, Salvation and Liberation, 52.

midst of the concrete historical reality of Latin America."<sup>54</sup> This remains true for other socio-historical contexts, on the proviso that we do not follow the details of the Latin American expression slavishly.

The third mediation involves a practical implementation of the theological reading of social reality: the actual steps of Christian obedience required. Naturally, this is something which is worked out more in practice than in theory. However, there are certain criteria which need to be considered when a course of action is being planned.<sup>55</sup>

Firstly, the course of action must be motivated by the faith principle of the second mediation: action without theological reflection degenerates into mere activism. Secondly, the action planned must be possible and realistic in terms of the resources of the group and the degree of resistance anticipated. Other considerations are that tactics and strategies should be non-violent, if possible,<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Stam, "Hermeneutics of Liberation Theology," 127.

<sup>55</sup>See Boff and Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology, 39-41 and Salvation and Liberation, 55-56.

<sup>56</sup>"As a matter of fact, I find very little advocacy of violence on the part of Third World liberation theologians. José Míguez Bonino does declare that the violence of oppressors sometimes demands violence in return. José Comblin does not exactly advocate violence, but he points out that there are times when one faces an unavoidable option: no action, which only condones an oppressor's continuation of violence, or action that runs the risk of violence. Pablo Richard believes that violence is inevitable and notes that the book of Exodus is itself a book of violence. Leonardo Boff urges that the oppressed should use violence only when forced by oppressors to do so." Ferm, Third World Liberation Theologies, 116.

and should take into account how the action planned relates to the wider dynamics at work in society.

It is important to remember that this third mediation does not conclude the process. In practice, a hermeneutical spiral<sup>57</sup> continues, beginning this time with an analysis of the action taken. This process of "hermeneutical circulation"<sup>58</sup> will be incorporated into the model we develop.

The weakness of this contextual hermeneutic is that, by emphasizing contemporary praxis, it neglects the biblical text itself. We have already suggested that the communication paradigm can function as a helpful

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<sup>57</sup>We do not refer here to the hermeneutical circle of neo-orthodoxy, which Smit describes in these terms: "'Voor-verstaan' word in gesprek met 'n teks 'nuwe verstaan', wat nou weer geld as 'nuwe voor-verstaan' in 'n nuwe gesprek, wat weer lei tot 'nuwe verstaan' wat op sy beurt geld as . . . Ensovoorts." Dirkie Smit, Hoe Verstaan Ons Wat Ons Lees? 'n Dink- en Werkboek oor die Hermeneutiek vir Predikers en Studente, Woord teen die lig B/1 (Cape Town: N. G. Kerkuittgewers, 1987), 41.

The spiral is closer to that of Segundo: "Firstly, there is our way of experiencing reality, which leads us to ideological suspicion. Secondly, there is the application of our ideological suspicion to the whole ideological superstructure in general and to theology in particular. Thirdly, there comes a new way of experiencing theological reality that leads us to exegetical suspicion, that is, to the suspicion that the prevailing interpretation of the Bible has not taken important pieces of data into account. Fourthly, we have our new hermeneutic, that is, our new way of interpreting the fountainhead of our faith (i.e. Scripture) with the new elements at our disposal." Juan-Luis Segundo, The Liberation of Theology (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976), 9, cited by Montague, "Hermeneutics and Scripture," 13.

<sup>58</sup>"Through these means we reach what Professor Casalis has called 'a hermeneutical circulation' (over against the famous 'hermeneutical circle' of the Bultmannians) between the text in its historicity and our own historical reading of it in obedience." Míguez Bonino, "Hermeneutics, Truth and Praxis," 356.

complementary paradigm to avoid such an imbalance. We illustrate this in Chapters 5 and 6 below.

The importance of contexts in the interpretive process is also demonstrated in the hermeneutical philosophy of Gadamer<sup>59</sup> and its application by the fields of reception aesthetics and reader-response theory. Here, meaning emerges through an interaction between contexts: those of the readers and those of the text.<sup>60</sup> Gadamer developed his idea from the basic insight that the reader comes to a text with some pre-understanding of the subject matter of the text.

The interpreter begins his or her work by anticipating the discovery of certain things within the text and by having some of these expectations thwarted in the reading of it. In this process of affirmation and denial what Gadamer terms the fusion of horizons takes place. The 'life-worlds' or horizons of the author and interpreter find themselves fused in a concentration upon the object, the thing said or pointed to in the text. The reader expands the horizon of the text by appropriating it in a particular historical situation; this is accomplished by asking of the text question which 'always bring out the undetermined possibilities of a thing.'<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Tracy sums up Gadamer's viewpoint thus: "The meaning of the text does not lie 'behind' it (in the mind of the author, the original social setting, the original audience), nor even 'in' the text itself. Rather, the meaning of the text lies in front of the text--in the now common question, the now common subject-matter of both text and interpreter." David Tracy, "Hermeneutical Reflections in the New Paradigm," in Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future, eds. Hans Küng and David Tracey (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 42.

<sup>60</sup>Tracy translates Gadamer's "German ontological vocabulary" into his "own Anglo-American experiential, de facto language" in David Tracy, "Hermeneutical Reflections in the New Paradigm," in Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future, eds. Hans Küng and David Tracey (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 38-47.

<sup>61</sup>Roger Lundin, "Our Hermeneutical Inheritance," chap. in The Responsibility of Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1985), 25.

The Portraits of Jesus series of contextual Bible studies on the gospels uses this contextual hermeneutical approach. These studies distinguish the contexts of Jesus, the authors of the gospels and the congregations for whom they wrote, and contemporary South African readers.<sup>62</sup> An equivalent classification of contexts for a Pauline letter would be: Paul's context, the contexts of his readers and other social groups interacting with them, and the contexts of different social groups of contemporary readers.

Having identified these different contexts, the studies invite contemporary readers of the gospels to discover their meaning through a process by which these contexts interact with their own. What is meant by "context" here is more than an historical description of social circumstances. What is referred to is the perspective or "horizon" contained within these circumstances.

As with liberation theology, this contextual approach may also over-emphasize the context and expectations of the reader. We cannot make the reception of a text the whole key to its meaning. Lategan comments, "What is needed therefore, is the broadening of the theoretical base to accommodate the aspects of reception in such a way that its inter-relatedness with text-production and text-mediation

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<sup>62</sup>See William Domeris, Portraits of Jesus: Matthew: A Contextual Approach to Bible Study (London: Collins, 1987), 11-21 and Paul Germond, Portraits of Jesus: Luke: A Contextual Approach to Bible Study (London: Collins, 1988), 9-22 for examples of this.

becomes clear."<sup>63</sup>

Despite this reservation, there is great value in starting the hermeneutical process with a strong, explicit awareness of our own context, with its concrete problems and needs. For unless such needs are explicitly included in the hermeneutical process, they will not be addressed. Unless our perspectives are made explicit, they will continue to function undetected, distorting and restricting the understanding process. We will remain enslaved to what Paul terms "weak and miserable principles" (ta stoicheia tou kosmou).

In Part II, we turn to the task of introducing Galatians to the contemporary reader. In Chapter 4, we examine all the contexts which affect our understanding of the letter. In Chapter 5, we re-introduce the letter using the multi-dimensional exegetical model. Part II ends by returning to the question of how to apply these exegetical insights within a liberation paradigm.

Part III tests this approach by developing an integrated method for contextual Bible study, and applying it to selected pericopes of Galatians.

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<sup>63</sup>Bernard C. Lategan, "Some Unresolved Methodological Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics," in Text and Reality, eds. Bernard C. Lategan and Willem S. Vorster (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 15. He continues: "To concentrate all attention on the act of reception, thereby making the reader the almost exclusive arbiter over, or creator of, the meaning of the text, not only over extends the contribution reception has to make but also foreshortens the process of understanding in a dangerous way. All the problems associated with the concept of 'intentional fallacy' could thus be repeated in the form of a 'receptor's fallacy'."

PART II  
INTRODUCTION TO GALATIANS

## CHAPTER 4

## THE CONTEXTS OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

Does recontextualization into the reader's situation make a parable "say something different?" It now appears that the answer must be neither "no" alone (parables used only for historical reconstruction) nor simply "yes" (reader-response theory), but both yes and no, depending on which level or dimension of the speech-act is under consideration, and for what purpose any given "reading" is carried out.

Anthony C. Thiselton, "Reader-Response Hermeneutics, Action Models and the Parables of Jesus,"

Introduction: Understanding Contexts

The processes of interpretation have a great deal to do with the contexts of interpretation. However, because the term "context" is used to refer to a variety of different linguistic, textual, literary, cultural and historical areas, it is necessary to begin this discussion with a brief outline of how the term is applied here.<sup>1</sup>

In historical-critical exegesis, the context of a pericope is taken in to account in a number of different ways. Synchronically, the "context" of a pericope refers to the text surrounding it. In the interests of clarity, this is referred to as the "co-text". The immediate co-text is

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<sup>1</sup>I am indebted to the methodological and hermeneutical discussion in Richard Bauckham's "Issues in Interpretation," the first chapter of The Bible in Politics: How to Read the Bible Politically (London: SPCK, 1989), 3-19. While I am not in agreement with some of his assumptions, I have found his distinction between the pre-canonical, canonical and contemporary contexts of interpretation a valuable point of departure.

is referred to as the "co-text". The immediate co-text is the text immediately adjacent to the pericope, while the broader co-text is the broader literary unit within which the immediate co-text is embedded.

Diachronically, "context" refers to a variety of historical data to which the pericope is related. Thus, textual criticism considers the co-texts of variant readings and the historical origins of various textual traditions. In proposing emendations, it considers the linguistic contexts (ranges of acceptable meanings) of words and idioms. Source criticism tries to reconstruct earlier co-texts for the pericope, prior to its current, canonical co-text. Form and literary criticism<sup>2</sup> consider the oral and written genres to which the pericope belongs: the traditional forms into which texts such as this are usually cast. In the "history of the transmission of traditions" (tradition history), attention is focused on the unusual or conventional uses (contexts) of traditional material. Redaction criticism, in turn, traces editorial decisions which include the placement of the pericope in a new co-text in order to influence its meaning.

Supplementing such text-historical analysis, socio-historical analyses identify the cultural contexts in which the text originated and evolved (political, religious, economic, legal, military, artistic, agricultural, educational, and so on) and the historical events which have bearing on the meaning of the text. These may be broad

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<sup>2</sup>This refers to a close reading of the text as a literary document, as opposed to source critical questions concerning the historical unity and authorship of the text.

background events or trends, or particular events in the lives of the original author(s) and receiver(s) of the text.

Thus, the historical-critical method can be described largely as the analysis of various original contexts of the text.

All these contexts are pre-canonical, in that they refer to backgrounds, forms and uses of the text prior to its inclusion in the canon of scripture.<sup>3</sup> However, the contemporary reader needs also to take the canonical and contemporary contexts of an epistle like Galatians into account.

Bauckham uses the term canonical context to refer to the position of epistle in the whole body of authoritative texts known as the canon. He points out that this is not a substitute for, but an addition to, the pre-canonical contexts. The additional element involves considering how the perspectives of this epistle compare with the perspectives of other canonical texts:

. . . we must think about the relative significance of the various parts of the canon, and recognize that some viewpoints within Scripture are relativized or even corrected by others. It means appreciating that the unity of the canon sometimes emerges in dialectical fashion from the diversity of the canon. It involves us in constant interaction between understanding particular texts in their primary contexts and attempting a biblical theology which does justice to the whole canon.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>"To interpret the text in its pre-canonical contexts, the well-known methods of historical exegesis apply and must be rigorously applied. No exceptions must be allowed to the principle that the historical meaning of the text must be a meaning which readers at that time could perceive."  
Bauckham, The Bible in Politics, 17.

<sup>4</sup>Bauckham, The Bible in Politics, 17.

Some feminist and liberation theologians object to this on the grounds that all historical expressions of faith are ideological.<sup>5</sup> Bauckham does not address this issue because he believes that texts have a "core meaning," contained in the historical meaning, which "persists in all new contexts".<sup>6</sup>

His idea of the canonical context is also limited by not having a diachronic dimension. This means that he does not take account of "the world in front of the text" and the need for hermeneutical suspicion to be applied to facets of the interpretive process.<sup>7</sup>

The world "in front of" the text is the interpretive tradition leading up to and following the formation of the canon. David Bosch writes,

. . . most of us, whether we are aware of it or not, read Paul through the filter of Augustine, Martin Luther, and--to a lesser extent--Karl Barth. I have no doubt that each of these great theologians interpreted Paul correctly for their contexts. However, I am also

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<sup>5</sup>See Fiorenza, "Toward a Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics," 375-381. She also rejects Segundo's contextual hermeneutic which regards the process of interpretation within the Bible and Christian history as normative, because "this process of expressing faith in a historical situation can also be falsified and serve oppressive interests." She maintains that "the canon and norm for evaluating biblical traditions and their subsequent interpretations . . . can only be formulated within and through the struggle for the liberation of women and all oppressed people. It cannot be 'universal,' but it must be specific and derived from a particular experience of oppression and liberation." (378)

<sup>6</sup>Bauckham, The Bible in Politics, 17. This belief is one of the consequences of his working in a modern philosophical paradigm. It is preferable to speak of the perspective of a biblical document. See Chapter 5, Canon Analysis, below.

<sup>7</sup>Smit, Hoe Verstaan Ons, 53-64.

convinced that their contexts were not the same as Paul's; neither were they the same as ours are today.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, Francis Watson's recent sociological study of Paul's view of the law pleads "for the abandonment of Lutheran presuppositions in interpreting Paul."<sup>9</sup>

Exegetes need to take account of the insight from the sociology of knowledge that statements of belief need to be interpreted with reference to the social patterns within which they originated.

Abstracted from that setting or placed in a different one, the stated belief is liable to mean something quite different--a happy fact for the religious communities that have had to reinterpret canonical texts in all sorts of new settings and occasions, but a dreaded pitfall for the historian.<sup>10</sup>

The sociology of knowledge also requires exegetes to be critical of their own "new improved" hermeneutical procedures and the ideological interests they represent.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>David Bosch, "Paul on Human Hopes," Journal of Theology for Southern Africa 67 (June 1989): 5. (He mentions, as an example, that Augustine applied Paul to his own context by both individualizing and ecclesiasticizing salvation.)

<sup>9</sup>Watson, Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles, 179-180. "The identification of the historical Paul with the Lutheran Paul is the result of simplistic and unhistorical thinking. Whatever its theological merits, the Reformation tradition has no right to regard itself as the guardian of authentic Pauline teaching, since its theological concerns have hindered rather than helped a correct understanding of the apostle."

<sup>10</sup>Meeks, First Urban Christians, 164.

<sup>11</sup>Botha has recently raised important questions about how South African theological training institutions ". . . are handling/ perverting/ truncating/ aborting/ restricting/ strangling, or otherwise, guiding the interpretation of the New Testament by virtue of their institutional power. What gets published? Which books do we use as text-books? Who are the people and the validating agencies which confirm and approve/disapprove and en/discourage this or that kind of interpretation? . . . The

These two additional elements require us to speak of canonical contexts, for we will need to be aware not only of the fact that the letter we are reading is part of collection of documents which are authoritative for Christians, but also that these documents have, because of their canonical status, developed different authoritative lines of interpretation in the centuries since their collection.

The third context which needs to be analyzed and accounted for is our contemporary context.

. . . whereas the historical critic thought we needed to know a great deal about the writer and his context to interpret a text, the fact is that we need even more to know a great deal about ourselves and our new situation to apply a text, that is, to judge its meaning in a new situation.<sup>12</sup>

The reason for this is that, in judging a text like Galatians to be canonical, the church insists that it be applied to contexts unimaginable to Paul.

There are of course many "contemporary contexts". As our goal is to learn how to apply Galatians to the contemporary South African church context, we will have to begin by locating it within the context of the contemporary world. Thus, we will begin by sketching some of the broad features which distinguish the First and the Third Worlds. Then we will present two sketches of the South African context, made from different perspectives.

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theory of interpreting is itself part of the social dynamics of the people participating in this interpretational endeavour." Botha, "On the 'Reinvention' of Rhetoric," 16.

<sup>12</sup>Leland J. White, "Biblical Theologians and Theologies of Liberation--Part II: Midrash Applies Text to Context," Biblical Theology Bulletin 11 (October 1981): 98.

These sketches make absolutely no claim to completeness, for the analysis of any context is a complex process, theoretically encompassing the full range of the human sciences. In a society like South Africa which is undergoing rapid socio-political change, there is also change in which issues are considered important by the community as a whole. In addition, different issues have different degrees of importance for specific communities at any particular moment. An issue may also remain significant but change the nature of its significance.<sup>13</sup>

More important still, is the question of which social theories are employed in the analysis of a particular context. Liberation theologians in particular insist, quite correctly, that the analytical method chosen affects the resultant analysis. This is illustrated, in our discussion of the South African context, by the very different analytical theories and concerns of Sunter and Nolan.

Christian interpreters seeking to analyze a contemporary context for the purpose of biblical interpretation and application have the practical advantage of being able to draw on the observations of both the wider church and the local church community. As Christians notice the variety of these observations, they are enabled to see that, even when observers share a common Christian faith, there are always a variety of interpretations of the same social realities. In fact, Christians living in different

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<sup>13</sup>An example of this is the changing political significance of the Afrikaans language at the University of the Western Cape. In contrast to 1976, when it was seen as the language of the oppressor, it is now (at the end of 1989) seen as a liberatory language.

social contexts and using different analytical theories may have sharply conflicting perceptions of the same situation.

The recognition and acceptance of this fact of contemporary experience can facilitate the recognition of conflicting perspectives within the pre-canonical and canonical contexts. Our contextual Bible study method indicates that it is these conflicts between perspectives, rather than details of historical circumstances, which can be most usefully compared when biblical interpreters try to move between pre-canonical, canonical and contemporary contexts.

### Pre-Canonical Contexts

#### **The Author: Paul**

Jerome Neyrey concludes a recent article on Galatians with the observation that, ". . . the nitty-gritty social world of Paul rarely gets addressed," and calls for "a further reading of the theology [of Paul] embedded in a lively social context".<sup>14</sup> As we saw in Chapter 2, there are many ways of approaching this task. If we begin by gathering some biographical details about Paul's life and his career, using the social historical approach, we must be clear that we are not attempting to reconstruct the "historical Paul". Our sources (Acts, Paul's epistles and the deutero-Pauline epistles) do not permit us to.

The reason for this should encourage us to interpret the Bible contextually: these sources were written to provide practical help to particular people in particular circumstances! Thus, for example, Luke wrote to assure

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<sup>14</sup>Neyrey, "Bewitched in Galatia," 99-100.

Theophilus, his literary patron, that the account of the gospel he had received was reliable and that it was meant for Gentiles as well as Jews,<sup>15</sup> while Paul wrote Galatians to warn his converts that the version of the gospel they had received from the "false brothers" was dangerously unreliable. Once we have made that basic observation, it is not surprising to find differences between Luke's account of Paul's career in Acts 11-28 and Paul's autobiographical outline in Galatians 1:12-2:14.<sup>16</sup>

What biographical information about Paul can we gather using a socio-historical approach to the New Testament? The most important insight is that, from birth, he absorbed a mixture of Greco-Roman and Jewish culture. He was born around A.D. 5-15 in Tarsus in Cilicia,<sup>17</sup> a free Hellenistic city where popular philosophers and public speakers preached in the streets, where mystery religions flourished, and where some important Stoic teachers lived.<sup>18</sup> According to the author of Luke-Acts, he enjoyed the privilege of Roman citizenship from birth (Acts 22:28). The fact that Paul's

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<sup>15</sup>I. Howard Marshall, The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 39-44 and Acts, 20.

<sup>16</sup>Marshall observes that, "The differences between Luke's portrait of Paul and the picture we get from Paul's own writings are basically due to the different interests of the two writers. Luke is principally concerned with the evangelistic mission of Paul and with his relations to the Jewish Christians, while Paul's letters reflect his concern for problems within the new churches and for the freedom of the Gentiles from Judaistic and syncretistic perversions of the gospel." Marshall, Acts, 43.

<sup>17</sup>See Appendix 2: Map of the World of Galatians.

<sup>18</sup>Luke T. Johnson, The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 244.

family had had this privilege for two generations "suggests that Paul's family was socially prominent."<sup>19</sup>

He was born a Jew.<sup>20</sup> Yet, from his childhood, Paul would have absorbed Greek culture.<sup>21</sup> He would even have felt the pressure of Greek culture while he studied Torah under Gamaliel at the rabbinic academy in Jerusalem.<sup>22</sup> It is therefore not possible to separate the Greek and Jewish sides of Paul, nor to say which was more important.<sup>23</sup> He

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<sup>19</sup>Johnson, Writings, 244.

<sup>20</sup>"Paul came from a family of Pharisees, of the tribe of Benjamin. He was named for the tribe's most illustrious member, Saul, King of Israel . . . The boy also had a Greco-Roman name, the Latin Paulus. We can speculate that one of Paul's ancestors was taken prisoner of war when Pompey captured Palestine in 63 B.C., that he was sold as a slave, and was eventually emancipated by a Roman citizen belonging to the Roman gens Paulus." Nils A. Dahl, Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 3.

<sup>21</sup>"Although there was an accommodation to Hellenism among Diaspora Jews, it would be incorrect to speak of a general assimilation. To be sure, Jews spoke the Greek language, attended the theatre, took education in the Greek classics, and were loyal subjects in the hellenistic political system; yet they did so without fatally compromising their ancestral religion." Calvin J. Roetzel, The World that Shaped the New Testament (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 53.

<sup>22</sup>Meeks points out that when Diaspora Jews became Roman citizens it was to the detriment of their Jewish identity. He therefore leaves open the question of Paul's Roman citizenship as recorded in Acts. ". . . the author of the book of Acts, whether his information was true or fictional, at least thought it credible that Paul's father had been both a citizen of Tarsus and a citizen of Rome, but still sent his son to Jerusalem to study with Rabbi Gamaliel." Meeks, First Urban Christians, 38.

<sup>23</sup>To err on one or other side leads to the temptation to discover the "key" to Paul, or one or other of his letters, in some aspect of his Hellenistic or Pharisaic background. This explains why Davies, with his interest in Paul's links with rabbinic Judaism, thinks that Betz depends too heavily on assumptions about Paul's use of Hellenistic literary and epistolary traditions. "If we do not misjudge

was thoroughly Hellenized and could speak and write Greek with ease, even as he dedicated his life to the study of Torah the "distinguishing symbol" of Judaism.<sup>24</sup>

It was in Jerusalem that Paul probably first met the messianic sect which he later persecuted. It was quite logical for him to persecute them as deviants, for he believed that observation of Torah produced righteousness with God, while this new sect claimed that only faith in Jesus the Christ, could do this. According to Torah this Jesus, far from being Messiah, was a sinner under God's curse. In Paul's view, Christ and Torah could not co-exist,

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his work, [Betz] has a tendency to ignore or at least minimize a fundamental fact of early Christian, including Pauline, expansion and to move too directly from the Greco-Roman world to the interpretation of Galatians. We refer to the truism that it was the Hellenized Jewish communities of the Greco-Roman world and their pro-Jewish peripheries of God-fearing semi-proselytes who harboured the earliest Christian cells and served as bases of operation for Paul and other Christian missionaries. Paul was first an apostle to the Greek Jewish communities." W. D. Davies, "Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia," chap. in Jewish and Pauline Studies (London: SPCK, 1984), 175-176.

Ralph Martin mentions four major categories which have been used to interpret Paul: Palestinian Judaism, Hellenistic Judaism, Gnosticism and Paul's conversion-call. He argues that the latter was the central motivating force in Paul's life. Ralph P. Martin, Reconciliation: A Study of Paul's Theology (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1981), 16-31.

<sup>24</sup>For Pharisees like Paul, the Torah consisted of "the five books of Moses" and all the traditions and instructions associated with them. "To be a Jew may . . . be reduced to a single pervasive symbol of Judaism: Torah. To be a Jew meant to live the life of Torah in one of the many ways in which the masters of Torah taught." Jacob Neusner, Judaism in the Beginnings of Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 13, quoted in David T. Gordon, "The Problem at Galatia," Interpretation 41 (January 1987): 38.

and he retained this view throughout his life.<sup>25</sup>

When Paul met the risen Jesus, he simply changed sides. Dahl reminds us that,

When Paul set out for Damascus, he was not tortured by a troubled conscience, as the young monk Luther was. Rather his enthusiasm remained undimmed. When Christ appeared to him, Paul had not wearied of the attempt to fulfill the Law perfectly. His view of the relation of the Mosaic Law to the crucified Messiah did not change when Christ called him to become his ambassador to the Gentiles; Paul simply abandoned one side of the fray to enter the lists on the other. He never doubted that God himself had intervened in his life to reveal his Son to him: that fundamental presupposition underlines all of his subsequent life and thought.<sup>26</sup>

We have already noted the difficulties associated with reconstructing the history of Paul's ministry.

Neither Acts nor the letters say much about the important years before Paul began his collaboration with Barnabas [his years in "Arabia" south of Damascus, his short visit to Jerusalem to meet Peter, a trip home to Tarsus and his stay in Antioch]. Neither source is helpful in his method of actually founding communities . . . . We do not learn what steps Paul took to establish the movement in a new place.<sup>27</sup>

All we can do at this point, unless we make use of social-science models, is make generalizations based on our knowledge of the socio-historical background of the primary

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<sup>25</sup>"Before Paul's call and after, the categories remain the same, they are simply transvalued." Johnson, Writings, 246. Thus, Torah and Christ function in Paul's thought as incommensurable paradigms. He saw it as impossible to live out his faith within both paradigms at once. "Dat die wet in sigself goed en reg is, is 'n tema wat Paulus uitvoerig in Romeine verder bespreek (vgl Rm 7:12). Die punt van sy betoog in Galasiërs is egter dat wet en belofte nie met mekaar in konflik kan wees nie, omdat dit twee sake is wat glad nie met mekaar vergelyk kan word nie." Lategan, "Krisis," 16.

<sup>26</sup>Dahl, Studies in Paul, 4-5.

<sup>27</sup>Johnson, Writings, 248.

sources. Thus, knowing that Paul was a city person,<sup>28</sup> we may think of him in the "urban setting with its common language, its spirit of ecumenism, its willingness to experiment, its accessibility by both land and sea, its concentrations of people, its spiritual ferment, its competing myths and its interaction with other cities."<sup>29</sup>

In the same way, if we agree with Meeks that we cannot read Acts as a direct, factual account, we can discover very little about how Paul went about his urban mission. All we have is generalizations and hints. Johnson sketches these generalizations for us. Firstly, his mission was almost entirely urban. Secondly, although he supported himself as a leather worker, his mission needed additional support from his churches. Thirdly, he worked as part of a team which he organized, mobilized and co-ordinated. "We can estimate that the Pauline mission involved at least forty persons, female and male." These people, and all the people they tended and led, were a major part of Paul's daily concern.<sup>30</sup>

Meeks offers a few additional hints: there is not a word about synagogues; individuals, who were probably the first converts, are singled out; protectors and hosts are also mentioned; Paul addresses assemblies in people's homes; special hospitality was involved at times, as when Paul

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<sup>28</sup>Meeks, First Urban Christians, 9.

<sup>29</sup>Roetzel, World, 72. Theissen compares Greek city life with life in the Palestine countryside, where Jesus had ministered: people in the cities were richer and more conservative politically, yet they were more open to new traditions and values than their culturally conservative rural counterparts. Theissen, First Followers, 116-118 and Social Setting, 35-40.

<sup>30</sup>Johnson, Writings, 248-249.

first entered Galatia; Paul's self-support as an artisan was also a symbol of the gospel.<sup>31</sup>

There is a pressing need to go beyond such generalizations made on the basis of hints from the surface of Paul's letters, because there were also important differences between the social conditions in different Hellenistic cities and regions. Thus, Theissen's study of the social setting of Pauline Christianity focuses specifically on social conditions at Corinth. The differences between Paul's Corinthian correspondence and his Galatian letter alone suggest widely differing social conditions between the congregations of these two regions.

These different congregations also viewed Paul differently, and their opinions of him changed with time.<sup>32</sup> In Galatia, he was initially welcomed with enthusiasm (Gal 4:14-15), then later he was accused of being manipulative rather than truthful (Gal 1:10). At the time of writing Galatians, it appears that some thought him an enemy because of his insistence on the truth of his views (Gal 4:16).

However, renewed attempts to analyze Paul's social world more precisely have not yet produced results which are assured. One of the many questions which is still unresolved is the question of the social status of Paul and his converts. Stanley Stowers has argued that Paul taught in private homes because, as an artisan, and as a Jew who believed in Christ, Paul lacked the status, reputation and socially-recognized role for speaking in public.<sup>33</sup> Ronald

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<sup>31</sup>Meeks, First Urban Christians, 27.

<sup>32</sup>Best, Paul and His Converts, 23.

<sup>33</sup>Stowers, "Social Status," 59-82.

Hock agrees, "To those of wealth and power, the appearance . . . of an artisan was that befitting a slave . . . ." <sup>34</sup>

Yet other recent studies argue that Paul may have enjoyed unusual privileges and status. Thus, Banks states,

Since citizenship in Tarsus was only given to those who had substantial property, Paul's family must have met this test. Their subsidizing his education in Jerusalem also suggests they possessed wealth and social status. <sup>35</sup>

Theissen is puzzled by the contradictory evidence:

Paul was only a cloth worker . . . and he possessed citizenship of both Tarsus and Rome. Since we learn from Dio Chrysostom's addresses to the Tarsians that the right of citizenship was in general withheld from cloth workers, it seems that Paul enjoyed an unusual, privileged status. <sup>36</sup>

Sociological theory helps to explain this contradiction somewhat by reminding us that social stratification has several dimensions. In the Roman empire these would be: extraction, formal ordo (from patrician down to plebs), personal condition (free, freed or slave), wealth, occupation, age and sex. Moreover, as Meeks points out, "one's status is not just the average of one's ranks in the several dimensions." <sup>37</sup> We need to ask further questions about the weight of each dimension, who is doing such

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<sup>34</sup>Ronald Hock, The Social Context of Paul's Ministry (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 50-65, cited by Stowers, "Social Status," 71. Compare Clark, who disagrees with Hock on the grounds that Paul was a Roman citizen. Clark, "Social Status," 110-111.

<sup>35</sup>Robert Banks, Paul's Idea of Community, (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), 153.

<sup>36</sup>Theissen, Social Setting, 36.

<sup>37</sup>Meeks, "Social Context," 268 and First Urban Christians, 53-55.

weighing and the degree of correlation between the status of the different dimensions. However, after a careful survey of "prosopographic" (intratextual) and indirect evidence, Meeks can still provide no more than an impressionistic sketch of the social composition of the Pauline churches<sup>38</sup> and no resolution of the question of Paul's social position.

Another unresolved question, which is of importance to the study of Galatians, is that of how Paul perceived and exercised his authority. This has recently been explored using models explicitly derived from the social sciences. Jerome Neyrey, borrows two anthropological models from Mary Douglas to study Paul's cosmological viewpoint in Galatians.<sup>39</sup>

According to Neyrey, Paul's viewpoint is of the strong group/rising grid type. This means that he has a strong impulse towards systemization (group) and there is a low, but improving degree of agreement between his views and the world as he experiences it.

Douglas suggests that when 'witchcraft accusations' are found, they are located in strong group, but medium or

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<sup>38</sup>"The extreme top and bottom of the Greco-Roman social scale are missing from the picture. It is hardly surprising that we meet no landed aristocrats, no senators, equites, nor (unless Erastus might qualify) decurians. But there is also no specific evidence of people who are destitute--such as hired menials and dependent handworkers; the poorest of the poor, peasants, agricultural slaves, and hired agricultural day labourers, are absent because of the urban setting of the Pauline groups. . . . The 'typical' Christian, however, the one who most often signals his presence in the letters by one or another small clue, is a free artisan or small trader." Meeks, First Urban Christians, 73. See also Meeks, "Social Context," 270-271.

<sup>39</sup>Neyrey, "Bewitched in Galatia," 72-100. For example, ". . . the accusation of 'bewitchment' can only be properly understood in [the] light of his perceptions of a deceived and hostile world." (75)

rising grid, for serious claims are implicit in the accusations that only certain ways of viewing and structuring the world are valid.<sup>40</sup>

Neyrey believes that such a witchcraft accusation is to be found in Gal 3:1. This is "the social phenomenon of an accusation that one's enemy or rival is either the devil himself or under the devil's power."<sup>41</sup>

By referring to Douglas' characteristics of "witchcraft societies", Neyrey is able to draw certain conclusions about how Paul perceived his interactions with the Galatian churches: (1) Paul is absolutely clear about who is "in" and who is "out"; (2) Paul is confused about the roles and statuses in the Galatian church; (3) Paul remains in constant interaction with the Galatian churches despite friction and tension; (4) Paul has no techniques for settling leadership or doctrinal disputes in Galatia; (5) Paul's authority is weak, both in Jerusalem and Galatia; (6) Paul was in intense and disorderly competition with rival preachers. In a nutshell,

Paul is fiercely jealous of his turf. . . . Whereas theologians focus on these conflicts in terms of conflicting theologies, a social science model urges us to see them as evidence of an intense sense of rivalry, competition, and even jealousy.<sup>42</sup>

There is room for much more research in this area. The results we have so far remind us of the distinctiveness of Paul's character and his social context. He does not

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<sup>40</sup>Neyrey, "Bewitched in Galatia," 76 and following.

<sup>41</sup>Neyrey, "Bewitched in Galatia," 91.

<sup>42</sup>Neyrey, "Bewitched in Galatia," 97. I would regard these conclusions more as hypotheses which need to be tested by further research by both sociological exegetes and social historians.

live in a generalized "New Testament world", but a specific world, as real as ours, yet very different from it. To borrow a phrase from the writer to the Hebrews, Paul is a person "who has been tempted in every way, just as we are."<sup>43</sup>

### The Readers: the Galatians

We begin our search for information on the context of the readers of Galatians with the geographical question we touched on in Chapter 2: where were these churches established? Were they in the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia, that is: churches that Paul and Barnabas had started during Paul's "first missionary journey", or were they in the northern territory, the land called Galatia by the Celts who migrated there in the third century B.C.?<sup>44</sup>

It is not necessary to review all the standard arguments for and against the southern province and the northern territory hypotheses. They can be found in any standard New Testament Introduction and in the older or more traditional commentaries.<sup>45</sup> More importantly, the evidence for neither is conclusive on its own. The arguments in favour of the southern province depend upon other

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<sup>43</sup>Hebrews 4:15

<sup>44</sup>In which case they would have been founded during Paul's "second" or "third" journey, according to the Acts chronology.

<sup>45</sup>See Kümmel, Introduction, 296-298, or, in more detail, Guthrie, Introduction, 450-457. Wayne H. House, Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 136-139, presents the arguments in chart form. See also, Burton, Galatians, xxi-xliv and Bruce, Galatians, 3-18.

assumptions such as "the historical reliability of the itineraries in Acts, and upon the argument from silence." As Betz points out, the first is unproven and the second is inconclusive.<sup>46</sup> Yet even the arguments for the alternative, the northern territory, are not strong.<sup>47</sup>

There was something out of the ordinary about Paul's first arrival in Galatia, which might suggest that the area did not lie on his most natural route. None of the ingenious explanations that have been offered for his ['because of a bodily illness'] (Gal 4:13) can really relieve our ignorance on this point, however.<sup>48</sup>

All this uncertainty explains why some commentators have been willing to adopt the southern provincial view:

If the epistle to the Galatians was indeed addressed to the churches of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe [rather than to unnamed and unknown towns in the north], then we have important historical, geographical, literary and epigraphic data which will provide material for its better understanding.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Betz, Galatians, 4.

<sup>47</sup>"All we can say is this: it is more probable that the Galatian churches were located in central Anatolia, and not specifically the southern cities of the Roman province. . . . The author of Acts does not have, or does not want to provide, information concerning these churches." Betz, Galatians, 5. Meeks, First Urban Christians, 42-43 also provides a useful sketch of the options. He guesses that Paul established communities in "one or more of the capitals of the three tribal 'republics' organized by Mark Antony", i.e. Tavium, Pessinus and Ancyra. See the map in Appendix 2.

<sup>48</sup>Meeks, First Urban Christians, 210.

<sup>49</sup>Bruce, Galatians, 18. Here, as elsewhere, we see that a strongly historical approach cannot always provide us with the solutions we need and can tempt us to over-interpret data. As with the desire to arrive at a precise identification of Paul's opponents, we can easily go beyond anything Galatians actually tells us and lean too heavily on secondary sources. See Lategan, "Galatians," 95-96.

Without this tempting data, we have to rely more on sociological research into conditions in the Galatian churches based on the internal evidence of Galatians itself.

What does such research reveal about social conditions in the Galatian churches? This approach implies a different way of handling the data. We need to set it

. . . within the context of everything we can learn about the social dimensions of the Christian communities and their environment--how they were organized, who exercised authority and by what means, how their rituals worked, how they maintained their boundaries over against the larger society, and so on. Symbols [and social forces] work, not in isolation, but as parts of an integral web of cultural significances.<sup>50</sup>

Meeks compares the Pauline churches with other Greco-Roman groups and organizations such as the household, the voluntary association, the synagogue and the philosophical and rhetorical school.<sup>51</sup>

The household was an important example of social organization for the Pauline churches. Not only did houses provide suitable meeting-places for small Christian groups, but these groups operated within the network of relationships of the extended family structure. This led to some tensions with the hierarchical family structure, but also resulted in a stronger sense of corporate identity.

While there are resemblances and differences between the Pauline churches and the many voluntary associations, Meeks finds no evidence that the Christian groups modeled themselves on them. The Christian groups made exclusive

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<sup>50</sup>Meeks, "Social Context," 276.

<sup>51</sup>Meeks, First Urban Christians, 74-84.

demands on their members' loyalty<sup>52</sup> yet were far more inclusive of people from all social strata.

The Pythagorean and Epicurean philosophical schools do not provide us with a more significant analogy either: ". . . they resemble the Pauline communities just to the extent that they take the form of modified households or voluntary associations."<sup>53</sup>

Lastly, the diaspora synagoge has been proposed as an obvious model, particularly as the Pauline churches took over the scriptures and a number of their activities. Strangely, however, there is very little evidence of contact with the synagogues or imitation of their organization (what little we know of it).<sup>54</sup> These analogies are therefore of limited help to us in explaining what the Galatian churches were like.

Betz, drawing on Theissen,<sup>55</sup> makes the following inferences about the Galatian churches from the letter

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<sup>52</sup>Meeks describes this as resocialization, rather than an aspect of secondary socialization. Baptism, for Paul's converts, signaled "an extraordinarily thoroughgoing resocialization, in which the sect was intended to become virtually the primary group for its members, supplanting all other loyalties." Meeks, First Urban Christians, 78.

<sup>53</sup>Meeks, First Urban Christians, 84.

<sup>54</sup>"Socially the most striking thing about the communities revealed in the Pauline letters is that there is no visible connection or even contact between them and the synagogues. . . . By the time the extant letters were written, the established pattern was instead to be found in every city associations of believers in Christ, drawn from Jews and Gentiles alike. The groups of believers were linked to one another but were entirely independent of the synagogues. The consequences for the future of Christianity were enormous." Meeks, First Urban Christians, 168.

<sup>55</sup>Theissen, Social Setting, 27-67.

itself. The fact that Paul wrote a well-composed, rhetorically structured letter "forces us to assume that he founded the Galatian churches not among the poor and uneducated but among the Hellenized and Romanized city population [with] . . . some education and modest financial means."<sup>56</sup> They must have been city-dwellers able to speak and understand Greek, rather than the rural descendants of the old Celts who still spoke the Celtic language.<sup>57</sup>

An important question is whether they had formerly been pagans or Jewish proselytes and God-fearers. Scholarly opinion is divided on this. Johnson states confidently that "Paul's preaching was probably the first they had ever heard of Torah; certainly they had not lived by it (3:2; 4:21; 5:4)."<sup>58</sup> Betz agrees. "They experienced the liberation from pagan superstition and the fear of Gods and demons-- things for which the people in this area were notorious. Instead they now endorsed 'monotheism'."<sup>59</sup> From this he

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<sup>56</sup>Betz, Galatians, 2.

<sup>57</sup>Citing A. H. M. Jones' The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces, 2d ed., revised by Michael Avi-Yonah et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), Meeks substantiates this view by commenting that although the Gauls were a rustic people, who preserved their own tribal languages until the fifth century, they had been organized into poleis by Pompey. In these cities, the upper classes had rapidly taken on Greek ways. Meeks, First Urban Christians, 210. We may surmise that perhaps Paul directed his rhetorical strategy to such people within the Galatian churches who would be most likely to be influential and also in favour of adopting new ideas.

<sup>58</sup>Johnson, Writings, 303.

<sup>59</sup>Betz, Galatians, 3. Best notes that one important difference between Paul and his converts was the degree of temptation to return to paganism. For Paul this was virtually nil, while for many of his converts the temptation was great. Best, Converts, 12.

infers that they experienced a radical freedom from all the distinctions and discriminations which had been sanctioned by it. The precise historical nature of their former religions<sup>60</sup> is not as important as the direction in which they were moving: towards spiritual and social liberation.<sup>61</sup>

Davies criticizes the view that they were formerly pagans.<sup>62</sup> He argues that both the form and substance of Galatians strongly suggests an audience of Jews and Gentiles deeply touched by Judaism. Yet he concedes that the many parallels which Betz adduces, between the letter and classical Greek and Latin authors, shows that they were "also culturally highly Hellenized".

This question cannot be adequately resolved using theological and literary data. Further research is needed. The explicit use of social science models can play a valuable role in this process by facilitating new ways of looking at the data. My provisional judgment is that Paul's emotions and actions are better explained on the hypothesis that his readers did not understand the rite of circumcision they were considering undergoing.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>These could either have been various forms of their traditional Celtic religion, or one or more of the newer Hellenistic mystery religions. See Roetzel, World, 46 and Johnson, Writings, 25, 29-30 for comments on the social and psychological functions of such syncretism.

<sup>61</sup>"Paul's message of 'freedom in Christ' must have found attentive ears among people interested in political, social, cultural and religion emancipation." Betz, Galatians, 2-3.

<sup>62</sup>Davies, "Galatians," 176-177

<sup>63</sup>Their pagan background has important bearings on Paul's concern about their "bewitchment" (Gal 3:1) and their apparent failure to "keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal 6:25b), which they had received through simply believing Paul's message (Gal 3:1-5).

### The Subjects: Paul's Opponents

The usual approach to the question of Paul's opponents is to decide whether they were Jews or Gentiles and to try and identify their theological convictions. Little consideration is usually given to their social context.

Roetzel surveys briefly the three main views identified using this approach.<sup>64</sup> They are: firstly, the traditional view that they were Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, seeking to correct Paul's misrepresentation of the gospel. Secondly, the view of Johannes Munck, that they were Gentile members of the Galatian churches who had learnt of circumcision from reading Gen 17 and had concluded that circumcision was required of all believers. Thirdly, the view of Walter Schmithals, that Paul's Galatian congregation were trying to accommodate Paul's gospel to their own social and religious context by combining it with both Jewish elements, such as circumcision, and pagan elements from their culture.

Guthrie<sup>65</sup> mentions two further options: (1) Kirsopp Lake's theory "that the troublers were non-Christian Jews who saw in the Gentile Christian Church an opportunity to win over proselytes to Judaism," and (2) J. H. Ropes' view "that the troublers included a group of Gentile perfectionists" who saw themselves as superior to law.

More recently, Robert Jewett has proposed that they were a politically orientated group of nomistic Jewish

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<sup>64</sup>Roetzel, Letters of Paul, 65-66.

<sup>65</sup>Donald Guthrie, Galatians, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 161-162.

Christians from Judea.<sup>66</sup>

Despite this variety of opinion, scholarly consensus still tends towards the traditional viewpoint.<sup>67</sup> John Drane expresses it as follows:

Paul's opponents in the Galatian churches were Judaizers, who had entered these churches more or less immediately after Paul's visit there, and by the promulgation of a Pharisee type of Judaism-cum-Christianity had misled the believers into thinking that they needed to be circumcised and to keep the Law if they were to be fully qualified Christians at all.<sup>68</sup>

Both Betz and Lategan remind us that the Galatian letter itself is our primary source for reconstructing the views of Paul's opponents in Galatia.<sup>69</sup> It is also important to remember that Paul's letter is an argument for his point of view.

Identification [of Paul's opponents] is difficult because we possess only Paul's refutation of their views. He can leave a lot unsaid because his readers know his opponents. He himself may not have been accurately informed about them or fully understood their views. They for their part have left us no statement of what they believed. It is impossible to draw an accurate picture of them.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>R. Jewett, "The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation," New Testament Studies 17 (1970-1971): 198-211. Fung discusses the difficulties of his hypothesis, principally the paucity of evidence that it was specifically Zealot pressure which caused the nomistic campaign among the Gentile churches. Fung, Galatians, 5-7.

<sup>67</sup>See the surveys in Drane, Paul, 78-98 and G. Howard, Paul: Crisis in Galatia, Monograph Series (Society for New Testament Studies) 35 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1-19.

<sup>68</sup>Drane, Paul, 78.

<sup>69</sup>Betz, Galatians, 5 and Lategan, "Galatians," 96.

<sup>70</sup>Best, Paul and His Converts, 113.

Keeping these methodological cautions in mind, we may accept the following additional information which Betz derives from the letter.<sup>71</sup> (1) Paul's opponents came into contact with the Galatian churches after Paul had founded them. (2) Paul considered their gospel to be "a different gospel". (3) This gospel was in some way associated with the observance of the Jewish Torah and with the ritual of circumcision.<sup>72</sup> (4) This message had confused the Pauline Galatian churches. (5) Paul considers his opponents to be in the same line as "the dissenting faction of the Jerusalem conference, 'the men from James,' and the Cephas group at Antioch," though they may not have seen themselves in that way.

On the basis of this evidence, Betz concludes that Paul's opponents were Jewish-Christian missionaries who were ignoring the agreement of Jerusalem<sup>73</sup> and were preaching a gospel which, except for the demand of obedience to the Torah and circumcision, must have been the same as Paul's.

Otherwise it would be difficult to understand why Paul is so eager to demonstrate that they are so radically different from him. There is no real reason to believe that these anti-Paulinists were morally dishonest or theologically deficient.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Betz, Galatians, 7.

<sup>72</sup>Sociologically, these functioned to maintain the social boundaries of Jewish communities. However, Paul considered their observance in a largely Gentile community to be a denial of the gospel. Meeks, First Urban Christians, 103.

<sup>73</sup>This was possibly because they were independent of Jerusalem, as Meeks thinks. Meeks, First Urban Christians, 132.

<sup>74</sup>Betz, Galatians, 7.

Yet Paul's angry opposition to his opponents is one of the most striking features of the letter.<sup>75</sup> This fact has to be adequately accounted for, particularly when one thinks of other instances in Paul's letters when he is very tolerant of those who disagreed with him. We need to explain his insistence on the rightness of his perspective and his concern for his converts. Neyrey's contention that "Paul was fiercely jealous of his turf" may well reflect one element in the situation,<sup>76</sup> but there is other evidence which needs to be accounted for. Paul also loved his converts. This is evident even when he is speaking severely to them.<sup>77</sup> He saw himself as their spiritual parent (sometimes a father and sometimes a mother). This helps to explain his strong

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<sup>75</sup>"That Paul is angry and defensive is obvious upon a careful reading of Galatians. The opening verse lashes out in response to Christians who claim that he received his gospel from the apostles (see also vv. 11-12) and had distorted it by requiring circumcision (see Genesis 17.9-14)." Roger L. Omanson, "A Gentile Palaver," in Issues in Bible Translation, UBS Monograph Series, No. 3, ed. Philip C. Stine (London, New York and Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1988), 275.

<sup>76</sup>Proponents of a new model are often tempted to overstate the new insights derived from it. (One thinks of the way Darwin over-emphasized the continuity of man and animal.) This is not to deny the value of Neyrey's approach. His proposals have the merit of describing Paul's relationship with his opponents in a fresh and vivid way, and reveal that Paul's commitment to his gospel can be seen (and probably was seen by some) as mere rivalry. It does not address, from the perspective of Christian faith, the question of whether Paul was right to fight for his version of the gospel. All it shows is that there is more than just one issue in Paul's conflict with his opponents.

<sup>77</sup>"Paul's use of the names of his recipients often softens what may otherwise seem a harsh statement, e.g. 'O foolish Galatians' (Gal 3:1; cf. 2 Cor 6:11; Phil 4:15)." Best, Paul and His Converts, 29.

language,<sup>78</sup> as does his conviction that he was Christ's spokesman.<sup>79</sup>

Thus, Paul's perception of his opponents is more important than who they in fact were and what they stood for. He may have been wrong about them. He may have changed his opinion of them if he had personally met them.<sup>80</sup> After all, his apostolic letter was a substitute for resolving his concern for the Galatians by meeting with them face to face.<sup>81</sup> As Paul did not know his opponents personally, their social identity and commitments are not as relevant to our understanding of the letter as how Paul imagined them.

Thus, when considering the context of Paul's opponents, the relevant critical tools are not only

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<sup>78</sup>" . . . the virulence of Paul's defence of his converts resembles nothing less than that of parents who see their children threatened." Best, Paul and His Converts, 121.

<sup>79</sup>"Paul, apparently, had no doubts about himself, his confidence being based on his experience on the road to Damascus. Since that time he believed himself close to Christ and able to speak in his name. As we have seen he regularly spoke in this way to his converts and there is no reason to suppose his confidence evaporated when faced by opposition." Best, Paul and His Converts, 120.

<sup>80</sup>Best speculates from his own experience and knowledge of contemporary Christian conflicts, that Paul might have changed his attitude to his opponents, had he met them. "We believe evil more quickly of those with whom we have no contact than those we have. Because Protestants and Catholics in N. Ireland have little personal contact they believe extraordinary things about each other." Best, Paul and His Converts, 122-123.

<sup>81</sup>The Antioch episode (Gal 2:11-14) indicates that "the primary means for resolving conflict [among the early Christians] seems to have been meeting and talking." Meeks, First Urban Christians, 113.

historical and sociological, as they were with Paul and the Galatian churches, but include literary criticism and reception theory. Questions of reception also serve to introduce the next important series of contexts: canonical ones. Here we consider why, and in what ways, Paul's defence of his version of Christianity was judged by later generations of the church to be correct and authoritative.

Canonical Contexts:  
Ratifiers of the Letter's Authority

As mentioned earlier, we may speak of the canonical contexts of a document such as Galatians in two different ways. Firstly, there are the social and ecclesiastical contexts in which Paul's letter has been read and preserved since its circulation amongst the Galatian churches to which it was first addressed. Here we think of all the contexts in which it has been read and interpreted as an authentic Pauline document, both before and after the close of the canon, in both the Eastern and Western church.

Secondly, Galatians has a canonical context in the sense of a broad co-text. Here the focus is on the authority which the letter shares with others in the New Testament. Shared authority raises the question of how to evaluate and correlate different statements and viewpoints which are made in documents which share canonical status. This question is further complicated by the different ways it has been solved at different times and in different places.

It is a problem which has received new attention in recent years by the rise of "canonical criticism", as differently practiced by Brevard S. Childs, James A. Sanders

and, previously, G. Ernest Wright.<sup>82</sup> It is part of a broader movement towards reading a biblical text within the context of the whole Bible.<sup>83</sup>

### The Canonization of Galatians

The integrity of Galatians as an authentic Pauline epistle has never been successfully challenged. Its status as a genuine apostolic letter resulted in its being part of the core around which the earliest Christian canons evolved.

The historical processes by which the canon developed are beyond the scope of this study. However, we may accept the outline provided by Metzger:<sup>84</sup>

In the earliest period, that of the so-called Apostolic Fathers, not much more is disclosed than testimony to the bare existence here and there of one or another Gospel or Epistle of the New Testament. In subsequent generations we can gradually perceive the outlines of a collection of four Gospels and of a number of Epistles attributed to Paul and to other early leaders in the apostolic Church. Finally, after many years, during which books of local and temporary canonicity came and went . . . the limits of the New Testament canon as we know it were set forth for the first time in a Festal Letter written A.D. 367 by Athanasius, bishop of

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<sup>82</sup>See Leland J. White, "Biblical Theologies and Theologies of Liberation--Part 1: Canon-Supporting Framework," Biblical Theology Bulletin, 11 (April 1981): 36. She finds that Wright's canon-within-the-canon does not account for the finality of the canon, nor does it allow for God's action in history. Childs' approach does allow for God's historical action, but does not easily allow for human action: "Is there a history of the church after the death of the last apostolic witness?" (38)

We focus here on Childs' study of Galatians in The New Testament as Canon.

<sup>83</sup>Smit, "Responsible Hermeneutics," 463.

<sup>84</sup>Bruce M. Metzger, The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development and Significance (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 7-8. See also pages 39-247.

Alexandria. But, as evidence from subsequent writers reveals, not all in the church were ready to accept precisely the canon as identified by Athanasius, and throughout the following centuries there were minor fluctuations in the East as well as in the West.

This summary reflects the process by which the Church acquired an authoritative body of distinctively Christian Scriptures paralleling the Jewish Scriptures:<sup>85</sup> (1) Jesus' words were treasured in oral tradition. (2) Apostolic letters interpreting his person and work were sent to individual churches which then circulated them more widely. (3) By the end of the first century, other Christian leaders such as Clement and Ignatius show signs of regarding these apostolic documents as normative. (4) In the post-apostolic age, authority was seen to reside primarily in those Gospels and Epistles in which the voice of Jesus and the Apostles could be heard. These documents were read in public worship along with the Jewish Scriptures. (5) In the second and third centuries, these Scripture were translated into Latin, Syriac and the Coptic dialects of Egypt.

Paul's letter to the Galatians can be traced through this whole process<sup>86</sup>: Galatians is a letter which

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<sup>85</sup>Here I follow the phases sketched in Metzger, Canon, 2-7. Johnson provides a similar outline, noting the successive phases of composition (the crystallization of community traditions), use in public worship, collection, selection and ratification. Johnson, Writings, 531-538. See also, A. B. du Toit, "The Canon of the New Testament," in Guide to the New Testament, vol. 1, ed. A. B. du Toit, trans. D. Roy Briggs (Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel, 1979), 184-268.

<sup>86</sup>In fact, Barrett comments that the restrictive aspect of the canonical process "can be seen already in Acts, where the Council which begins with a consideration of gospel preaching ends with the Decree." Barrett, Freedom and Obligation, 108.

consciously presents itself as an authoritative interpretation of the significance of the gospel of Jesus Christ, by someone who had seen him. The fact that Paul addressed his letter to the churches of Galatia is one of a number of indications that individual epistles of Paul were circulated and even collected at an early date.<sup>87</sup> Burton identifies "reminiscences of the language of Galatians" in 1 Peter, Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Polycarp and Justin Martyr.<sup>88</sup>

About A.D. 140 Marcion placed Galatians at the head of his "Apostolikon," the second part of his canon. From this, the very first occasion on which Galatians is placed within a closed canon, we see the important link between social experience, belief and canon, for it was Marcion's experience of rejection and excommunication which led to his formal delimitation of his severely truncated canon.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Metzger, Canon, 259-261. "The evidence suggests that Paul's letters were the first Christian writings gathered into a collection. . . . it is clear that within thirty years of his death, Paul's letters were being used by churches other than the ones for whom they were originally written, and were regarded as having a special authority."

<sup>88</sup>Burton, Galatians, lxviii.

<sup>89</sup>While it is true to say, as du Toit does ("Canon," 203), that his canon is "a logical consequence of his theological system," the sociology of knowledge reminds us of the link between such beliefs and social contexts. For example, Marcion's preference for "Galatian Christianity" might equally be explained by his learning of such traditions in Sinope, which is linked by road to the north Galatian city of Ancyra.

The process by which reform movements become sects and then form an ideology to legitimize their state of separation is explained by two sociological models discussed by Watson. The first model shows that when a reform movement becomes a sect it "sets up rigid and clearly defined barriers between itself and the parent community." The second indicates that in such a state of separation, the group may denounce its opponents, use antitheses to distance itself from its parent community, and reinterpret the

We know nothing of the social context in which the Muratorian Canon was originally compiled, but it does bear witness to the inclusion of Galatians in the first full canon-list to appear before the end of the second century.<sup>90</sup> On the basis of internal evidence, we can say that the Muratorian Canon regarded Galatians as apostolic, historically authentic and both intended for and accepted by the whole church.<sup>91</sup>

Burton notes that, from A.D. 175 onwards, quotations from the epistle which identify it by name are found in the writings of Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, while "from the end of the second century quotations from our epistle are frequent, and no question of its Pauline authorship was raised until the nineteenth century."<sup>92</sup>

#### Post-Canonical Interpretive Contexts

However, the fact that no case against the authorship and authenticity, and hence authority, of Galatians has ever been successfully made does not mean that there has always been consensus on the meaning of the letter. While it would appear to be self-evident, it needs to be explicitly recognized that Galatians, as an important part of the Pauline corpus, has been interpreted under the influence of

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religious traditions of this parent community to try to show that it is the sole legitimate heir to those traditions. See Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles, 19-20 and 184.

<sup>90</sup>The Muratorian Canon has been dated as early as A.D. 170. See Burton, Galatians, lxix.

<sup>91</sup>Du Toit, "Canon," 247-248.

<sup>92</sup>Burton, Galatians, lxix.

differing theological traditions at different times. Often these theological traditions have been so strong that they have obscured important aspects of Paul's message. While this has been particularly true of the Lutheran theological tradition, it is only one recent example of this trend.<sup>93</sup> The danger of these dominant theological traditions is that they can give the illusion that we have grasped the fundamental meaning of Galatians, when all we are doing is echoing the dominant tradition of our time and place.

This calls for a greater degree of historical awareness in our exegetical handling of the text. If we wish to ensure that we hear the message of Galatians for our own context, we need to develop a stronger awareness how it has been variously interpreted in other contexts. There have been various "assured conclusions" not only regarding the theological heart of Galatians but also regarding particular exegetical cruxes, such as the location of the Galatian churches. These variations are the result of what philosophers of science call the "context of discovery".

How scientists arrive at theories is . . . a psychological, sociological, or historical problem and as such lies within the context of discovery. Within this latter context one might ask how scientific

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<sup>93</sup>Stephen Neill, in an entertaining illustration of this, mentions how similar Bultmann's thought is to Luther's: "Here is man lost in sin, unable to attain salvation even though he struggles valiantly to do so. Here is the Gospel, announcing the abolition of the law and the free gift of God in Christ. Here is the life of faith, the glad response to the Gospel, the release from the shackles of a Judaism which corresponds so interestingly to medieval Catholicism. Such a scheme is eminently preachable, and there are still plenty of people preaching it, and believing it to be the heart of what Paul was saying.

"But is it historically correct?" Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, The Interpretation of the New Testament: 1861-1986, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 412.

discoveries relate to qualities such as intuition, creativity, political and ethical values, cultural-historical and thus also religious factors. Logical positivism maintains that the results of such an inquiry have no bearing on the question of the justification of scientific knowledge: what can justify a theory is not its origin but only correct argument.<sup>94</sup>

It is factors from the context of discovery which explain why W. M. Ramsay's archaeological evidence appears to be more persuasive to British than to American or European scholars. A comment such as that of J. A. Findlay that, "It is significant that all those who know the geography of Asia Minor well are 'South Galatianists' to a man,"<sup>95</sup> needs to be tested from this perspective, rather than just cited. Such dominant exegetical and theological traditions need to be understood as the conclusions arrived at in specific canonical contexts. Positivist notions of validation<sup>96</sup> cannot explain why the same evidence may be used to justify variant, even divergent points of view.

It is quite beyond the scope of this study to detail the history of exegesis and theological application of Galatians. But this is not to minimize the importance of such historical awareness. It protects us from thinking that influential interpretations of a canonical text have the same authority as the text itself.

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<sup>94</sup>Van Huyssteen, Justification of Faith, 7.

<sup>95</sup>Bruce, Galatians, 8. Neill and Wright also incline to this judgment, but they add, "this is one of the points at which further study may lead us to greater certainty than we possess at the present time." Interpretation, 156.

<sup>96</sup>As implied in Stephen Neill's comment, "Nothing may be accepted on authority. Every tradition, however venerable, must be questioned, and no more respect may be accorded to it than is justified by the evidence on which it rests." Neill, Interpretation, 62.

### Canonical Criticism of Galatians

This leads us on to ask what role the rest of the canon has in a contemporary interpretation of a canonical text such as Galatians. What is the role of the canonical context in this sense? This question complements the one we have just been discussing by asking how a collection of historically conditioned texts, such as Paul's letters, can address the needs of an ongoing community of faith. That is: how can the interpretation of Galatians be responsibly returned to the ecclesiastical and doctrinal context from which it was detached by historical criticism?<sup>97</sup>

One of the scholars who has made a systematic recent attempt to address this question is Brevard Childs. He attempts to qualify the importance of historical criticism in the study of the Pauline letters in the light of the fact that the New Testament canon itself does not preserve the historical contexts of the letters, except for occasional details. "From the outset the letters were seen as having a meaning that transcends their local context."<sup>98</sup> Childs' canonical criticism is not another critical method, rather it is an attempt to use standard critical tools in a hermeneutical context which recognizes that the church needs and uses the whole canon to guide its corporate life of

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<sup>97</sup>" . . . given the detachment of biblical interpretation from the community of faith and the insistence that its meaning is what it meant in its ancient context, the question naturally arises as to how the Bible can still be responsibly interpreted and used by the community of faith." R. W. L. Moberly, "The Church's Use of the Bible: The Work of Brevard Childs," The Expository Times 99 (January 1988): 105.

<sup>98</sup>Moberly, "Church's Use," 108.

faith.<sup>99</sup> We will look briefly at how Childs interprets critical issues relating to Galatians using this hermeneutical framework and will then consider what insights his canonical approach contribute to our hermeneutical model.

In his treatment of Galatians<sup>100</sup>, Childs devotes more than half of the discussion to a review of current critical questions. His interaction with current debate on the form of the letter is limited to some comments on Betz's rhetorical approach which he judges to distort "the real exegetical questions regarding rhetorical function and Paul's intentionality."<sup>101</sup> He is equally critical of Dahl's theory that Paul is making use of traditional rabbinical hermeneutics in Gal 3, though here he gives more reasons for his criticism. His objection to Dahl's view is that the key to understanding a passage like Gal 3:10-12 cannot be some time-conditioned insight of that kind: "It is without analogy to find the essential key to a whole book to have been lost in some time-conditioned aspect of the literature

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<sup>99</sup>See the ten "canonical theses" in Johnson, Writings, 544-547 for a fuller expression of this point of view. For example, thesis 6: "What distinguishes the Scripture scholar and theologian from the historian of ideas and student of literature is the effective acceptance of the canon. For history and literature as such, the concept of canon is meaningless, except as a convenient categorization or the recognition that a certain group of writings achieved classical status for a certain period of history. But such recognition does not affirm the distinctive interrelationship between texts and a living community over an extended period of time, which is essential to the notion of canon."

<sup>100</sup>In New Testament as Canon, 297-310.

<sup>101</sup>Childs, New Testament as Canon, 302.

which had been misunderstood from the beginning."<sup>102</sup>

This is consistent with our view of the supplementary role of historical insights of this nature.<sup>103</sup> His review of critical debate on the occasion, the protagonists and the recipients of Galatians illustrates this further. In essence, he rejects "the assumption that the clearer the historical focus becomes the better the interpretation of the biblical text."<sup>104</sup> He insists that the determinative perspective is the canonical text, and that extra-biblical evidence may only be used in interpreting its canonical intentionality. We must note that Childs is careful not to break the link between Paul's perspective and historical reality,<sup>105</sup> but he argues consistently for the priority of Paul's perspective when reading Galatians as a canonical letter.

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<sup>102</sup>Childs, New Testament as Canon, 304. This view does not have to imply that Galatians has a static message which has already been understood by the church, but only that the key to understanding it is not contained outside both the text and the Christian canon. Childs thinks that Dahl's insights illuminate the background and sharpen the contemporary reader's perception of the text, but insists that these insights need to be seen "in continuity with a larger canonical function of the letter in addressing a continuing community of faith in its own historical context."

<sup>103</sup>Childs' method of reading a text is formally related to New Criticism, with its insistence on the self-sufficiency of a literary work. See Longman, Literary Approaches, 27, 28. This point is more fully discussed in J. Barton, Reading the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 140-157.

<sup>104</sup>Childs, New Testament as Canon, 305.

<sup>105</sup>His approach "recognizes that the subject matter of the biblical text is not identical with common historical reality, but it strives in principle neither to identify nor to isolate these two spheres of reality." Childs, New Testament as Canon, 306.

At this point, Childs deals with the fundamental hermeneutical question of ". . . how a fully time-conditioned letter which was written under severe stress in order to address a specific situation in first-century Galatia could function as normative scripture for subsequent generations of Christians, namely for us . . . ." <sup>106</sup> Again, for him, the key lies in the priority of Paul's perspective. Paul's understanding of the problem at Galatia was much narrower than that of the Galatian churches in which his letter was first read. He did not have all the details and he was not in the situation at the time. Instead of understanding the problem in terms of local historical causes and effects, Paul interprets it by relating it to his theological understanding of Old Testament history. In all these respects, Paul's interpretation of the Galatian problem is more accessible and meaningful to subsequent (canonical) readers than the interpretation arrived at by the Galatian churches when they read Paul's letter.

Thus far, we may agree with Childs. However, in his final distinction between the meanings derived by the original addressees and that derived by subsequent readers, he lapses too easily into a Lutheran understanding of which elements of Galatians have a "representative and typical function" for subsequent Christian readers. Thus, he poses a simple ontological alternative between "faith" and "works" without discussing what these alternatives meant to Paul, nor acknowledging that they have been variously interpreted by subsequent readers. While Childs' theory makes careful provision for historical-critical insights, he seems in

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<sup>106</sup>Childs, New Testament as Canon, 306-307.

practice to recognize a Barthian separation between human history and divine history.<sup>107</sup> In his assertion that the death of Christ never becomes representative of human action, Childs seems to part company with the Paul who, by his own canonical admission has been "crucified with Christ" and who bears on his body the marks of Jesus.<sup>108</sup>

How are we to evaluate Childs' use of the canonical context of Galatians?<sup>109</sup> His insistence on the importance of the church's interpretation of Galatians is valid, and his qualification of the historical perspective is acceptable. However, we may agree with those who doubt whether his notion of canon can be used guide the application of biblical material "from one specific situation to any situation."<sup>110</sup> Moberly concludes his sympathetic assessment of Childs' work with this comment:

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<sup>107</sup>Many of his comments have a Barthian tone, such as: ". . . the witness of the apostle [cannot] simply be equated with historical reconstructions, even if more accurate historically." (305) "By grounding his argument in the faith of Abraham, Paul removes the debate from the sphere of merely contingent history." (308) "Paul grounds his authority upon direct revelation by God. His message is not derived from human tradition, but stems from divine disclosure." (310)

<sup>108</sup>Childs, New Testament as Canon, 309. Gal 2:20 and 6:17.

<sup>109</sup>We may disregard Childs' tendency to abuse the adjective "canonical", using it to qualify nearly thirty different words. Metzger complains of the "mystique" which this unnecessarily creates. Metzger, Canon, 36.

Moberly rightly remarks on this point that Childs merely uses the term "canonical" as shorthand for his approach to the Bible. "It is important that debate should centre upon the substantive issues to do with the relationship of the Bible to the community of faith, and not be sidetracked into secondary issues of terminology." Moberly, "Church's Use," 108.

<sup>110</sup>Moberly, "Church's Use," 106.

While the relationship between Bible and church may be relatively straightforward in theory, in practice the intractable plurality of communities of faith raises problems that need more specific treatment if the relationship between Bible and church is to be exploited as fruitfully as Childs proposes.<sup>111</sup>

The various canonical contexts of Galatians stand between us and the pre-canonical contexts as a reminder of the varied functions of historical awareness in the interpretive process: we are engaged in interpreting a text which not only has its own historical origins and background, but also a rich history of interpretation. The factor which unifies these historical processes is the church, which occasioned, received, obeyed, disregarded, preserved, circulated, copied, translated, disseminated and treasured this letter for a variety of reasons. The canonical contexts of Galatians remind us that Galatians in all its particularity<sup>112</sup> belongs to the church as one of the charter documents by which it defines its identity.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup>Moberly, "Church's Use," 109.

<sup>112</sup>". . . to the apostle himself, letters to particular churches written on special occasions were the proper literary form for making theological statements. Of this fact both exegesis and theology, not to mention preaching, have to take account. The particularity of Pauline epistles points to the historicalness of all theology, even that of the apostle." Nils A. Dahl cited by Metzger, Canon, 266.

<sup>113</sup>"These are the public documents of the church, the framework for its discussions. They are public in the sense that their first use is to be read aloud in worship. They are also public because they offer themselves to the whole community's debate and discernment." Johnson, Writings, 545.

Contemporary Contexts

The more serious division [in contemporary theology] is not between theologians who are socially conservative or socially progressive or even revolutionary, but between those who have probed the depths of the problem of speaking about God at all in our cultural situation, and those who have not.

J. S. Krüger, "Theology as Response to Social Change: A Case Study."

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened by a yoke of slavery." With this cry at the start of Galatians 5 Paul reaffirms both the "indicative" and the "imperative" of Christian salvation. Betz argues that freedom is "the basic concept underlying Paul's argument throughout the letter."<sup>114</sup> It is also, as we implied in our discussion of the liberation paradigm, a dominant concept in the world today.

In our analysis of contemporary contexts we will have to see how it relates to other contemporary concerns. At the same time we will need to search for correspondences between dominant perspectives in contemporary contexts and the pre-canonical contexts of Galatians.<sup>115</sup> In this we will

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<sup>114</sup>Betz, Galatians, 255: It is central to the narratio section as the motivation of Paul's struggles; it is implied in the language of the Christological passages (Gal 1:4; 2:20; 3:13; 4:4-5) which express the Christian's redemption from slavery to this present evil age; it surfaces fully in Gal 3:26-28, and it underlies the Hagar and Sarah allegory (Gal 4:22-31), which immediately precedes this parenetical passage. See also his comments in his introduction on page 29 and his comments on Gal 2:4-5; 4:22-31; 5:1,13.

<sup>115</sup>Some other important concepts raised by Galatians are questions of spiritual experience and the rational explanation of irrational phenomena, the role of the "outsider" and the appearance of "illegitimacy" as a mark of Christianity, and the delicacy of freedom. Betz, Galatians, 29-33.

be encouraged by Paul's own example. For, as Räsänen confirms, Paul's own statements about his call show that practice was the mother of theory and that he continued the process of relating new experience to sacred tradition to the end of his life.<sup>116</sup>

#### Methodological Questions

If we are to analyze contemporary contexts, we need to establish the tools we are to use. This matter is not as easy as it would seem. Nel has recently described the experience of reading through the literature of context analysis as one of "sheer chaos" with little consensus about the most promising theoretical approaches to the study of society and politics.<sup>117</sup>

Sunter, who has practiced context analysis on behalf of a multinational corporation, emphasizes the importance of reducing the number of factors and variables: "We do that by looking at the 'rules of the game' and profiling the main actors. We ask ourselves what makes the world tick? What makes South Africa tick?"<sup>118</sup> This process of identifying the key variables involves us in the usual research procedure of generating hypotheses by means of observation

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<sup>116</sup>Heikki Räsänen, "Paul's Conversion and the Development of his View of the Law," New Testament Studies 33 (1987): 404-419.

<sup>117</sup>Danie T. Nel, "Methods and Models of Context Analysis: The Challenge to Missiology," Missionalia 16 (November 1988): 149.

<sup>118</sup>Clem Sunter, The World and South Africa in the 1990s (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau and Tafelberg, 1987), 14.

and imagination and testing them by means of some process of verification or falsification.

### Modern and Post-Modern Philosophical Paradigms

We need to give consideration to the philosophical framework underlying our research. Comstock distinguishes between pre-modern, modern and post-modern philosophical frameworks, illustrating them by the change in attitude to the words truth, goodness and beauty.<sup>119</sup> Pre-moderns assume the validity of such concepts, while moderns would prefer to speak of accuracy, avoidance of coercion and consensus. Post-moderns, in his view, say that there are no facts: ". . . the rhetorical form we adopt in order to relate those facts coerces them into a message suited to our interests."<sup>120</sup> Similarly, "goodness" cannot be separated from the narratives about it told by particular groups, while notions of consensus and peaceful silencing are suspect in an era of feminist and post-Holocaust theology.<sup>121</sup>

The problem with these varied philosophical options is that they constitute different and incommensurate forms of

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<sup>119</sup>Gary Comstock, "Is Postmodern Religious Dialogue Possible?" Faith and Philosophy 6 (April 1989): 189-197.

<sup>120</sup>Comstock, "Postmodern Religious Dialogue," 191.

<sup>121</sup>"We worry about efforts to plan and build one world, one conversation of mankind, one story of humanity. Which tribe came up with this particular idea of aesthetic wholeness anyway? Why is it that those who benefit most from monopoly, capitalism and bureaucratic socialism like the image so much? Why do the powerless and the marginal seem to have so little use for it?" Comstock, "Postmodern Religious Dialogue," 191.

discourse.<sup>122</sup> We will see that different philosophical frameworks generate different analyses of the same context. Thus, it is important to identify the philosophical orientation underlying any particular analysis.<sup>123</sup>

### Sociological Perspective

Secondly, we need to identify the sociological perspective (and related assumptions) which is being used for any particular analysis. As we noted in our discussion of sociological approaches to the New Testament and of the liberation paradigm, there is a fundamental choice to be made between viewing society as a functional whole, or as divided in two.<sup>124</sup> This choice is not the only possible one, for, as Giddens notes, all sociological theory must be historical, anthropological and critical.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup>Comstock, "Postmodern Religious Dialogue," 192.

For a fuller discussion of the issue of incommensurability, see also Nancey Murphy, "Relating Theology and Science in a Postmodern Age." CTNS Bulletin 7 (Autumn (1987): 8 and Nancey Murphy and James William McClendon, Jr. "Distinguishing Modern and Postmodern Theologies," Modern Theology 5 (April 1989): 191-214.

<sup>123</sup>Nel identifies four contemporary orientations: logical positivism, phenomenology, critical theory and Charles Taylor's pragmatic theory. Nel, "Methods and Models," 150-155.

<sup>124</sup>"An illustration of the first model is suggested by Talcott Parsons (at least the postwar Parsons) and his school, and of the second, by the Marxist current (all of its component schools, whatever differences they may have, accepting both the principle of class struggle and dialectics as a duality operating within society)." Lyotard, Postmodern Condition, 11.

<sup>125</sup>See Anthony Giddens, Sociology: A Brief but Critical Introduction (London: MacMillan, 1982), 16. Giddens' theory of structuration is an important critical response to the orthodox consensus in social science up to the 1960s. "It was the dominance of structural constraints and functional needs of the system that barred both human agency in the making of history and also in the recovery of

The third important perspective is that broad cluster of humanist perspectives known as interactionism, which focuses on the process of interaction in particular contexts. The sociology of knowledge is an important part of this perspective with, as we have noted, important implications for the sociology of religion.

### Focus of Attention

No less problematic is the question of what aspects of the context to analyze. We follow the divisions used by Theissen in his functional analysis of the social context of Palestinian Christianity: socio-economic, socio-ecological, socio-political and socio-cultural,<sup>126</sup> without necessarily following that order. However, we need to recognize that

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time and space as inherent in social practices." Hamish F. Dickie-Clark, "Hermeneutics and Giddens' Theory of Structuration," in Anthony Giddens: Consensus and Controversy, eds. Jon Clark and Sohan and Celia Modgil (Falmer Press, forthcoming). Giddens has been criticised by sociologists such as Susan J. Hekman for working within modern rather postmodern categories.

<sup>126</sup>"Socio-economic factors are the organization of work and the distribution of its products between productive workers and those who enjoy the profits; socio-ecological factors are the results of the interplay between man and nature as expressed in the relationship between city and country and in the trading pattern of a country. Socio-political factors include the structures of government . . . i.e., the opportunities of various groups and institutions for imposing their will as a general law, claiming legitimacy for it and overcoming opposition by force. Socio-cultural factors include all values, norms and traditions which give a group self-awareness and identity. . . . The terminological stress on the prefix 'socio-' in each case is meant to emphasize that the factors under investigation do not have an immediate effect on human behaviour, but make their impact through the 'totality' of all social interconnections." Theissen, First Followers, 31, emphasis added.

our philosophical and sociological orientation influences what data we analyze in these broad categories.

The brief comments below on the First World, the Third World and South Africa merely illustrate this point. At the same time the analytical comments of Sunter, Giddens and Nolan do raise the kind of important contemporary issues which need to be related in some way to the issues raised by Galatians.

Beckmann rightly points out that the great issues of the modern world are both economic and religious. Theologians need to be fully and critically aware of global realities affecting trade and economic growth: "We do not need leaders of the Christian mission following uncritically in the footsteps of capitalism; neither do we need missionaries recommending class revolution."<sup>127</sup>

### First World and Third World Contexts

#### Economics

The world is divided, in Sunter's analysis, into two parts: the "rich old millions" and the "poor young billions".<sup>128</sup> These abbreviations sum up the gap which lies between the people of North America, Japan and Western Europe on the one side and the rest of the world on the other. This gap is illustrated by the fact that the three economic zones named contain only 15 per cent of the global population, but earn over two-thirds of its income, a 12:1 income differential.

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<sup>127</sup>David Beckmann, "The Challenge of Economics to the Teaching of Missiology," cited in Nel, "Methods and Models," 147.

<sup>128</sup>For this and the statistics following, see Sunter, World and South Africa, 19-56.

The significance of the economic influence of the rich old millions over the rest of the world is also shown by Sunter's observation that the question of whether there is going to be trade conflict between Japan and the United States is a key uncertainty for the 1990s. Such conflict could mean that the world could be limited to a 2 or 3 per cent growth rate at a time when the poor billions will be growing at 3,5 to 4 per cent per year.<sup>129</sup>

### Ecology

Population growth is static amongst the rich millions, while the poor billions are expected to increase by 34 per cent by 2005. The gap can be explained by a variety of cultural, economic, political and medical reasons. Africa, particularly, has a soaring population. A consequence of this is that food production is unable to keep up and the continent suffers from extensive malnutrition.<sup>130</sup> In contrast to this, Western Europe and the United States have enormous food surpluses. In both the rich and the poor zones of the world, it is difficult to determine how diseases such as Aids may affect this demographic picture.

Globally, there has been an increase in ecological problems as a result of population growth and industrial activity: destruction of the ozone layer and forests in the Amazon basin; soil erosion; extinction of plant and animal

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<sup>129</sup>Sunter, World and South Africa, 74-82.

<sup>130</sup>"Food production in sub-Saharan Africa is down 15 per cent per capita on what it was in 1970, whereas China and India have moved to self-sufficiency in food. Asia has 329 million acres of irrigated land against 20 million in Africa (one-third of which is in Egypt)." Sunter, World and South Africa, 25.

species; radio-active waste disposal; water and air pollution. This is leading to efforts to reduce consumption of energy and raw materials. Unfortunately for the poor young billions, this places them at a further economic disadvantage.

### Politics

The rich millions are moving away from strong attachment to a single ideological commitment to nationalism, socialism or capitalism.

The world is moving away from the belief that a single idea works, that a universal ideology should be used to direct a nation's destiny. Governments are moving towards a pragmatic blend of ideologies: they are taking a pinch of this-ism and a pinch of that-ism, putting it into a pot and concocting a brew that works for them.<sup>131</sup>

The extension of this trend to countries which are not part of the "rich millions" has been one of the striking developments of the last few years of the 1980s. The rigid ideologies of the countries of Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, China, the Philippines, Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa, have all been challenged, replaced or modified. However, ideological supremacy or conflict is still endemic in much of North America, sub-Saharan Africa, Central and South America and South-East Asia.

It remains uncertain whether the trend away from the use of single political ideology will result in détente rather than an ongoing arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union, a factor which Sunter identifies as having an important bearing on world economic growth in the 1990s.

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<sup>131</sup>Sunter, World and South Africa, 34.

## Culture

The gap between the rich and the poor, even in rich countries, is determined by such cultural factors as social harmony and high educational standards, and a combination of political and social conditions which encourage people to work hard.

The strong work ethic in the rich nations has been linked to four socio-political factors: (1) small government, (2) a sound family system, (3) low taxation and (4) lack of corruption. Social harmony is an essential ingredient in this process. This is a lesson which is being proved by default in countries which fall into both the "rich millions" and the "poor billions" categories: Britain, Sri Lanka, Spain, Northern Ireland and North and South America. Undemocratic institutions and embittered minorities lead to ongoing cycles of social conflict.

Good education has been identified as essential to economic success. The key to the Japanese economic miracle has been a uniformly high educational standard in both rural and urban areas.<sup>132</sup> Along with this rise in educational levels, computerization has changed the way learning is viewed in the technologically advanced rich countries:

It is not hard to visualize learning circulating along the same lines as money, instead of for its

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<sup>132</sup>Sunter, World and South Africa, 40-41. The same is true for South Korea. "By positively sacrificing consumer expenditure for the sake of educational investment, the South Koreans increased secondary school enrolment from 27 per cent in 1960 to 85 per cent in 1982. Then university enrolment took off, and finally per capita income in the 1970s." (42)

'educational' value or political (administrative, diplomatic, military) importance . . . .<sup>133</sup>

On the other hand, many social analysts are concerned about the way electronic communication systems and the success of "imperialistic capitalism" are speeding up the westernization or Europeanization of the world.<sup>134</sup>

### Philosophical Critique

We need to examine the epistemological, linguistic and metaphysical assumptions underlying an analysis to identify whether it is modern or postmodern.<sup>135</sup> Modern thought is identified epistemologically by foundationalism and scepticism, linguistically by representational and expressivist theories of language and metaphysically by collectivist and individualist tendencies.<sup>136</sup> They

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<sup>133</sup>Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, 6.

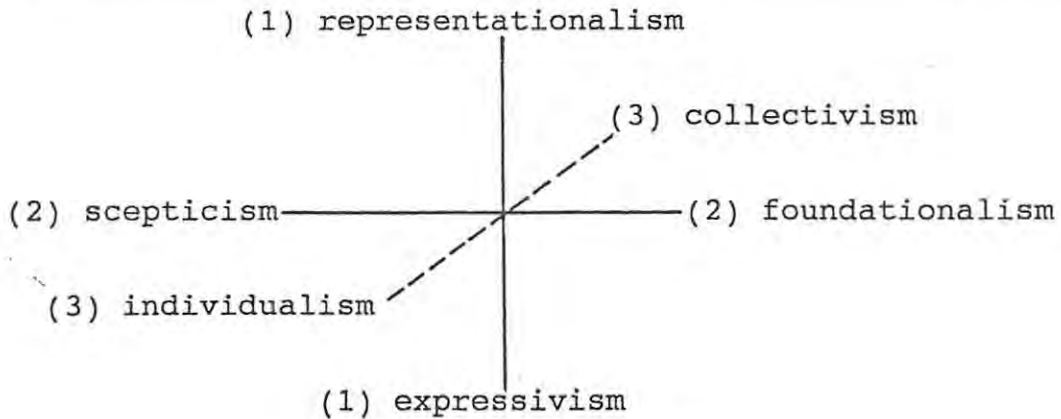
<sup>134</sup>"Westernization occurs first of all at the level of the expansion of political domination, and especially at that of the diffusion of cultural models. This political and cultural aspect, however, is accompanied by another more scientific and methodological one: the fact that so-called primitive societies are regarded as the objects of a kind of knowledge that is completely dominated by 'Western' categories." Gianni Vattimo, The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-Modern Culture, trans. and intro. Jon R. Snyder (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 152.

<sup>135</sup>There is considerable distance between the two. See Murphy, "Relating Theology and Science," and, in the discussion following, Murphy and McClendon, "Modern and Postmodern Theologies," 192-205.

<sup>136</sup>"In modern social science the individualist-collectivist axis appears in the form of a debate over the methodological question whether social groupings can be understood completely by investigating the motives and behaviour of the individuals who comprise them, or whether they must be studied at their own autonomous 'macro-level'. Both collectivists and individualists base their arguments on metaphysical positions, the former claiming that social wholes, and not their human elements, are the true historical individuals." Murphy and McClendon, "Modern and Postmodern Theologies," 197.

represent modern thought diagrammatically as occupying various positions on three axes:<sup>137</sup>

Table 8.--The Axes of Modern Thought



Postmodern thought may be identified by its departure from these modern axes. Thus, epistemologically, it is holistic and pragmatic. Kuhn's view of paradigm changes in science expresses this: paradigms are accepted or rejected as wholes for pragmatic reasons. Linguistically, the postmodern focus is on the use of language<sup>138</sup>. Dewey, the later Wittgenstein and the later Heidegger all "hammer away at the holistic point that words take their meanings from other words rather

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<sup>137</sup>Murphy and McClendon, "Modern and Postmodern Theologies," 199, with the addition of numbers to indicate the axes.

<sup>138</sup>". . . whereas for classical Greek thought, ideas determined both reality and language, and for moderns, at least with the rise of empiricism, experience determined ideas, which determined language, in postmodern thought the tables are turned and language makes possible both ideas and experience." Murphy and McClendon, "Modern and Postmodern Theologies," 202-203.

than by virtue of their representative character, and the corollary that vocabularies acquire their privileges from the men who use them rather than from their transparency to the real."<sup>139</sup> Metaphysically, there is movement away from the individualist-collectivist axis towards a rediscovery of the importance of the community. "In short, language and the search for knowledge are practices, dependent upon tradition--they are communal achievements."<sup>140</sup>

Postmodern concepts are not necessarily newer than modern ones. The concept of community in which individuals complement one another and share together in a something bigger than themselves is similar to the Pauline view of community, as expressed in his body metaphor. In postmodern ethics, MacIntyre's concept of virtue resembles Pauline parenesis.<sup>141</sup> Instead of being newer, postmodern concepts are based on different, "abnormal", weak, even nihilistic<sup>142</sup> assumptions.

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<sup>139</sup>Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, 368.

<sup>140</sup>Murphy and McClendon, 'Modern and Postmodern Theologies,' 205.

<sup>141</sup>". . . before one can call a quality a virtue one must see how it contributes to one individual's life story from birth to death. Second, one must consider how the quality contributes to that person's life not as self-defined individual but as daughter or son, citizen of a city, member of a profession, tribe, or nation, etc. Thus the traditions of family, profession, tribe or nation, that determine one's starting point in life must be taken into account in determining what is or is not virtuous." Murphy and McClendon, "Modern and Postmodern Theologies," 203.

<sup>142</sup>"Nihilistic thought seeks to show that metaphysical 'truths' simply express the subjective values of a given individual or social group, not the immutable, unchanging essence of either the divine, human or natural world." Jon R. Snyder, Introduction to The End of Modernity, by Gianni Vattimo (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), xii.

Sunter's interactionist analysis of the world<sup>143</sup> clearly has postmodern elements to it. This is evidenced by his epistemological preference for pragmatism rather than one single ideology, and his metaphysical awareness of the world as a single economic and ecological community.

The socialist critique of industrial capitalism is based more on modern philosophical assumptions.<sup>144</sup> It is also made from a conflict perspective. Social conflict is seen to be a consequence of competition for limited economic resources and the unequal distribution of power.<sup>145</sup>

Liberation theology has consequently also been built on such modern assumptions. While it has been criticised for this, it is certainly not the only form of theology making such assumptions.<sup>146</sup> However, there are also two

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<sup>143</sup>Max Weber was the first to hold this view of society, namely that social structures are the product of human activity. The humanist perspective assumes, amongst other things, that society is an intersubjective reality, that it is a structure of meaning and that human action must be understood contextually. See Norma Romm, "The Humanist Perspective," in Sociology: Study Guide for SOS100-4, ed. Tessa le Roux, Norma Romm and Tina Uys (Pretoria: UNISA, 1986), 116-131.

<sup>144</sup>For example, the instrumental attitude to nature presupposed by Marxism and its collectivist tendencies. "The later Marx . . . by treating class as the preeminent social fact, reiterates the modern (generic) view of the relation of the individual to society. Thus, his collectivism is a powerful correlate of individualism, just as skepticism is of foundationalism. In short, Marx shares an axis with the individualists, though his is an avowedly opposite pole." Murphy and McClendon, "Modern and Postmodern Theologies," 197.

<sup>145</sup>Uys lists the assumptions of conflict sociology in Tina Uys, "The Conflict Perspective," in Sociology: Study Guide for SOS100-4, ed. Tessa le Roux, Norma Romm and Tina Uys (Pretoria: UNISA, 1986), 92.

<sup>146</sup>For example, Krüger criticizes Allan Boesak for using terms such as "the Word of God" and "the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ" as if there is no difficulty in explaining what these terms mean. Krüger, "Theology as

important areas of correspondence between the liberation paradigm and the postmodern one. Firstly, both acknowledge the importance of the community.

Moderns assumed that any individual was . . . as competent as any other to form justified beliefs and speak the language. Society's knowledge and language were merely the collection of the individuals'. However, in postmodern thought, the community itself plays an indispensable role.<sup>147</sup>

Secondly, both use language in a way which is neither representational nor expressivist.<sup>148</sup> These correspondences

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Response to Social Change," 26-27. Nel notes that both conventional theology and "prophetic theology" as advocated by the Kairos Document make similar problematic assumptions of objectivity and neutrality in their context analyses. Nel, "Methods and Models," 150-151.

<sup>147</sup>Murphy, "Relating Theology and Science," CTNS Bulletin 7 (Autumn 1987), 6. In a recent personal letter, Murphy commented that both the multi-dimensional exegetical model and the contextual bible study model ". . . seem to assume that language becomes determinate when it is regularly associated with practice by a linguistic community. And these views, indeed, are central to the kind of thinking I count as postmodern." (28 June 1989)

In the outline of a course on postmodern philosophy, given at the Dominican School of Philosophy, she indicates that she considers liberation theology to be one of the theological consequences of postmodern epistemology, the sociology of knowledge and holism. "Current Anglo-American Philosophy," course outline, Fall, 1987.

<sup>148</sup>For example, Schlemmer's criticism of Nolan's use of language amounts to its not being able to be placed on the modern representational-expressivist axis: "Sy oordeel is gegrond op die emosies wat die struktuur uitlok. Die emosie wat hy dan in beskuldigende taal uitbeeld, mag geheel en al eg wees, maar daardie emosies (van sy swart bondgenote) is nie noodwendig universele of grondige waarheid nie. Soos ek dit sien, ontwyk hy 'n soeke na die waarheid deur prioriteit te gee aan die egtheid van lyding en sy eie medelye uit te druk in 'n taal wat deurlopend 'n verhewe waarheid suggereer." Lawrence Schlemmer, "Waar is Liefde vir Mense van die Stelsel?" Die Suid-Afrikaan 21 (June 1989): 10, (emphases added).

indicate areas of practical agreement still to be explored.

### Sociological Critique

Not all analysts are in favour of the industrial societies developed by the rich millions.<sup>149</sup> From a Marxist point of view, the expansion of industrial capitalism is the cause of underdevelopment.<sup>150</sup> This view, which is one of the foundations of liberation theology, "regards 'underdevelopment' as deriving from the effect of Western merchant capital in preventing indigenous economic development through its dominance over the latter."<sup>151</sup> This challenges the fundamental assumption often made by Western governments in their interaction with countries of the Third World that industrialism is a liberalizing and progressive force.

This situation has developed in three distinct phases.<sup>152</sup> The first, that of merchant capitalism, lasted

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<sup>149</sup>The sociological term "industrial society" was first coined by Comte Henri de Saint-Simon in the early nineteenth century and his theoretical guidelines were subsequently given wide currency by Durkheim and others. The notion of "capitalist society" derives from Marx, though "today Marxism represents an internally diverse body of thought." Giddens, Sociology, 30-31.

<sup>150</sup>Apart from the references already cited, see Boff, "Contribution," 416-420 "In order that development according to the capitalist pattern may keep up the degree of acceleration and wealth which it has reached in the countries of the centre (the North Atlantic, Europe, Japan, USA), these countries have to keep other countries in their sphere of dependency; and from these other countries everything can be taken and purloined which the countries of the centre require for the wealth they enjoy." (418)

<sup>151</sup>Giddens, Sociology, 150.

<sup>152</sup>For the purposes of this brief sketch, I follow the historical outline in Giddens, Sociology, 146-154.

from the start of the sixteenth to the end of the nineteenth centuries. Economically, established trading patterns were destroyed and traditional forms of agriculture were replaced with cash crops such as rubber, cocoa or sugar. Similarly, existing political structures were disrupted as

traders from Europe, backed where necessary with firepower, 'opened up' the African coasts, Asia, and North and South America. . . . these were only superficially purely mercantile organizations: their activities were directly backed by the threat or use of force. Such bodies were thereby able to extract conditions of exchange that frequently amounted to looting sanctioned by state patronage.<sup>153</sup>

Not surprisingly, cultural and ecological disruption followed.<sup>154</sup>

The second phase, that of colonialism, led to the rise of economic, ecological, political and cultural dualism which is still evident in many post-colonial settings today. The destruction of traditional structures led to the need for colonial administration to maintain Western standards of "order and productivity". Westernized cities, as the centres of economic and political power, also became centres of cultural and ecological destabilization. The familiar twentieth century phenomenon of rapid and disorderly urbanization is the result of the dual processes of rural deprivation (economically and ecologically) and urban enhancement (politically and culturally, as well as economically).

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<sup>153</sup>Giddens, Sociology, 148.

<sup>154</sup>"Disruption" may be too weak a word for the physical extermination of millions of the indigenous inhabitants of Africa and North and South America.

The third phase of post-colonialism has perpetuated these dualistic structures, despite the independence of almost all of the former colonies. In particular, transnational corporations have been able to continue to exploit the less developed countries and further enrich the First World countries in which their parent companies are situated.<sup>155</sup>

One element of the contemporary world situation which is not accounted for by the industrialism-capitalism distinction is the rise of nationalism, and the resultant development of the militarily powerful nation-state. This has been made possible by rapid advances in transportation, communication, urbanization, civil administration and industrial production of the modern era.

The fact that increasing numbers of nation-states have a growing ability to wage war on one another in a globally destructive way makes the independent nation-state as important a feature of the contemporary world as capitalism. The contemporary world is a place in which international interdependence is accompanied by intense competition between powerful nations to maximize their economic performance at the expense of the rest of the world. Thus nationalism sustains artificial mental and geographical barriers to the detriment of the entire world. This is an issue which can be related to Paul's rejection of all national marks of distinction in Christ.

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<sup>155</sup>There are, however, opportunities for less developed countries to use First World capital and expertise to their own advantage, particularly if they can control the inflow and outflow of capital and also develop First World educational standards and a strong work ethic.

### South African Contexts

During the early rumblings of Islamic opposition to his novel The Satanic Verses, Salman Rushdie described South Africa as "one of the chosen or accursed few [countries] in which the history of the century is taking place in its most intense and emblematic form."<sup>156</sup> This vivid description points to the worldwide symbolic importance of the struggle to overcome racial prejudice and political and economic oppression in South Africa. South Africa is an interesting and representative context to consider because it contains a variety of "First-" and "Third-World" contexts juxtaposed within it.

### Economics

Sunter describes South Africa as "an average country with an average economy."<sup>157</sup> While its economy is over-dependent on valuable mineral exports such as gold, platinum and diamonds, it does have other economic strengths such as a good infrastructure, cheapish power, an important trade route, a beautiful country and climate, medical skills, and the ability to handle large projects such as Escom, Sasol and the gold mining industry. It has a typical post-colonial dual economy, with the "first logic" sector

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<sup>156</sup>Salman Rushdie, "I Have Learnt a Great Deal about South Africa just sitting in My Study with the Phone Glued to my Ear," Weekly Mail, 2-7 December 1988, 15.

<sup>157</sup>Sunter, World and South Africa, 85. Its gross domestic product puts it on a par with Yugoslavia, Mexico, Malaysia, Portugal, Uruguay, Chile and Brazil. Sunter analyses the world and South Africa according to the theory of industrial society. His analysis is conducted on behalf of a multinational, capitalist business corporation, something which he makes explicit in his Introduction. (11)

particularly vulnerable to economic pressure in the form of internal strikes and external sanctions.<sup>158</sup> This weakness is exacerbated by the fact that its informal sector is not big enough to provide the extra jobs and housing needed by its growing urban population.

### Ecology

South Africa's ecology is closely related to the economic, political and cultural forces at work in the society. One of the statistics most often quoted to illustrate this is the one which notes that inequality of land ownership goes back to the Native Land Act of 1913. As a result of this single Act, the majority of the population was restricted to a tiny proportion of the land (13 per cent).<sup>159</sup>

### Politics and Culture

Political and cultural conflicts lie at the heart of the contemporary South African reality. These are the result of the nationalism which its rulers shared with many other neocolonial governments in the early twentieth century. In

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<sup>158</sup>Van Zyl Slabbert qualifies this vulnerability with two considerations: (1) the South African economy has a viable industrial base, with some 60 per cent of its export earnings coming from low-volume, high value, difficult-to-sanction items and (2) the power elite is well-insulated from the effects of sanctions, with 40 per cent of Afrikaners being employed by the state and its supporting structures. Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, "The Dynamics of Reform: Patterns of Resistance and Revolt," lecture 2 of The Dynamics of Reform and Revolt in Current South Africa, Three part Tanner Lecture Series (Cape Town: IDASA Occasional Papers, 1987), 9.

<sup>159</sup>Marjorie Hope and James Young, The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981), 27.

a culturally diverse society, it was assumed that all the indigenous tribal groupings shared similar exclusivist nationalist aspirations. When the process of decolonization gathered momentum after the Second World War, the new Afrikaner nationalist government determined to both resist and fulfil these perceived aspirations by means of the ideology of Separate Development.

What sets South Africa's socio-political history apart from that of other post-colonial societies is that legislation to entrench white minority domination was enacted at the very time when the Western world was recognizing the right of separate nation-states to political self-determination. "When in a sense the West was going one way, South African whites were going the other."<sup>160</sup>

#### **A Conflict Analysis of the South African Context**

Albert Nolan has recently made a comprehensive conflict analysis of the South African context.<sup>161</sup> While his assumptions are largely modern rather than postmodern,<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup>Van Zyl Slabbert, "From Apartheid to Reform: The Ideological Preparation for the Total Onslaught," lecture 1 of Dynamics of Reform and Revolt, 5.

<sup>161</sup>Albert Nolan, God in South Africa: The Challenge of the Gospel, (Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Philip, 1988; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988; Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988; London: CIIR, 1988), 49-105 and 139-179. See also Albert Nolan, "The Political and Social Context," in Catholics in Apartheid Society, ed. A. Prior (Cape Town: David Philip, 1982), 1-21.

<sup>162</sup>This is one of the chief problems which Degenaar has with Nolan's social analysis. "Een van die implikasies van die hermeneutiese sirkel is egter dat die absoluutheidsaanspraak van die teologiese perspektief op waarheid verval--'n insig wat by [Nolan] afwesig is." Johan Degenaar, "Kritiese Vrae oor die 'Goeie Nuus'," Die Suid-Afrikaan 19 (February 1989): 34. In a subsequent article, Degenaar accuses Nolan of replacing a biblical justification

his analytical method does reflect the important postmodern emphasis on the epistemological role of community:

. . . by and large, the content of this book is the result of doing theology with people in thousands of meetings, discussions and arguments and of the everyday experience of the struggle. I have learnt more about what it means to be a Christian from the people of my country and especially from the youth of the townships than I have ever learnt from books.<sup>163</sup>

Nolan identifies human suffering as the major consequence of the South African political system of white minority domination:<sup>164</sup> the physical sufferings of workers who are forced to live far from home, who face physical danger at work, who are dehumanized by being seen only as labour units, who are paid inadequate wages, or who face long periods of unemployment.<sup>165</sup> There is the suffering which arises from being deprived of basic requirements such as adequate health care, education and shelter. In addition to these very concrete forms of suffering, those who are not classified as white suffer legalized humiliation.<sup>166</sup>

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of apartheid with a biblical justification of structural conflict analysis. Johan Degenaar, "Die Keuse tussen Demokrasie en Radikalisme," Die Suid-Afrikaan 22 (August/September 1989): 39. This is a consequence of Nolan's modern epistemological assumptions.

<sup>163</sup>Nolan, God in South Africa, xiii.

<sup>164</sup>"The concern is for the sufferings of people, and the interest is centred on the needs of people." Nolan, "Political and Social Context," 1.

<sup>165</sup>This suffering is symbolized by the endless "activity" of waiting: ". . . waiting for the bus, waiting for a possible job, waiting for a relative who might help you--hour after hour, day after day, month after month." Nolan, God in South Africa, 56.

<sup>166</sup>". . . how a government can actually demand by law that the majority of its citizens be systematically humiliated is beyond the comprehension of anyone who has not been brought up as a white South African." Nolan, God in South Africa, 51.

This suffering experienced by people on the deprived side of the dual social system spills over into emotional and psychological sufferings which are shared by the whole society. "Fear is the overriding emotion in South African society. Much of what is said and done by rich and poor, black and white is based upon fear."<sup>167</sup> Not surprisingly, both sides experience high levels of alienation and violence.

Both black and white feel powerless, helpless and insecure. And this in turn leads to every imaginable form of escapism: alcohol, drugs, passive forms of entertainment, sport and religion. . . . Moreover the general state of alienation, frustration, fear and insecurity makes almost everyone want to take up a gun and shoot those they fear.<sup>168</sup>

From sociological analysis based on Marxist presuppositions, Nolan moves directly to theology.<sup>169</sup> On the basis of Hinkelhammert's materialist interpretation of Pauline soteriology, Nolan argues that death is a consequence of a sinful system in the same way that it is the ultimate consequence of individual sin in traditional theology.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup>Nolan, "Political and Social Context," 19.

<sup>168</sup>Nolan, "Political and Social Context," 20 and God In South Africa, 80-84.

<sup>169</sup>Nolan's tendency to switch abruptly between two different forms of discourse is objected to by both Schlemmer and Degenaar. Schlemmer, "Waar is Liefde," 10, and Degenaar, "Die Keuse," 39.

<sup>170</sup>For example, "Whatever causes death is sin; and sin lives by sucking the life out of those it kills. Sin is a fetish that lives by the law." F. J. Hinkelhammert, The Ideological Weapons of Death: A Theological Critique of Capitalism (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986), 135. Nürnberger has criticised Hinkelhammert for obscurity and pressing his opponents into either/or choices. See Klaus Nürnberger, review of The Ideological Weapons of Death: A Theological

Nolan makes a similar direct transition from Marxist sociological analysis to theological evaluation in his discussion of apartheid. Apartheid is analyzed as a form of internal colonialism which can only be maintained by the use of force. By using force to maintain their position of material privilege, those in power reveal their worship of mammon.<sup>171</sup> Thus apartheid is idolatry.

Nolan supports his absolute rejection of apartheid by relating it to Jesus' rejection of the legal system of his day. Nolan argues that apartheid, as a religio-political system, and the Jewish law, as a purity or holiness system, resemble one another. Both order and control "every aspect of life, including the way Christianity is to be interpreted and how religion is to be practised." From this resemblance between systems, Nolan concludes that apartheid is "just as heretical for us as Christians today as the system of the scribes and the Pharisees was for Jesus in his time."<sup>172</sup> Both are idolatrous.

This interpretation of the social function of the Jewish law is consistent with Paul's view of the law in Galatians. Gordon argues that the social function of Torah was to exclude the idolatrous Gentiles from God's covenant community. However, once the promise to Abraham had been

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Critique of Capitalism, by F. J. Hinkelhammert. Missionalia 16 (1988): 180-181.

<sup>171</sup>For a detailed illustration of Nolan's analytical method see Nolan, "Unmasking the System," in God in South Africa, 68-88.

<sup>172</sup>Nolan, God in South Africa, 69.

fulfilled, it became "utterly inappropriate as an identifying feature of religion." To exclude the Gentiles once the promise had been fulfilled was "an eschatological, christological and ecclesiastical error of great magnitude."<sup>173</sup>

However, Torah and apartheid cannot be simplistically and positivistically equated. It is true that both set up boundaries between groups of people, and are used as means of evading the God whose purpose is to bless all nations (Gal 3:8). However, the sociology of knowledge reminds us that all interpretations are made by particular social groups in particular social circumstances. For example, Paul attacked a "particular and restrictive understanding of the law" which used it to define God's covenant people in a way which he found unacceptable because of the revelation he had received.<sup>174</sup>

Degenaar has identified the hermeneutical inconsistencies underlying Nolan's simplistic identification of the Struggle with the Kingdom of God. Firstly, one cannot solve political questions simply with reference to the Word of God: "Die sogenaamde 'Woord van God' is nie sy eie verklaarder nie en is self reeds 'n produk van

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<sup>173</sup>Gordon, "The Problem at Galatia," 38-39.

<sup>174</sup>"That the law served to identify the Jewish people as the people chosen by the one God for himself, and as a boundary to mark them off from all (other) nations, would have been a basic assumption of Jewish self-understanding. From such a sociological perspective it also becomes self-evident that Jews (including Jewish Christians) would be particularly sensitive at the points where the boundary seemed to be threatened and consequently their own identity threatened." James D. G. Dunn, "Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3:10-14)," New Testament Studies 31 (1985): 538.

interpretasie."<sup>175</sup> Secondly, social structures cannot be directly identified with religious categories without doing violence to religious language.

Thirdly, an individual's horizon of experience does not constitute a privileged source of information.

Nolan had responded to Degenaar's critique of his book by concluding that,

In the final analysis the reason why my theological reflections do not find an echo in Degenaar or Nicol (while they do find an echo in numerous other people), is that I am trying to reflect theologically upon an experience that is significantly different from theirs.<sup>176</sup>

Degenaar objected that Nolan could not appeal to his experience and his discernment of the Word of God to exempt himself from the hermeneutical circle: "Hierdeur gee hy ongelukkig feilbaarheid, kontingensie, historisiteit, meerduidigheid en dialektiek prys."<sup>177</sup> By theologically absolutizing his social analysis, Nolan apparently attempts to place it beyond criticism.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>175</sup>Degenaar, "Die Keuse," 37. Jaap Durand also objects to this basic hermeneutical error: "Die erkenning van die interpretasie van die Woord het 'n einde gemaak aan sulke teologiese naïewitiet." See Jaap J. F. Durand, "Engelssprekende Kerke: Gevangenes van Apartheid," *Die Suid-Afrikaan* (October/November 1989): 30.

<sup>176</sup>Albert Nolan, "Critics Lack Experience of Struggle," *Die Suid-Afrikaan* 21 (June 1989): 10.

<sup>177</sup>Degenaar, "Die Keuse," 38.

<sup>178</sup>Schlemmer, "Waar is liefde," 10, does not like Nolan's concealed Marxism. Degenaar mentions a variety of political questions that simply cannot be debated in Nolan's absolute terms: alternative political systems, politics as an interplay of pressures, the democratic handling of conflicting interests, the politics of negotiation and compromise, and the problems of transition from the injustices of apartheid to a just dispensation. Degenaar, "Kritiese Vrae," 34.

Thus, Nolan's work is hermeneutically flawed: Christian theology is only possible because people are able to rationally interpret and evaluate experiences other than their own.<sup>179</sup> However, Nolan does provide a valuable point of departure in the quest for a theological understanding of the South African context. His work illustrates the point that while commitment to the poor and participation in the context is pastorally and even theologically fundamental, these qualifications alone do not produce a superior analysis of the context.

It might be argued that the confrontational stance advocated by Nolan and other documents with a similar context analysis, such as the Kairos Document, is very similar to that adopted by Paul in Galatians. Thus the authors of the Kairos Document assert that,

As disciples of Jesus we should . . . promote truth and justice and life at all costs, even at the cost of creating conflict, disunity and dissensions along the way . . . a biblical theology of direct confrontation with the forces of evil rather than the theology of reconciliation with sin and the devil.<sup>180</sup>

They argue that neutrality has the effect of siding with the oppressor.<sup>181</sup> An analysis of the South African context

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<sup>179</sup>Jaap J. F. Durand, "Engelssprekende Kerke: Gevangenes van Apartheid." Die Suid-Afrikaan 23 (October/November 1989): 31.

<sup>180</sup>Kairos Document, 11.

<sup>181</sup>"The Kairos Document therefore calls Christians in South Africa out of their comfortable position of neutrality with regard to the Kairos in their land. The liberal and comfortable anti-apartheid stance of the English speaking churches is here exposed as a form of neutrality which in fact amounts to partiality for the status quo." J. N. J. Kritzinger, "The Kairos Document: A Call to Conversion." Missionalia 16 (November 1988): 133.

which highlights the sharp divisions<sup>182</sup> within it also demands a radical taking of sides or resocialization. For Christians, this has been expressed as a call to re-conversion.<sup>183</sup>

This does correspond with Paul's ultimatum to the churches of Galatia in that he too allows no room for neutrality. The choice which has to be made is expressed in a variety of antitheses: gospel or no gospel, faith or law, Spirit or flesh, Abraham or Moses, sonship or slavery, liberty or imprisonment, circumcision and uncircumcision or new creation. Similarly, Paul confronts and rejects (rather than accommodates) the Judaizers in Galatia: ". . . let [them] be eternally condemned." (Gal 1:9); "I wish they would go all the way and emasculate themselves." (Gal 5:12) His criticism of their motives is telling: he objects to their attempts to alienate the Galatian churches from him and to draw them over to the opposite side (Gal 4:17).

Yet Paul makes his strong call to decision (a call for a division) precisely because his opponents wished to reintroduce divisions between Jew and Greek, slave and free,

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<sup>182</sup>"A large majority (more than 70%) of the total South African population claims to be Christian and churches therefore play an important role in all sections of society, but the sharp social, economic and political cleavages are becoming worse rather than better." J. N. J. Kritzinger, "Black Eschatology and Christian Mission," Missionalia 15 (April 1978): 23.

<sup>183</sup>"This re-evangelization means 'to exhort and help Christians to make a total break with the unjust established order and make a forthright commitment to a new society'." Kritzinger "Black Eschatology," 24, citing Mokgethi Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid: A Social-Ethical Analysis (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1984), 261.

male and female which had been removed by Jesus Christ (Gal 3:28). For Paul, the only important division is between those who are totally resocialized in terms of the cross of Christ alone and those who are not (Gal 6:12,17).

There is thus both correspondence and discontinuity between the confrontational stance of Paul in his letter to the Galatians and that of the Kairos signatories. Both use confrontational rhetorical tactics, yet their central perspectives are different. The Kairos signatories call for a division on the basis of a particular conflict analysis of the South African context, while Paul calls for a division not on the basis of economic resources and political power, but on the basis of the social implications of the cross of Christ.

#### **The Role of Context Analyses**

Despite its length, the above discussion serves merely to illustrate how important it is for South African scholars to continue to develop and refine tools for analyzing and distinguishing between contexts. There are many contexts which require analysis. These contexts change over time, thus requiring fresh analyses to be made. There are also a wide range of analytical perspectives. It is important that the perspective chosen for a particular analysis is explicitly acknowledged and accounted for.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>184</sup>"Different people will give different analyses or explanations of the society in which they live. Their assumptions, interests and concerns give them a variety of perspectives on the same social reality. It is important, then, before starting, to declare one's assumptions, interests and concerns." Nolan, "Political and Social Context," 1.

Context analysis is not undertaken merely as a preliminary orientational exercise. South African biblical scholars have recently emphasized the need to allow the messages of biblical texts to address the problems which are identified in the process of context analysis. Botha, for example, calls for New Testament scholars to get once again into contact with texts as power and not just as embodiments of content.<sup>185</sup> The New Testament needs to address and correct sin which has been embodied in social structures.<sup>186</sup> De Villiers asks why none of the contributors to a recent Festschrift, sub-titled "A South African Perspective on the New Testament", addressed concrete social and ethical problems of the South African context such as poverty, labour, unemployment, human rights, capital punishment, ecology, medical ethics and so on.<sup>187</sup> After surveying a wide range of critical approaches applied to Luke 12:35-48 by the New Testament Society of South Africa, Smit notes that:

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<sup>185</sup>He echoes the kind of concern voiced by Fiorenza: "The rhetorical understanding of discourse as creating a world of pluriform meanings and a pluralism of symbolic universes, raise the question of power. How is meaning constructed? Whose interests are served? What kind of worlds are envisioned? What roles, duties, and values are advocated? Which social-political practices are legitimated?" Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Ethics of Biblical Interpretation," 14.

<sup>186</sup>"The premises of racism in political structures and gender-prejudice in societal structures at large . . . are both abundantly present in our society. I have met American New Testament scholars who say that they have the impression that South African scholars are 'hiding behind' literary or 'theological' approaches to the New Testament." Botha, "Reinvention of Rhetoric," 16.

<sup>187</sup>De Villiers, "New Testament Scholarship in South Africa," forthcoming in Neotestamentica.

. . . issues of ethical responsibility have hardly been dealt with. Theories involving social analysis, of past and present, ideology critique, praxis theory and so on have been almost absent. Is, for example, the emphasis of liberation theology on a preference for the poor and a serving church, a church with a human face, not a very suitable context in terms of which to read this pericope?<sup>188</sup>

This discussion of the contexts of Galatians illustrates the extensive scope of the hermeneutical task. While the issues raised in the discussion of the contemporary context are far removed from the pre-canonical context in which the letter originated, such issues determine the physical and psychological world in which the contemporary South African church reads Galatians.

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<sup>188</sup>Smit, "Responsible Hermeneutics," 478.

CHAPTER 5  
A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL INTRODUCTION TO GALATIANS

To know is always to interpret, and to interpret demands the utilization of codes or interpretive keys.

Leonardo Boff, Saint Francis: A Model for Human Liberation.

In this chapter, we provide a fresh Introduction to Galatians, using Rousseau's multi-dimensional exegetical model. Our aim is to understand Galatians as an act of communication between Paul and the Galatian congregations. This understanding forms the exegetical basis of the contextual Bible study method presented in Chapter 6.

Multi-Dimensional Exegesis

We saw in Chapter 3 that Rousseau's multi-dimensional exegetical model seeks to incorporate all the dimensions of the communication process. His model requires us to follow three processes in our exegesis of a biblical text: (1) to map the syntactic chart of the text, (2) to identify the semantic heart of the text and (3) to witness the pragmatic duel between the perspectives of text and reader which the text provokes. The first process focuses on the static textual dimension, the second on the dynamic historical dimension, and the third on the dialectic of the theological dimension.<sup>1</sup> Thus he uses a communication paradigm to ensure

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<sup>1</sup>Rousseau does not refer here to the dialectical or crisis theology associated with Karl Barth and others. He uses dialectic to refer to the strategies the author encodes within the text to persuade readers to adopt his or her perspective.

that all dimensions of the text receive adequate attention.

### The Syntactic Thrust of Galatians

We saw in Chapter 2 that there are various ways of mapping the syntactic structure of a Pauline letter. We may compare its structure with that of other ancient letters of the same period, drawing on studies of ancient epistolography. We may use discourse analysis and describe the macrostructural configuration of the letter. In addition, following Rousseau, we may use literary or source criticism to trace the mosaic pattern of tradition material used by Paul, and pragmatics analysis to identify the aesthetic relief of the text as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

### Ancient Epistolography

We begin by comparing the structure of Galatians with that of other letters of the period. Doty notes that Hellenistic letters in Greek and Latin from the period 400 B.C. to A.D. 400 are "amazingly stereotyped and bound to tradition,"<sup>3</sup> a factor which invites comparisons of this kind. Funk argues that the conventional letter outline shown in Table 9 would have been followed by Paul in the composition of all his

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<sup>2</sup>For example, Rousseau argues that the oxymoron "elect strangers" provides the aesthetic key to 1 Peter. Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 8.

<sup>3</sup>William G. Doty, Letters in Primitive Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 12, cited in D. François Tolmie, "Die Aanwending van die Formele Briefelemente in die Brief aan die Galasiërs," in Acta Academica, Series D, No. 6, ed. A. H. Snyman (Bloemfontein: University of the Orange Free State, 1986), 19.

letters. Galatians may easily be shown to correspond to this form.<sup>4</sup>

Table 9.--Formal Correspondences between Galatians and the Hellenistic Letter Structure

General Letter Structure	Galatians
1. <u>Salutation</u>	
a. Sender	1:1-2a
b. Recipient	1:2b
c. Greeting	1:3-5
2. <u>Thanksgiving</u>	None.
3. (Theological) <u>Body</u>	1:6-4:31
a. Formal opening	
b. Connective and transitional formulae	
c. Eschatological Climax	
d. Travelogue (apostolic parousia)	
4. <u>Parenesis (Ethical Exhortation)</u> (letter summary)	5:1-6:10
5. <u>Closing</u>	6:11-15
a. Greetings	-
b. Doxology	-
c. Benediction	6:18

This comparison shows us that Galatians has the same broad conventional structure as other letters of the day. However, we must be cautious in making comparisons, for it is apparent that Paul adapted the conventional framework to function as an integral part of his Galatian letter.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Robert W. Funk, Language, Hermeneutic and the Word of God (New York, Evanston and London: Harper and Row, 1966), chap. 10, cited in William G. Doty, Contemporary New Testament Interpretation (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), 143-144. See too, Roetzel, Letters of Paul, 40.

<sup>5</sup>"Paulus maak hierdie geykte vorm egter dadelik diensbaar vir die doel van sy skrywe deur van die belangrikste temas way hy aanstons uitvoeriger gaan behandel, reeds hier aan die orde te stel." Lategan,

Thus, in the salutation Paul expands the identification of himself as the sender to include his status as an apostle (Gal 1:1), and he expands the greeting to make important statements about Christ and his saving work (Gal 1:4).<sup>6</sup>

In contrast with his expansion on his own identity, he departs from his frequent practice of describing his recipients in similarly Christian terms. In addition, the thanksgiving, which appears in all the other extant Pauline letters, is missing.<sup>7</sup>

The body contains an autobiographical section, a feature which is often present in Paul's letters. (Compare 2 Cor 1:8-2:12; Phlp 1:12-26; 1 Cor 1:10-17.) "In each case this autobiographical note is fully integrated into his theological argument."<sup>8</sup>

Galatians is the only one of Paul's letters which apparently makes no reference to his travel plans. However, Funk makes a case for considering Gal 4:12-20 to be "a 'travelogue' in a situation where travel . . . is out of the question."<sup>9</sup>

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Galasiërs, 21.

<sup>6</sup>Betz, Galatians, 15.

<sup>7</sup>Roetzel, Letters of Paul, 33. "This reflects the seriousness of the situation into which the Galatians have fallen: because they are deserting the one true gospel Paul can find in them no cause for thanksgiving to God, but can only express astonishment instead." Fung, Galatians, 43.

<sup>8</sup>Roetzel, Letters of Paul, 35.

<sup>9</sup>Robert W. Funk, Language, Hermeneutic, and the Word of God (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 268, cited in Roetzel, Letters of Paul, 34. "Funk also believes that the location of the announcement of travel plans at the end of the letter is explicable in terms of Paul's imminent visit to Rome and the purpose the letter serves in preparing for that visit." Roetzel, Letters of Paul, 142.

In the parenesis Paul includes a typical catalogue of virtues and vices (Gal 5:19-23; compare Rom 1:29-31; 1 Cor 5:10f; 6:9f; 2 Cor 12:20f). Aune classifies it (with Rom 1:29-30 and 2 Cor 12:21) as an asyndetic list because of its lack of connective particles.<sup>10</sup> Lists such as these were very popular in New Testament times. Although the ethical concepts are not specifically Christian, Paul uses them to identify vices and virtues as manifestations respectively of evil or of the Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to observe the disorderly presentation of the vices and the well-ordered list of the virtues attributed to the Spirit. Smit has recently proposed that part of the section of Galatians traditionally identified as parenetical, Gal 5:13-6:10, was added to the original letter by Paul at a later date.<sup>12</sup>

The closing is the least studied component of the standard letter form.<sup>13</sup> This is surprising, as elementary

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<sup>10</sup>Aune, The New Testament, 195.

<sup>11</sup>See Betz, Galatians, 281-283 and William Barclay, Flesh and Spirit: An Examination of Galatians 5:19-23, (London: SCM Press, 1962, repr. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 23-127.

<sup>12</sup>He argues that this section shows an interruption in problem, outlook and tone, and was added when the letter was adapted for more general use. However, he acknowledges that his suggestion alters the centre of gravity within the letter. Smit, "The Letter of Paul to the Galatians," 25. In view of the long tradition of unity of the letter, the fact that Smit does not propose when and why Paul might have added a section disturbing the original form of his letter, and the balanced macrostructural configuration which we suggest below, Smit's proposal is unlikely.

<sup>13</sup>"Unlike the opening of the letter, the conclusion has received scant attention. Increasingly, however, scholars have discovered in it important clues to the viewpoint of the letter as a whole." Roetzel, Letters of Paul, 36.

communication theory identifies the start and end of an act of communication as especially important: "It is important for an author who wants to communicate with his readers to grasp their attention right from the start and also to make sure in his conclusion that the readers have understood his intention."<sup>14</sup> Paul shows that he recognized this principle by writing his conclusion in his own hand. In this he departs from his custom of dictating his letters to an amanuensis orally and then adding the concluding greeting himself (Rom 16:22; 1 Cor 16:21).

The fact that these verses are written in Paul's own hand and are written in unusually large letters is an indication of their special importance. In conformity with the epistolary convention of the time, this autographic postscript serves to authenticate the letter and sum up its main points.<sup>15</sup>

We note that Paul modifies the traditional conclusion to emphasize his message. He replaces the customary closing greeting and kiss with a solemn apostolic warning (Gal 6:17). Compare 1 Cor 16:22: "If anyone does not love the Lord--a curse be on him."

As we saw in Chapter 2, this process of comparison teaches us little about the structure of the body of Galatians. Aune's recent study notes that "the analysis of the central section of early Christian letters remains problematical."<sup>16</sup>

Research into the structure of the body of Pauline letters has identified five different types of material:

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<sup>14</sup>Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 7.

<sup>15</sup>Fung, Galatians, 301. See too Tolmie, "Formele Briefelemente,"<sup>33</sup> and Aune, The New Testament, 187.

<sup>16</sup>Aune, The New Testament, 183.

(1) internal transitional formulas; (2) epistolary topoi; (3) autobiographical statements, (4) travel plans and (5) concluding parenthesis.<sup>17</sup> The body of Galatians begins with a disclosure formula (Gal 1:11) and ends with a confidence formula (Gal 5:10). Topoi such as those of letter writing (6:11), reunion with addressees (Gal 4:20) and exhortations (Gal 5:13-6:10) are evident. The first major section of the body (Gal 1:10-2:21) is an autobiographical statement<sup>18</sup> and the apostolic parousia form described by Funk may be present in Gal 4:12-20. Finally, the last part of the body of Galatians is in the form of a concluding parenthesis. Thus, the body of Galatians also follows the conventions of ancient letters. However, as with the opening and closing formulas, Paul is not bound by these and frequently "strikes out on his own".<sup>19</sup>

### Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis provides us with an important supplementary tool for studying the syntactic thrust of Galatians. Botha provides a clear and up-to-date description of the basic steps for doing this:<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Aune, The New Testament, 188.

<sup>18</sup>"According to Gregory Lyons, the autobiographical section in Gal. 1:10-2:21 is structured in accordance with conventional autobiographical topoi . . . ." Aune, The New Testament, 190.

<sup>19</sup>"My own feeling is that in the body sections of the longer letters, at least, Paul had more inclination to strike out on his own and to be least bound by epistolary structures." Doty, Letters in Primitive Christianity, 35, cited in Tolmie, "Formele Briefelemente," 30.

<sup>20</sup>Botha, Semeion, 200-216. The method is exemplified in the discourse analysis of Matthew's gospel in Neotestamentica 11 and 16.

(1) After a preliminary division of the text into pericopes, the text is divided up into cola. A colon has been defined as:

an independent, grammatical construction, consisting of a noun-phrase and a verb-phrase (together with possible embedded elements), which, in itself, is not embedded in some higher-level configuration. The minimum size of a colon is a single nominal element, functioning as subject (generally designated noun-phrase), together with a single verbal element, such as a verb (generally designated verb-phrase).<sup>21</sup>

Reasons for the colon divisions need to be given.<sup>22</sup>

(2) Thematic markers (significant words, repeated words, significant syntactic constructions, any form of patterning, etc.) are identified.

(3) The flow of the discourse is indicated by linking the cola, using the following criteria: syntactical considerations, sentence structure, thematic markers, contextual considerations and the main semantic thought line of the text.<sup>23</sup>

(4) Each pericope is divided into paragraph segments (usually clusters of cola, sometimes one long colon). These clusters are usually indicated on the right hand side of the analysis.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>H. C. du Toit, "What is A Colon?" Addendum to Neotestmentica 11 (1977): 1.

<sup>22</sup>"Dit is duidelik dat kolonanalise hoegenaamd nie 'n 'objektiewe' en meganiese proses is nie. Die oordeel van die analitikus moet voortdurend meespreek." Botha, Semeion, 205.

<sup>23</sup>Rousseau, "New Testament Exegesis," 32.

<sup>24</sup>In the discourse analysis in Appendix 1, they are indicated by means of a broken line, for reasons of space and to indicate how the clusters are linked together.

(5) The content of each cluster is briefly described.

(6) The semantic relationships between the clusters is shown by linking them (cluster configuration). In a full discourse analysis, these relationships are described and explained, with reasons for the choices which have been made.<sup>25</sup> During this process, adjustments can be made to the provisional pericope and cluster demarcation made earlier, and the turning point of each pericope can be determined.<sup>26</sup>

(7) The theme of each pericope is given.

(8) When a whole letter such as Galatians is being analyzed, this process is followed by a determination of the semantic relationships which exist between pericopes. Pericopes are grouped into clusters and linked together to present the macrostructural configuration of the whole letter.

In the analysis of the macrostructural configuration of Galatians below, we follow Betz's pericope divisions, without allowing his rhetorical assumptions to pre-determine the way the pericopes are linked. The resultant configuration varies from his very slightly, with Gal 5:1-12, the start of his exhortatio, being identified as the

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<sup>25</sup>Du Toit has provided a provisional account of the construction and line of thought in Galatians in "Analyse." His paper is valuable in that it is the first study, to my knowledge, which compares the macrostructural configuration of Galatians which has been arrived at by means of discourse analysis, with analyses of the structure arrived at on the basis of rhetorical criticism.

<sup>26</sup>A discourse analysis of the New International Version translation of Galatians is given in Appendix 1. The colon division follows that used by the New Testament Society of South Africa at the Pauline sub group mini-congress held in Pretoria on 24 November 1989, while the pericope divisions follow those of Betz in Galatians.

conclusion to the body of the letter.<sup>27</sup>

The configuration given below also differs from that of the NTSSA, which is discussed by du Toit in his preliminary paper. That of the NTSSA is indicated by means of a dotted line, as a basis for comparison. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the main reason for differences between these two configurations lies in the different decisions at the level of pericope demarcation.

The quotation or summary attached to each pericope division, refers to the section identified as the turning point of each pericope; it is not a summary of the whole argument of each pericope.

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<sup>27</sup>It links the arguments of the body with the ethical exhortations in the same way that his propositio sums up the biographical section and sets up the arguments of the body. See Betz, Galatians, 114. Compare Drane, Paul: Libertine or Legalist? 8, who regards 5:1-6:10 as an integral part of Paul's refutation of his opponents' view of the Torah and circumcision.

As we noted in Chapter 2, while Betz's rhetorical structure has become the standard point of departure for all rhetorical analyses of Galatians, there have been many alterations to his analysis proposed. See, Kennedy, New Testament Interpretation, 144-152, Hall, "The Rhetorical Outline for Galatians: A Reconsideration," 277-287, Smit, "The Letter of Paul to the Galatians: A Deliberative Speech," 1-26, Aune, The New Testament, 198-208 and Hester, "The Rhetorical Structure of Galatians 1:11-2:14," 223-233, "Rhetoric in Galatians," 387-388, and Placing the Blame.

Table 10.--Configuration of the Macrostructure of Galatians

Pericope

1. 1:1-5  
"Paul . . . to the churches in Galatia."

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  2. 1:6-11  
"Brothers my gospel is not man-made"
  3. 1:12-24  
"I did not receive it from any man, I received it from Jesus Christ. For you have heard . . ."
  4. 2:1-10  
"Some false brothers tried to take away our freedom. We did not give it to them."
  5. 2:11-14  
"When Peter came to Antioch I opposed him. He was wrong."

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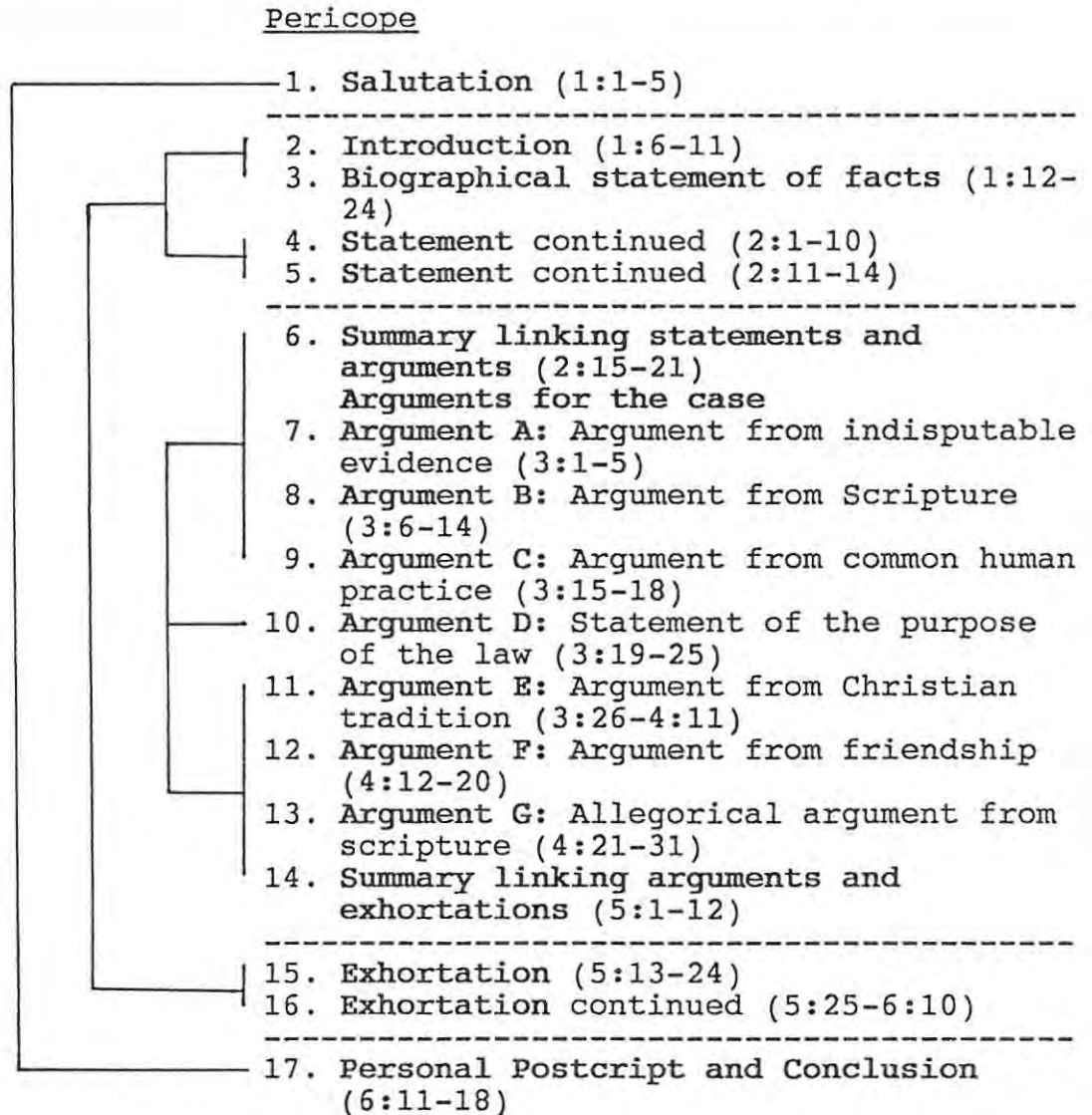
  6. 2:15-21  
"We Jews know that a man is not justified by observing the Law but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in him."
  7. 3:1-5  
Foolish Galatians! Does God give you his Spirit because you observe the law or because you believe what you heard?
  8. 3:6-14  
Those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham. All who rely on observing the law are under a curse.
  9. 3:15-18  
Everyday example: as no-one can set aside a human covenant so no-one can set aside the promise to Abraham and his seed (Christ).
  10. 3:19-25  
"Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law."
  11. 3:26-4:11  
Before you knew God you were enslaved to weak and miserable spiritual principles. Now that you know Him why are you turning to them? "I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you."
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12. 4:12-20  
"My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you. . . . I am perplexed about you."
13. 4:21-31  
We are not children of the slave woman (Hagar/Sinai/Jerusalem/Law) but of the free woman (Sarah/Promise to Abraham/Jerusalem that is above).
14. 5:1-12  
"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."
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15. 5:13-24  
"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their sinful nature with its passions and desires."
16. 5:25-6:10  
"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited . . . Let us share . . . let us do good to all people."
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17. 6:11-18  
"See what large letters I use . . . . Peace and mercy to all who follow the rule of 'new creation' . . . . Let no-one cause me trouble . . . . The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers."

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This analysis of Galatians strongly suggests that the letter has a deliberately symmetrical structure. This is revealed in the explication of the macrostructural relationships within the letter. Once again, the pericopes are described here using Betz's rhetorical schema, rather than the broader divisions according to Hellenistic letter structure used by the NTSSA.

Table 11.--Macrostructural Relationships within Galatians



There is a structural balance between the body and the letter-framework, shown by the correspondence between the salutation and the conclusion, and the introduction and biographical statements and the concluding exhortations.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Bligh argues that the structural correspondence between the autobiographical and parenetical sections suggests that Paul "intended the Autobiographical Passage to demonstrate that before his conversion he walked according

There is also evidence of structural balance within the body of the letter:

- C1 Linking passage and three arguments
- C2 Statement on the purpose of the law
- C3 Three arguments and linking passage

The quite probable assumption that Paul wrote under the influence of strong emotion cannot therefore be taken to suggest that he wrote carelessly or hastily.

From this description of the configuration of the letter we can identify which parts of Galatians are emphasized by the structure of the letter. These are the salutation and the conclusion (pericopes 1 and 17); and the beginning, middle and end of the body of the letter (pericopes 6, 10 and 14). From this perspective, the autobiographical and parenetical sections have a subordinate, bracketing function. Their structural correspondence with one another, however, should not be overlooked when they are interpreted.

### Source Analysis

When we analyze the pattern or "mosaic" of sources used by Paul in Galatians, this configuration is confirmed. Paul uses or presupposes scripture, proverbs, common law, liturgical and doctrinal material.<sup>29</sup>

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to the flesh, and since his conversion, whatever his adversaries may say, he has walked according to the Spirit." John Bligh, Galatians (London: St. Paul Publications, 1970), 39-40. However, we need to recall Deist's warning that macrostructural analyses of this kind have a descriptive function alone and cannot be used heuristically. See "Ope Vrae," 264.

<sup>29</sup>See Betz, Galatians, 26-28.

References to Scripture are found in pericopes 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 13 and 16 (that is in the statement sections, each of the three main sections of the body of the letter, and in the parenthesis).

Proverbs occur in pericopes 12, 14 and 16 (mainly in the parenthesis, as we would expect).

Illustrations from the common law occur in pericopes 9 and 11 (as part of Paul's argument, and on either side of the pericope which deals with the purpose of Torah).

Liturgical material is found in most of the pericopes<sup>30</sup>. However, it is most prominent in pericopes 1 and 17 (the introduction and conclusion), and in pericope 11.

The fifth category, doctrinal material, is by far the largest. Such material occurs in every pericope but is most prominent in pericopes 3 and 4 (Paul's statements about the gospel), pericopes 6, 11 and 14 (the summary passages and 11) and pericope 17 (the conclusion).

### Pragmatics Analysis

Pragmatics studies the nature and function of language use, with the emphasis on the actions performed by it. The illocutionary function of an utterance is its social function when used by a specific speaker, in a specific context for a specific purpose. (A variety of illocutionary functions are distinguished: expressive, directive, commissive, representational, declaratory and reflexive.) Its perlocutionary function is its pragmatic effect on

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<sup>30</sup>Only pericopes 4, 5, 7, 8, 12 and 16 contain no liturgical material.

person(s) to whom it is addressed.<sup>31</sup>

Rousseau uses the term pragmatics for this phase of his analysis to refer to the aesthetic image and relief of the text,<sup>32</sup> that is, to the essential stylistic features which correspond with its syntactic thrust.

As we saw in Chapter 2, ancient epistolary theory urged letter writers to use a style which was appropriate to the purpose of the letter.<sup>33</sup> We also noted that Paul's letters are particularly suited to his purpose: his oral style and solemn, official tone are appropriate to his role as an apostle, and to the context of public worship in which his letters were read aloud.

Other stylistic features of his letters express his distinctive mode of thought, in particular his fondness for antithesis and paradox.<sup>34</sup> Cronjé has shown that the devices of estrangement or defamiliarization are dominant features of Galatians: rhetorical questions, metaphors, anacoluthons, paradoxes, parentheses, hyperbole and hyperbaton. He notes

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<sup>31</sup>Botha, Semeion, 94-94.

<sup>32</sup>Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis and Theology," 8.

<sup>33</sup>For example, Cicero's distinction between public and private letters, each with its appropriate style, and between factual letters and those which express the mood of the writer, whether happy or solemn.

<sup>34</sup>See Fischer, "Pauline Literary Forms," 212 and 216. Johannes Weiss has commented on antithesis as the most distinctive characteristic of Paul's style: "It appears so often and in so many different nuances in Paul that it must . . . be considered the fundamental element in his outlook upon life." Johannes Weiss, Earliest Christianity, vol. 2, trans. Frederick C. Grant (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1937), 416, cited in Leland Ryken, The New Testament in Literary Criticism: A Library of Literary Criticism, comp. and ed. Leland Ryken (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1984), 276.

that the effect of these devices on the reader is to retard the reading process and intensify perception.<sup>35</sup>

In general, the devices have been skilfully applied in such a way that the subject-matter (which is in every case, one of the main themes of the letter) is highlighted. In other words, the retardation and consequent intensified perception occur on occasions when the writer really wants his readers to pay attention to what he has to say.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, Paul's use of stylistic devices of estrangement are consistent with the alterations he makes to the conventional Hellenistic letter form and the configuration of his discourse. This analysis of the syntactic thrust of Galatians sensitizes the exegete to Paul's insistently persuasive purpose.

#### The Dynamic Perspective of Galatians

In the second analytical phase of Rousseau's model, the exegetical emphasis shifts from the textual to the historical dimension. Here, we seek to identify the semantic perspective or heart of the text, by analyzing the way the author redescribes and reorientates important symbols, actants and tradition material. In effect, we trace the way the author expresses his or her faith orientation in the text:

All people communicate with their world from their 'heart' or cosmologic perspective (i.e. their ultimate commitment of life and world view). This insight is based on the observation that man's life perspective functions as an orientation for his interaction with his world or cosmos.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Cronjé, "Defamiliarization," 214-227.

<sup>36</sup>Cronjé, "Defamiliarization," 226.

<sup>37</sup>Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 9.

### Theological and Sociological Analysis

Rousseau approaches the question of Paul's theological perspective by means of an analysis of the sociology of Paul's narrative world in Galatians. This is not as strange as it sounds, for, as Norman Petersen has argued, literary and sociological criticism are simply further evolutionary developments of the historical critical method: the new literary criticism is a result of the new linguistics, and the recent burst of sociological criticism is part of a process of catching up with developments in the social sciences.<sup>38</sup>

Petersen's work has been helpful in showing the way in which an historical question such as the occasion for the writing of an epistle, can be replaced with a literary question, namely the story of the letter:

The fictions of narrative show that history is story in a double sense; both in the sense that the historical narrative we construct from a letter is a story, and in the sense that the historical narrative we construct from a letter's story is also a story . . .<sup>39</sup>

However, not only is the historical dimension of an epistle like Philemon or Galatians able to be represented as a story, but the sociological world of this story can be described. Petersen likens the contemporary interpreter of

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<sup>38</sup>This point is made in a lecture entitled, "Towards a Literary-Sociological Method," delivered at the University of Port Elizabeth during his visit to South Africa in 1984.

<sup>39</sup>Petersen, Rediscovering Paul, 14.

a Pauline text to an anthropologist moving back and forth between the social facts and symbolic forms of a particular society, "and all for the purpose of understanding what it means to be human (anthropos) in a world constructed out of these social facts."<sup>40</sup> For the purpose of bringing together symbol systems and social systems, Petersen draws on the social anthropology of Beidelman, Evans-Pritchard, Geertz and Douglas, as well as Berger and Luckmann's sociology of knowledge.<sup>41</sup>

Rather than talking of the theology of Paul's letters, Petersen speaks anthropologically of his symbolic universe. This is the world as it is viewed from within his letters, what Rousseau refers to as his cosmological perspective.

Rousseau's theological analysis of the cosmological perspective of the text is done in terms of the master symbols, culturally significant symbols which determine the conduct of a society. The orientation of the textual world is expressed in the relationship of the different actants towards one another,<sup>42</sup> relationships which are expressed in symbolic roles.<sup>43</sup>

If we turn to Galatians, we see how the relationship between the actants reveals the textual perspective of three

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<sup>40</sup>Petersen, Rediscovering Paul, 20.

<sup>41</sup>Petersen, Rediscovering Paul, 39-40. This distinguishes him from the historical sociology of Pauline Christianity of Theissen, Meeks and even Elliott.

<sup>42</sup>Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 10.

<sup>43</sup>He uses the term "actant", rather than Petersen's term "actor". "Actant" is more suitable because, as in structuralism, it can refer to divine beings, persons or inanimate objects.

of the pericopes. This is illustrated in Tables 12, 13 and 14.

Before drawing up such tables, it is worth doing the simple exercise of identifying those symbols which seem culturally and religiously important to Paul in the passages highlighted by our analysis of the syntactic thrust.

In pericope 1 we note the following important symbols: Paul himself; the office of apostleship; mankind; Jesus Christ; God the Father; death; resurrection; brotherhood; churches; the blessing of grace and peace; sins; the present evil age; and glory. It is evident, from the roles which Jesus Christ plays in this pericope, that his rescuing work is the perspective around which they are all orientated. Jesus Christ sent Paul; he was raised by God; he gave himself to rescue Paul and the Galatian churches.

Similarly, in pericope 6, we find another cluster of culturally significant symbols: Jews by birth; Gentile sinners; justification; Torah observance; faith in Jesus Christ; sin and sinners; lawbreakers; death; life; crucifixion; the body; Son of God; and grace. Again we see that they are orientated in Paul's mind around the central perspective of faith in Jesus Christ, who loved him and gave his life for him.

In pericope 10, we see: Paul, the writer and teacher of the Scriptures; the Galatians, who are being taught by him; God, the creator of life and source of both law and promise; Jesus Christ, the promised Seed; the law as pedagogue; God's people Israel, angels and a human mediator; humanity or the world; righteousness and sin. The point of orientation is God's fulfilment of the promise to Abraham in

Jesus Christ. Paul again argues for faith to be centred upon him.

We could repeat this process with pericopes 14 and 17 (or indeed any of the others) to confirm that Paul's perspective is completely centred on Jesus Christ. In pericope 14, Christ sets us free. In pericope 17, the cross of Christ leads to the crucifixion of Paul's former symbolic universe, and to a totally new order of existence. The vividness of this new symbolic world is revealed in the way he calls his scars, received as a result of persecution for his new view of the world, the cross marks of Jesus.

This kind of symbolic analysis is extraordinarily simple and fruitful. We are quickly enabled to identify important people, roles, social institutions, events, ideas and themes. Most importantly, our attention is directed beyond them to the perspective around which they are orientated. In Galatians, this perspective is utterly, almost obsessively, Christ-centred.<sup>44</sup> This is one of the explanations for its canonical place in the New Testament. What Rousseau says of 1 Peter is thus also true of Galatians:

this letter is part and parcel of the writings which witness so decisively to the 'new testament' which is founded on the Christ-events (i.e. which is Christologically orientated).<sup>45</sup>

However, Paul's perspective is not the only perspective present within Galatians. There are other

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<sup>44</sup>"Although in all Paul's epistles Christ is much spoken of, yet in none other is the mention of Christ so all-pervasive." Guthrie, Galatians, 154.

<sup>45</sup>Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 11.

people in it with other perspectives: Paul's opponents, and the members of the Galatian churches about whom he is so concerned. These people may have been "resocialized" to see life from Paul's perspective; or they may have wholly other perspectives, which are the result of their primary and secondary socialization (that is, their family upbringing and their wider social interaction). By using the tabular layout developed by Rousseau, it is possible to group all these actants, their relationships and roles, not only in terms of the world and perspective of the letter, but also according to whether the relationship is one of superiority or inferiority, and whether it is positive or negative from the perspective of the writer.

The resultant analysis of Pericope 1 is as follows:

Table 12.--Analysis of the Actants and Roles in Gal 1:1-5 as Master Symbols Reflecting the Textual World and Perspective of the Pericope

<u>Master Symbols</u>		<u>Textual</u>	<u>Textual</u>
<u>Actants</u>	<u>Roles</u>	<u>World</u>	<u>Perspective</u>
-----			
Positive Vertical (downwards)			
JESUS CHRIST: PAUL sender	WHO sent Paul	WHICH REFLECTS resocialization	INTERRELATED BY rescue work of Christ
GOD: PAUL sender	WHO sent Paul	WHICH REFLECTS resocialization	INTERRELATED BY rescue work of Christ
JESUS CHRIST: GALATIANS rescuer (metaphor)	WHO gave himself for them	WHICH REFLECTS resocialization	INTERRELATED BY rescue work of Christ
GOD: GALATIANS rescuer (metaphor)	WHO raised Jesus	WHICH REFLECTS resocialization	INTERRELATED BY rescue work of Christ

GOD: JESUS CHRIST Father (metaphor)	WHO  raised Jesus	WHICH REFLECTS  divinity as source of resocialization	INTERRELATED BY  rescue work of Christ
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Positive Vertical (upwards)

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PAUL: JESUS CHRIST apostle	WHO  is obedient to his call	WHICH REFLECTS  resocialization	INTERRELATED BY  rescue work of Christ
PAUL: GOD apostle	WHO  were rescued	WHICH REFLECTS  resocialization	INTERRELATED BY  Jesus Christ
GALATIANS: JESUS CHRIST Gentile sinners	WHO  were rescued	WHICH REFLECTS  resocialization	INTERRELATED BY  Jesus Christ
GALATIANS: GOD Gentile sinners	WHO  were rescued	WHICH REFLECTS  resocialization	INTERRELATED BY  Jesus Christ
JESUS CHRIST: GOD Messiah	WHO  rescues humanity	WHICH REFLECTS  resocialization	INTERRELATED BY  rescue work of Christ

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Positive Horizontal

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PAUL: GALATIANS church founder	WHO  is concerned	WHICH REFLECTS  resocialization	INTERRELATED BY  Jesus Christ
letter writer	writes	secondary socialization	AUTHORIZED BY social convention
BROTHERS: GALATIANS fellow Christians	WHO  write	WHICH REFLECTS  resocialization and secondary socialization	INTERRELATED BY  Jesus Christ AUTHORIZED BY social convention

PAUL: BROTHERS co-worker	WHO  writes with to them	WHICH REFLECTS  resocialization	INTERRELATED TO  Jesus Christ
JESUS THE LORD:GOD the Lord (metaphor)	WHO  shares divinity	WHICH REFLECTS  divinity as source of resocialization	INTERRELATED BY  rescue work of Jesus Christ
----- Negative Vertical (downwards) -----			
PAUL:MAN apostle	WHO is not sent by man	WHICH REFLECTS resocialization	AUTHORIZED BY Jesus Christ
JESUS CHRIST: EVIL AGE rescuer	WHO  rescues those who believe	WHICH REFLECTS  resocialization	AUTHORIZED BY  God the Father
----- Negative Vertical (upwards) -----			
MAN:PAUL humanity	WHO do not send Paul	WHICH REFLECTS secondary socialization	AUTHORIZED BY human authority
EVIL AGE: JESUS CHRIST world in rebellion	WHICH  is defeated by Jesus	WHICH REFLECTS  conflict be- tween secondary socialization and resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY  God the Father
-----			

**Results:**

We note three human social groups in this pericope:  
(1) Paul and the brothers; (2) Paul and the Galatians; (3)  
Paul and man.

We note five human-divine relationships: (1) Paul and  
Jesus Christ; (2) Paul and God; (3) the Galatians and Jesus

Christ; (4) the Galatians and God; (5) the evil age and Jesus Christ.

We note two divine relationships: (1) God and Jesus the Christ; (2) Jesus the Lord and God.

The human actants have all been resocialized from their primary and secondary worlds into a new world in which their most important perspective is the rescue work of Christ. The resocialization of the human actants is a consequence of the divine relationship between God and Jesus. It is characterized by the following symbols: the actions of being sent and obedient response (Jesus; Paul); the activity of working together (Paul and the brothers; Jesus and God); the rescuer and the ones rescued (Jesus and all humanity, including Paul, the brothers and the Galatians).

In this way, theological, literary and sociological information is combined to indicate the cosmological perspective of this pericope.

Much of this information can help us with questions we raised earlier. For example, we note that Paul has "positive horizontal" relationships with the Galatians, but (as shown in Table 13) a "negative vertical (downwards)" relationship with his opponents. This suggests that the rivalry, competition and jealousy which Neyrey attributes to a sense of inadequate authority in Paul<sup>46</sup> ought to be viewed rather as evidence of Paul's intense concern to be faithful to his resocialization which had taken place by the direct intervention of the "divine community" (God and Jesus Christ) recorded in Gal 1:15-16.

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<sup>46</sup>Neyrey, "Bewitched in Galatia," 97.

If we repeat this process with the pericope 17, the conclusion, which is indicated by the macrostructural configuration to correspond to the salutation, some of the negative relationships which are the occasion for the letter are evident. They are, of course present from pericope 2 onwards. The fact that Paul gives no positive indication of them in his salutation,<sup>47</sup> shows that, while Paul is deeply concerned about the activity of his opponents in Galatia, he is not in any way opposed to the Galatian Christians, whom he still regards as his brothers.

Table 13.--Analysis of the Actants and Roles in Gal 6:11-18 as Master Symbols Reflecting the Textual World and Perspective of the Pericope

<u>Master Symbols</u> <u>Actants</u>	<u>Roles</u>	<u>Textual</u> <u>World</u>	<u>Textual</u> <u>Perspective</u>
----- Positive Vertical (downwards) -----			
JESUS CHRIST: PAUL Messiah and Lord (metaphor)	WHO was crucified gives peace, mercy and grace	WHICH REFLECTS extreme re- socialization	INTERRELATED BY cross of Christ
JESUS CHRIST: GALATIANS Messiah and Lord (metaphor)	WHO was crucified gives peace, mercy and grace	WHICH REFLECTS extreme resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY cross of Christ

<sup>47</sup>Paul's opponents or, more precisely, the problems they have caused, are only evident in pericope 1 in the changes he makes to his conventional letter opening.

JESUS CHRIST: ISRAEL OF GOD Messiah and Lord (metaphor)	WHO was crucified gives peace and mercy	WHICH REFLECTS resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY cross of Christ
THE CROSS: PAUL Paul's boast	WHICH crucifies the world	WHICH REFLECTS resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY cross of Christ
THE CROSS: GALATIANS source of new creation	WHICH crucifies the world	WHICH REFLECTS resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY cross of Christ

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Positive Vertical (upwards)  
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PAUL: JESUS CHRIST Apostle	WHO bears marks of Jesus	WHICH REFLECTS resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY cross of Christ
PAUL: THE CROSS follower of crucified messiah	WHO boasts in the cross	WHICH REFLECTS resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY cross of Christ
GALATIANS: JESUS CHRIST New creations (metaphor)	WHO need to trust in Christ's work for them	WHICH REFLECTS resocial- ization under pressure to revert to secondary socialization	INTERRELATED BY cross of Christ
GALATIANS: THE CROSS followers of crucified messiah	WHO do not want to be persecuted for the cross	WHICH REFLECTS conflict between re- socialization and secondary socialization	AUTHORIZED BY cross of Christ

ISRAEL OF GOD: JESUS CHRIST true descend- ants of Abraham's grandson Jacob; God's people	WHO  are new creations and receive peace and mercy	WHICH REFLECTS  resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY  cross of Christ
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 Positive Horizontal
 

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PAUL: GALATIANS church founder  brother (metaphor)	WHO  writes appeals and blesses	WHICH REFLECTS  secondary socialization,  resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY  social conventions  INTERRELATED BY cross of Christ
GALATIANS: PAUL recipients of letter	WHO  read the letter	WHICH REFLECTS  secondary socialization	AUTHORIZED BY  social conventions
JUDAIZERS: THOSE THEY WANTED TO PLEASE the circumcised	WHO  to force Christians to be circumcised	WHICH REFLECTS  secondary socialization	AUTHORIZED BY  the law

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 Negative Horizontal
 

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GALATIANS: JUDAIZERS uncircumcised	WHO  are leaning towards being circum- cised	WHICH REFLECTS  conflict be- tween second- ary social- ization and resocial- ization of Judaizers and Galatians	INTERRELATED BY  cross of Christ
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 Negative Vertical (downwards)
 

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PAUL: JUDAIZERS opponent	WHO fights their trouble- making	WHICH REFLECTS conflict be- tween re- socialized and primary/ secondary worlds	INTERRELATED BY cross of Christ
PAUL: LAW/CIRCUM- CISION follower of Jesus	WHO  no longer needs the law	WHICH REFLECTS  resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY  cross of Christ
GALATIANS: LAW/CIRCUM- CISION followers of Jesus	WHO  are not sure if they need the law	WHICH REFLECTS conflict between resocial- ization and secondary socialization	AUTHORIZED BY  cross of Christ
LAW/CIRCUM- CISION: JUDAIZERS outward observance	WHICH  prevents persecution	WHICH REFLECTS  secondary socialization	AUTHORIZED BY  Jewish religious tradition
JESUS CHRIST: JUDAIZERS crucified Messiah (metaphor)	WHO brings new creation	WHICH REFLECTS resociali- zation	MEDIATED BY cross of Christ
JUDAIZERS: CROSS the circum- cised	WHO  avoid perse- cution	WHICH REFLECTS  secondary socialization	AUTHORIZED BY  Jewish religious tradition

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 Negative Vertical (upwards)
 

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JUDAIZERS: PAUL trouble- makers	WHO teach circum- cision to avoid perse- cution	WHICH REFLECTS conflict between resocial- ization and primary/ secondary worlds	AUTHORIZED BY Jewish religious tradition
JUDAIZERS: LAW/CIRCUM- CISION observers of the law	WHO  teach circum- cision to avoid perse- cution	WHICH REFLECTS  conflict between resocial- ization and primary/ secondary worlds	INTERRELATED BY  Jewish religious tradition
LAW/CIRCUM- CISION: PAUL part of old creation	WHICH demands observance	WHICH REFLECTS secondary socialization	INTERRELATED BY tradition of religious community
LAW/CIRCUM- CISION: GALATIANS part of old creation	WHICH demands observance	WHICH REFLECTS secondary socialization	INTERRELATED BY tradition of religious community
JUDAIZERS: JESUS  advocate observance of the law, esp. circumcision	WHO avoid perse- cution for cross of Christ	WHICH REFLECTS conflict between re- socialized and primary/ secondary worlds	INTERRELATED BY cross of Christ
CROSS: JUDAIZERS substitute for the law	WHICH  brings perse- cution	WHICH REFLECTS  secondary socialization	AUTHORIZED BY  Jewish religious tradition

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**Results:**

In this closing pericope we note four human social groups: (1) Paul and the Galatians; (2) Paul and the Judaizers; (3) the Galatians and the Judaizers; (4) the Judaizers and those they wanted to please.

We note four human-divine relationships: (1) Paul and Jesus Christ; (2) the Galatians and Jesus Christ; (3) the Israel of God and Jesus Christ; (4) the Judaizers and Jesus Christ.

We note, too, five human-conceptual relationships: (1) Paul and the cross; (2) the Galatians and the cross; (3) the Judaizers and the cross; (4) Paul and the law/circumcision; (5) the Galatians and the law/circumcision; (5) the Judaizers and the law/circumcision.

While Paul, the Galatians and the Judaizers have all been converted to a perspective in which the cross of Christ is important, the Judaizers have allowed their secondary socialization, symbolized by the law, to dominate their perspective. They in turn are attempting to turn the Galatians' perspective away from the cross of Christ and towards the dominant master symbols of their secondary socialization: the law and circumcision. In Paul's view, this approach, motivated by the avoidance of persecution for the cross of Christ, results in total loss of the benefits of the cross: new creation, peace, mercy, and grace from the Lord and Messiah, Jesus.

It may be argued that these two pericopes, as the salutation and conclusion, are somewhat unusual and more amenable to this kind of analysis. To illustrate that it can be used just as successfully with a more "theological" pericope, we apply it to pericope 10. While Betz terms it

"a digression on the Jewish Torah",<sup>48</sup> its position in the structural centre of the letter suggests that it is more central to his argument.

Table 14.--Analysis of the Actants and Roles in Gal 3:19-25 as Master Symbols Reflecting the Textual World and Perspective of the Pericope

<u>Master Symbols</u> <u>Actants</u>	<u>Roles</u>	<u>Textual</u> <u>World</u>	<u>Textual</u> <u>Perspective</u>
----- Positive Vertical (downwards) -----			
JESUS CHRIST: PAUL Christ (metaphor)	WHO  justifies	WHICH REFLECTS goal of resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY fulfilment of promise
JESUS CHRIST: GALATIANS Christ (metaphor)	WHO  justifies	WHICH REFLECTS goal of resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY fulfilment of promise
PAUL: GALATIANS scripture teacher	WHO  explains	WHICH REFLECTS secondary social- ization and resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY Jewish exegetical practice and faith in Christ
GOD: JESUS CHRIST father (metaphor) and	WHO  sends his son	WHICH REFLECTS  divinity as source of re- socialization	INTERRELATED BY  divine nature
GOD: HUMANITY promiser	WHO  fulfils	WHICH REFLECTS source of resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY  promise to Abraham
GOD: PROMISE source	WHO  makes promises	WHICH REFLECTS  source of resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY  God's divine nature

<sup>48</sup>Betz, Galatians, " 161.

GOD:LAW source	WHO gives law	WHICH REFLECTS source of secondary socialization	AUTHORIZED BY God's divine nature
GOD: FAITH source	WHO  rewards trust	WHICH REFLECTS  resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY  God's divine nature
JESUS CHRIST: FAITH fulfilment of promise	WHO  came	WHICH REFLECTS  divinity as source of re- socialization	AUTHORIZED BY  God's divine nature
PROMISE: HUMANITY scripture	WHICH  gives faith	WHICH REFLECTS  resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY  God's divine nature
PROMISE: FAITH scripture	WHICH  provides a basis for faith	WHICH REFLECTS  resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY  God's divine nature
LAW: ISRAEL pedagogue (metaphor)	WHICH  leads to Christ	WHICH REFLECTS transition: secondary to resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY  God's divine nature
ANGELS: GOD God's messengers (metaphor)	WHO ordain the law	WHICH REFLECTS supernatural beings as source of secondary socialization	INTERRELATED BY God's creative power
ANGELS: LAW God's messengers (metaphor)	WHO ordain the law	WHICH REFLECTS supernatural beings as source of secondary socialization	AUTHORIZED BY God's divine nature
ANGELS: MEDIATOR God's agents	WHO ordain the law	WHICH REFLECTS supernatural beings as source of secondary socialization	AUTHORIZED BY God's divine nature

MEDIATOR: ISRAEL Moses	WHO mediates God's law	WHICH REFLECTS resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY God's divine nature
FAITH: LAW imparts life	WHICH shows its superiority to the law	WHICH REFLECTS validation of the resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY God's divine nature
----- Positive Vertical (upwards) -----			
PAUL: JESUS CHRIST believer	WHO believes in Jesus	WHICH REFLECTS resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY fulfilment of God's promise
GALATIANS: JESUS CHRIST believers	WHO believed in Jesus	WHICH REFLECTS resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY fulfilment of God's promise
GALATIANS: PAUL congregations	WHO are in danger of apostasy	WHICH REFLECTS resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY faith in Christ
PROMISE: GOD scripture	WHICH expresses God's plan	WHICH REFLECTS divinity as source of resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY God's divine nature
FAITH: PROMISE realizes promise	WHICH receives	WHICH REFLECTS validation of the resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY God's divine nature
FAITH: JESUS CHRIST realizes promise	WHICH receives justifi- cation	WHICH REFLECTS resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY God's divine provision
LAW:GOD scripture	WHICH expresses God's plan	WHICH REFLECTS divinity as source of resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY God's divine nature

LAW: FAITH pedagogue	WHICH  leads to the object of faith	WHICH REFLECTS  resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY  God's divine provision
FAITH: GOD trust	WHICH  receives	WHICH REFLECTS  validation of the resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY  God's divine nature
HUMANITY: GOD God's creation	WHO  seek life	WHICH REFLECTS  human desire to be resocialized	INTERRELATED BY  God's creative initiative
JESUS CHRIST: GOD Christ and son (metaphors)	WHO  is sent	WHICH REFLECTS  divine initiative	INTERRELATED BY  divine nature
HUMANITY: PROMISE descendants of Abraham (metaphor)	WHO  seek faith	WHICH REFLECTS  human desire to be resocialized	INTERRELATED BY  God's promise
ISRAEL: ANGELS God's people	WHO  seek to obey him	WHICH REFLECTS  resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY  service to God
LAW: ANGELS scripture	WHICH  expresses God's will	WHICH REFLECTS  resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY  God's divine nature
MEDIATOR: ANGELS lawgiver	WHO  puts law into effect	WHICH REFLECTS  resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY  God's divine nature
ISRAEL: MEDIATOR God's people	WHO  seek to obey him	WHICH REFLECTS  resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY  service to God

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 Positive Horizontal
 

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GOD: JESUS CHRIST divinity	WHO  create and recreate	WHICH REFLECTS  divinity as source of re- socialization	INTERRELATED BY  divine nature
PAUL: GALATIANS brother (metaphor)	WHO  explains	WHICH REFLECTS  resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY  faith in Christ
GALATIANS: PAUL brothers (metaphor)	WHO  listen	WHICH REFLECTS  resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY  faith in Christ
LAW: PROMISE scripture	WHICH  expresses God's will	WHICH REFLECTS  resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY  God's divine nature
PROMISE: LAW scripture	WHICH  is a prior expression of God's will	WHICH REFLECTS  divine purpose	AUTHORIZED BY  God's divine nature
SEED:PROMISE Jesus Christ (metaphor)	WHO  fulfils promise	WHICH REFLECTS  divine purpose	AUTHORIZED BY  God's divine nature
PROMISE:SEED scripture	WHICH  expresses God's will	WHICH REFLECTS  resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY  God's divine nature

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 Negative Horizontal
 

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LAW: RIGHTEOUS- NESS scripture	WHICH  expresses God's will	WHICH REFLECTS  resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY  God's divine nature
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Negative Vertical (downwards)			
SIN:WORLD trans- gressions	WHICH imprison	WHICH REFLECTS failure to be resocial- ized	INTERRELATED BY neglect of divine nature and will
PAUL:LAW Jewish Christian	WHO is free of the law	WHICH REFLECTS resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY faith in God's promise
LIFE/RIGHT- EOUSNESS:LAW greatest human needs	WHICH come via faith in Christ	WHICH REFLECTS resocial- ization	INTERRELATED BY God's divine nature
Negative Vertical (upwards)			
WORLD:SIN prisoner (metaphor)	WHICH transgresses	WHICH REFLECTS failure to be resocialized	INTERRELATED BY lack of faith/ unrighteousness
LAW: PAUL pedagogue	WHICH led Paul to Christ	WHICH REFLECTS transition to resocial- ization	AUTHORIZED BY God's divine purpose
LAW:LIFE/ RIGHTEOUS- NESS warder	WHICH imprisons	WHICH REFLECTS failure to be resocialized	INTERRELATED BY absence of faith

### Results

In this pericope, two human social relationships are implied: (1) Paul and the Galatians; (2) the mediator and Israel.

We note three human-divine relationships: (1) Jesus Christ and Paul; (2) Jesus Christ and the Galatians; (3) God and humanity.

We note four human-conceptual relationships: (1) humanity and the promise; (2) Israel and the law; (3) the Seed and the promise; (4) sin and the world.

We note one divine relationship: God and Jesus Christ.

We note four divine-conceptual relationships: God and the promise; (2) God and the law; (3) God and faith; (4) Jesus Christ and faith

We note two superhuman-human relationships: (1) angels and mediator; (2) angels and Israel.

We note one superhuman-conceptual relationship: the law and the angels.

We note one superhuman-divine relationship: the angels and God.

We note five conceptual relationships: (1) law and promise; (2) law and righteousness; (3) law and life/righteousness; (4) faith and law; (5) faith and promise.<sup>49</sup>

The human actants are resocialized in terms of their faith in Jesus Christ. The source and goal of this resocialization is God's fulfilment of his promise to Abraham. The law functions as an intermediate step in this process and has the ambiguous function of facilitating both secondary socialization and resocialization. This ambiguity is expressed through its association with the unusual symbol of a pedagogue and, indirectly, the negative symbol of a jailer. This ambiguity is resolved by Paul's assertion that

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<sup>49</sup>This list of relationships is not exhaustive, for example we could also identify relationships between righteousness and promise, angels and sin, angels and righteousness, and so on. The intention here is to note the more important relationships:

the fulfilment of God's promise in Christ renders the law obsolete.

Thus we see in the relationships of the actants, the Christocentric orientation of the textual world of Galatians. Not only is the cross of Christ the dominant symbol of the letter, but union with Christ through the cross is the dominant metaphor.<sup>50</sup>

#### Traditio-Historical Analysis

Secondly, we note how Paul re-orientates his traditional material in terms of this Christocentric orientation.

In pericope 1, the traditional material is already Christological, and we have seen how Paul's expansion of the traditional letter opening is done to include this material about Jesus Christ.

Paul's apostleship is based exclusively on Christ. The fact that Paul emphasizes that his apostolic commission was neither derived "from men nor by man" (from humanity nor even via a human intermediary) suggests that his Galatian converts might have been told this. Paul insists that "his commission was received directly, without mediation, from

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<sup>50</sup>Thus, Paul writes: in chapter 1, that Christ "gave himself for our sins" (Gal 1:4); in chapter 2, that he has been "crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20); in chapter 3, that "Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified" and "you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26); in chapter 4, of being "in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you" (Gal 4:19); in chapter 5, that "those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their sinful nature with its passions and desires" (Gal 5:24) and in chapter 6, that through the cross of Jesus Christ "the world has been crucified to me and I to the world . . . I bear on my body the marks of Jesus" (Gal 6:14, 17).

the risen Christ."<sup>51</sup>

The title "Christ" (messiah or anointed one) has been completely re-interpreted from its Jewish roots to refer to the crucified and resurrected Jesus of Nazareth. In the Old Testament, the only people to be anointed were kings, priests and prophets. In Jesus' day messianic expectation had developed a strong political-nationalistic emphasis. The title is rarely used of Jesus in the gospels, yet under the influence of his ministry "the content of Messiahship was increasingly understood in new ways. The elements of rule were subordinated to those of deliverance and salvation."<sup>52</sup> After Jesus' resurrection, the title of Christ was quickly applied to him: it could no longer be politically misunderstood and it powerfully expressed the belief that God had vindicated him.

For Paul, this reinterpretation of the Jewish messiah tradition is central to his understanding that the law has been superseded. Gordon comments:

The very essence of Paul's gospel consists in the declaration that in Christ God has indeed fulfilled the promises he made with Abraham, to bless 'all the nations' in him. Paul's faith, and that of the Pauline churches, finds its focus in the Christ in whom these promises have arrived.<sup>53</sup>

Paul gives God the title "Father". Again this is uniquely associated with the life and teaching of Jesus. He enjoyed a unique Father-Son relationship with God and taught his disciples to see God as Father. "Whereas the

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<sup>51</sup>Bruce, Galatians, 72.

<sup>52</sup>I. Howard Marshall, The Origins of New Testament Christology (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), 94.

<sup>53</sup>Gordon, "Problem at Galatia," 43.

contemporary pagan world held its gods in fear, the Christian view of God's fatherhood brings an unparalleled element of intimacy into man's relationship with God."<sup>54</sup> The fatherhood of God and Paul's brotherhood with his fellow-workers and the Galatian believers are both consequences of his Christocentric perspective.

Similarly, as is widely recognized, Paul's greeting contains a specifically Christian form of the customary Greek and Hebrew words of greeting: chairein<sup>55</sup> and shalom.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, Paul names the Father and Son as the joint source of this grace and peace.

This clearly reflects the preeminent place that Jesus Christ occupies in the thinking of Paul. Christ has this preeminence because to Paul Christ is God by nature (2:20; 4:4; cf. Phil. 2:6), because it was Christ who accomplished the great work of redemption (Gal. 1:4), and because he has been highly exalted by God (cf. Phil. 2:9-11).<sup>57</sup>

Bruce draws attention to the fact that the doxology at the end of this greeting is unparalleled in Paul's letters.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Donald Guthrie, New Testament Theology (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 80.

<sup>55</sup>Johannes Weiss first suggested that "grace" might have first developed out of the Greek form of the greeting in Der erste Korintherbrief KEK 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910), 4 and 5. See Betz, Galatians, 40.

<sup>56</sup>See Bruce, Galatians, 74, Burton, Galatians, 10-11, Jürgen Becker, "Der Brief an die Galater," in Das Neue Testament Deutsch (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 9, Lategan, Galasiërs, 22 and Fung, Galatians, 38-39.

<sup>57</sup>Fung, Galatians, 39.

<sup>58</sup>Bruce, Galatians, 7. It is possible that this doxology replaces the missing thanksgiving. Betz comments on the way a liturgical tradition from Judaism is here part of the epistolary style of early Christianity. Betz, Galatians, 43.

The other traditions relating to Jesus are pre-Pauline: "raised from the dead"; "gave himself for our sins"; "rescue . . . from the present evil age". Paul transmits them here without alteration. Regarding Paul's reference to the resurrection tradition, Becker comments, "Damit greift Paulus auf die wohl älteste Stufe der urchristlichen Bekenntnisformulierung zurück (vgl. Röm.8,11; 10,9; 1.Thess.1,10 u.ö.)."<sup>59</sup> However, it is striking that he finds it unnecessary to mention it again: "Die Auferstehungsbotschaft scheint in Galatien im Unterschied zu Korinth (1.Kor.15) in Geltung zu stehen. Paulus sieht sich nirgends genötigt, sie im Brief zu entfalten."<sup>60</sup> In contrast to this, the tradition of Christ's act of self-giving for our sins is one which dominates the first two chapters of the letter.<sup>61</sup>

The closing pericope, pericope 17, also contains liturgical traditions, for example the blessings in Gal 6:16 and 18 and the Christological title "Lord" in Gal 6:14 and 18. Again they are transmitted relatively unchanged by Paul, and again they point to the Christ as the source not only of grace, but also of mercy and peace. The term "Israel of God" is an example of Paul's reinterpretation of a traditional name for the Jewish people, to mean all (Gal 6:16) those who have been made new (Gal 6:15) by the power of the cross of Christ (Gal 6:14). Bruce and Fung suggest that Paul might have been thinking here of the additional benediction to the Eighteen Benedictions: "peace . . . and

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<sup>59</sup>Becker, "Galater," 8.

<sup>60</sup>Becker, "Galaten," 8.

<sup>61</sup>See Lategan, Galasiërs, 22.

mercy on us and on all Israel thy people."<sup>62</sup>. But Roetzel rightly reminds us that, ". . . the Eighteen Benedictions which became a regular feature of synagogue worship . . . was a later [post A.D. 70] intrusion."<sup>63</sup>

A central tradition, reinterpreted here (and throughout the letter) is the rite of circumcision. It is now no longer the decisive mark of belonging to the people of God (Gen 17:23-27), or a token of adherence to Torah (Gal 6:13), but has become, in Paul's perspective, a way of avoiding persecution for the cross of Christ (Gal 6:12). Moreover, it reflects a superficial orientation based on outward impressions (Gal 6:12) and boasting about the flesh (Gal 6:13). It is thus useless both as a rite and as a symbol (Gal 6:15).

The cross of Christ is as effective as circumcision is ineffective: it evokes persecution (Gal 6:17) but it also crucifies the evil power of the present world for those whose lives are based upon it (Gal 6:14; compare Gal 5:24) and transfers them into a new world (Gal 6:15):

Damit klingt nochmals das Stichwort an, das das spezifische Zentrum der paulinischen Theologie signalisiert. Es leuchtete jeweils an entscheidender Stelle auf . . . . Wer nach Paulus vom Kreuz Christi angemessen reden will, muss in bezug auf das Rühmen von dem Gegenstand des Ruhmes, wie ihn die Irrlehrer suchen, ganz Abstand nehmen. Das Kreuz Christi schliesst ihn aus.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, this new world is not only an eschatological hope; it is also a present sociological reality.

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<sup>62</sup>Bruce, Galatians, 274, Fung, Galatians, 309-310.

<sup>63</sup>Roetzel, World, 66.

<sup>64</sup>Becker, "Galater," 82-83.

Our account of the macrostructural configuration indicates that Pericope 10 is an important one. This is confirmed by the fact that in it Paul relativizes the central Jewish tradition of the law.<sup>65</sup> He does so by reinterpreting it in terms of another important Jewish tradition, the promise to Abraham, as fulfilled in Christ.

The fact that both the law and the promise are contained in the same Jewish scriptures, indicates the important hermeneutical role played by the cosmological perspective of the reader or interpreter. Differing cosmological perspectives result in differing interpretations.<sup>66</sup> This is confirmed by the insight from

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<sup>65</sup>The literature on Paul's treatment of the law is immense. Davies rightly terms it "one of the most discussed subjects in Christian theology and particularly in New Testament studies." See, W. D. Davies, "Paul and the Law: Reflections on Pitfalls in Interpretation," in Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett, eds. M. D. Hooker and S. G. Wilson (London: SPCK, 1982), 4. Apart from the discussion in commentaries, important contributions to the debate as it affects Galatians, can be found in: Terrance Callan, "Pauline Midrash: The Exegetical Background of Gal 3:19b," Journal of Biblical Literature 99 (1980): 549-567, Dunn, "Works of the Law," 523-542, Hans Hübner, Law in Paul's Thought: A Contribution to the Development of Pauline Theology, trans. James C. G. Greig, ed. John Riches (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1984), 15-50, Heikki Räisänen, "Paul's Conversion and the Development of his View of the Law." New Testament Studies 33 (1987): 404-419 and "Galatians 2.16 and Paul's Break with Judaism," 543-553 and Watson, Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles, 49-72 and Nigel M. Watson, "Justified by Faith; Judged by Works - An Antinomy?" New Testament Studies 29 (1983): 209-221.

<sup>66</sup>Francis Watson shows how the traditional Reformation interpretation of the faith-law antithesis in Galatians springs from that particular sociological context and is not present in Paul at all. "For Paul, the term 'works of the law' refers not to morality in general but to the practice of the law within the Jewish community; and the term 'faith in Jesus Christ' refers not to a willingness to receive God's grace as a free gift and to renounce reliance on one's own achievements, but to the Christian confession of Jesus as the Messiah and the social reorientation which this entails." Watson, Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles, 64.

pragmatics that utterances, even those taken from Scripture, have a specific illocutive function within a specific social context. These two factors help to explain "the tortured ambiguity of Paul's relation to the law".<sup>67</sup> He is constantly engaged in reinterpreting the master symbols of his opponents in terms of his cosmological perspective.<sup>68</sup>

In Galatians, Paul reinterprets the role of the law for people who are being persuaded that Christianity is simply a Jewish reform movement.<sup>69</sup> Paul considers this view to be inconsistent with the radical newness of the gospel, something which he has both experienced and received as part of the Christian tradition: "the break with Judaism became

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<sup>67</sup>"It seems that we have to accept that Paul uses nomos in a variety of senses and is not entirely consistent in his statements. He wins his argument in Galatians by disparaging the Law, but, in Romans, declares that he is establishing and revering it." C. F. D. Moule, "Jesus, Judaism and Paul," in Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament, eds. G. F. Hawthorne and O. Betz (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 48-49.

<sup>68</sup>For example, Barrett argues that in chapters 3 and 4 Paul is "taking up passages that had been used by his opponents, correcting their exegesis, and showing that their Old Testament proof texts were on his side rather than on theirs." C. K. Barrett, "The Allegory of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar in the Argument of Galatians," in Rechtfertigung: Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann, eds. J. Friedrich, W. Pöhlmann, and P. Stuhlmacher (Tübingen and Göttingen; 1976), 22-27, cited in Fung, Galatians, 217-220. See also Barrett, Freedom and Obligation, 17-38.

<sup>69</sup>Watson argues the case for this in Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles, 49-72. Martyn thinks that Paul's opponents were teachers belonging to a Law-observant mission to the Gentiles, for whom the messiah was secondary to the law. He argues that Gal 3:6-29 is a reformulation of the way they reinterpreted scripture. J. Louis Martyn, "A Law-Observant Mission to Gentiles: The Background of Galatians," Scottish Journal of Theology 38 (1985): 313-323.

logically inevitable at the very moment when the claim was raised that faith in Jesus is the only way to salvation."<sup>70</sup>

In reinterpreting the law in terms of Christ, rather than Christ in terms of the law, Paul expresses his belief not only that the Galatian Christians are no longer under the supervision of the law, but also that the Galatian churches are not under the jurisdiction of the Jewish church in Jerusalem.<sup>71</sup> He challenges such religious nationalism and exclusivism<sup>72</sup> by refusing to allow the law to function as a marker of Jewish, or Jewish-Christian social identity and boundaries.<sup>73</sup>

There are other Jewish traditions reorientated in this pericope along with the law: those concerning angels, the "mediator" and God. In Gal 3:19-20, Paul adopts and adapts Jewish midrashic interpretations of scriptures relating to the giving of the law. This is clear because the Old Testament does not refer to angelic involvement in the giving of the law, nor is Moses ever called "mediator" in scripture.<sup>74</sup> Verse 20 is notoriously obscure. However, in verses 19 and 20, Paul seems to be contrasting the complex

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<sup>70</sup>Räisänen, "Galatians 2.16," 550.

<sup>71</sup>Watson shows how Paul attempts to legitimise this separation in the letter by means of denunciation, antithesis and reinterpretation. Watson, Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles, 61-72.

<sup>72</sup>"Würden sie das Gesetz beachten, müssten sie so werden, wie die Galater bisher waren. Also bleibt nur ein politisch-egoistischer Grund ihrer Agitation übrig: der religiös-nationalistische Fanatismus in Judäa." Becker, "Galater," 82.

<sup>73</sup>See Dunn, "Works of the Law," 524, 538.

<sup>74</sup>Callan, "Pauline Midrash," 550.

and indirect manner by which the law was given, according to Jewish midrash, with the simplicity of God and the directness of the coming of Christ.<sup>75</sup> Thus, he interprets the Jewish monotheistic confession in a way which points away from the law, and towards Christ.

While Paul avoids the implication that the law is not from God by a simple denial (21a), he nevertheless radically downgrades its status by means of daring and original metaphors of jail warder and pedagogue.<sup>76</sup>

The law, then, plays a subordinate role in Paul's symbolic universe. "There is no ultimate abolition of Torah. The Torah represents the negative backdrop, without which the positive divine redemption would never have come."<sup>77</sup> However, the source of this redemption is not the law: it is Christ alone.

### Canon Analysis

It is clear from the discussion above that Galatians is written from a very definite faith commitment. Its canonical status reminds us that this is not an idiosyncratic commitment peculiar to Paul, but one which found an appreciative echo in all the Christian communities

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<sup>75</sup>Callan, "Pauline Midrash," 564-567. Compare the alternative translation given by Today's English Version: ". . . God acts alone."

<sup>76</sup>Betz, Galatians, 177. A pedagogue was the slave who accompanied the son of the household everywhere, carrying his belongings and protecting him from accidents. In the visual representations that have been preserved, he is often shown as an old, grumpy-looking Socrates! See Young's comprehensive study of the social background of the paidagogos: "Paidagogos," 152.

<sup>77</sup>Betz, Galatians, " 178.

which preserved and circulated the letter, up to and beyond the time of its inclusion in the canon in the fourth century.

We have already looked briefly at the historical process by which Galatians was canonized, and the way in which subsequent post-canonical contexts variously received and interpreted the letter.

If the cosmological perspective identified above is the one which led to its canonization, then it remains central to subsequent interpretations of the letter. This is what Bauckham means when he speaks of the "core meaning" of the text which persists in all new contexts.<sup>78</sup> However, a cosmological perspective is not the same thing as a meaning. A cosmological perspective identifies a particular way of seeing. It represents a particular relationship between master symbols and social systems which can be transferred from one socio-historical context to another. Theological meanings, on the other hand, are the result of systematic reflection upon cosmological perspectives.<sup>79</sup> As a primary and pre-theoretical form of knowledge, cosmological perspectives can be readily transposed into new

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<sup>78</sup>"All new dimensions of meaning which a text may later acquire must be intelligibly continuous with a meaning accessible to readers of the text in its pre-canonical contexts." Bauckham, The Bible in Politics, 17.

<sup>79</sup>"Theology . . . is for the sociology of knowledge a kind of knowledge that is the product of systematic reflection upon a symbolic universe, . . . a kind of knowledge that is produced to defend and maintain the knowledge comprising a symbolic universe, and for this reason we can speak of a symbolic universe as a primary (pre-reflective) form of knowledge and theology as a secondary (reflective) form that is dependent on it." Petersen, Rediscovering Paul, 29-30.

historical situations, while theological meanings require further interpretation and deductive application before they can be used within any specific historical situation. Thus, cosmological perspectives avoid the distortions which have historically arisen when interpreters have attempted to apply the core meaning which they have extracted from the text of a letter like Galatians to a different historical context.

Galatians is therefore a particular historical expression of Paul's cosmological perspective, in which Jesus Christ's work of rescue is of central significance. It shows how this perspective transformed Paul's interpretation of his context and circumstances. As later readers turn to this canonical document for help, they rediscover Paul's cosmological perspective. They are invited to adopt Paul's perspective and view their own context in the same light.

We turn our attention now to the nature of this persuasive process.

#### The Dialectical Strategy of Galatians

The ultimate step in any act of communication involves the reception of the message. Without this step, no communication can be said to have taken place.

Drawing on insights from the fields of pragmatics, rhetorics and text-reception theory, Rousseau defines the communication of the New Testament writings as a battle between the cosmological perspectives of the New Testament and those of its reader(s). "[There is] a conflict-creating process within communication . . . especially when one deals

with ideological and religious texts."<sup>80</sup> To ensure that his message is received, Paul has to take account of the conflict between his Christ-centred perspective, and the law-centred perspective of his opponents.

Rousseau's multi-dimensional model uses a variety of exegetical tools to study this conflict: principally those of text-functional analysis, on the one hand, and form, redaction and reception criticism, on the other.<sup>81</sup>

### Text-Functional Analysis

Rousseau sums up his text-functional analysis of 1 Peter as follows:

With the aid of Grosse's distinction of text-functions, I identified the group-identificative (indicative) and appellative (imperative) text functions as dominant in 1 Peter. This led to the conclusion that this letter has an argumentative-persuasive strategy which is conflict-creating and group directed. . . . The most basic text functions (i.e. the elementary binary structure) which underlie this process of persuasion, are [those] of "identification" and "estrangement" (i.e. the delicate dialectic between the known and the unknown).<sup>82</sup>

If we make a similar analysis of Galatians, we discover that Paul's strategy is similar to that of "Peter".<sup>83</sup> Again we limit our analysis to the same three pericopes used above.

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<sup>80</sup>Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 11.

<sup>81</sup>See Rousseau, "A Multidimensional Approach," 34. The common factor uniting these tools is that they all ask "waartoe vrae": "Wartoe wil die betrokke meestersimbole ons bring; waartoe wil die interaksie van die betrokkenes (aktante) ons bring; waartoe wil die sleutelverse ons bring?" Rousseau, Meestersimbole van God, 29.

<sup>82</sup>Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 11.

<sup>83</sup>This resemblance is one of the arguments advanced by German scholarship against the Petrine authorship of 1 Peter. See Kümmel, Introduction, 421-424.

In pericope 1, Paul begins with the symbol of the "apostle". Behind the letter lies a dispute over who truly enjoys apostolic authority: Paul, or his opponents. Paul immediately excludes the possibility of any higher counter-claims by his opponents by asserting that he has been ". . . sent not from men not by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father . . ." (Gal 1:1).

Though he first calls the Galatians his "brothers" in Gal 1:11, his oneness with them in Christ is expressed in Gal 1:3-4. References to "our" and "us" draw attention to his belief that he and they share in the benefits of Christ's sacrifice. They share the same ontological status of those who have been rescued from their sins and the present evil age. This heightens the shock effect of Gal 1:6: "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ . . . ." The sharp contrast between "brotherhood" and "desertion" has the psychological effect of forcing the Galatians to reconsider their perspective. Are they indeed ". . . turning to a different gospel--which is really no gospel at all" (Gal 1:6-7)? Similarly, their shared, privileged participation in the rescue work of Christ contrasts sharply with the repeated curse of eternal condemnation on those who preach a different gospel (Gal 1:8,9).

In each instance, Paul uses the contrast between symbols of identification and estrangement to nudge his readers in the direction he wants them to go.<sup>84</sup> This is a

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<sup>84</sup>"The successful author will choose and organize his material in such a way that the text will strategically nudge the reader in a certain direction." Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 11.

technique which he uses repeatedly in the letter. Cronjé mentions four major devices of estrangement: rhetorical questions (erotemata), metaphors, anacoluthons (and parentheses) and paradoxes. They are all characterized by a shift in expectations.<sup>85</sup>

In pericope 10, we have noted the cluster of primary religious symbols which Paul reinterprets: cultic symbols such as "transgressions", "angels", "a mediator", "righteousness", and "faith", and liturgical symbols of "the law", "the promise", "the Scripture" and the central Jewish confession, "God is one" (Deut 6:4). In this pericope the tension between identification and estrangement is delicately balanced. The law is "absolutely not" opposed to the promises of God, yet it is definitely superseded! This qualifies Cronjé's assertion that Paul's rhetorical questions in Galatians always have only one answer:

All these questions are asked in such a way, that there can be just one answer to every question: Although the reader/listener has a choice to answer each question in his own way, this choice is only a theoretical one; the way in which the questions are asked, forces the reader/listener to give the answer intended by the author.<sup>86</sup>

However, it is true that the effect of the rhetorical questions in this pericope is to move the readers in the direction Paul wants them to go.

Paul uses the strong Jewish appeal to monotheism to weaken the authority of the law in which that monotheism is grounded and he uses the Jewish Scriptures to point to the need for faith in Jesus Christ, the only source of life,

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<sup>85</sup>Cronjé, "Defamiliarization," 218.

<sup>86</sup>Cronjé. "Defamiliarization," 219.

righteousness and spiritual maturity.<sup>87</sup> His mildly derogatory reference to the law as a pedagogue is not found anywhere else in the LXX, other Greek versions or the Apocrypha. This, together with his metaphor for the law as our warden or custodian, has the effect of estranging his readers from the law.<sup>88</sup> His strategy is to say, in effect, if you truly seek what the law offers, you must look to Christ.

In pericope 17, Paul works hard to consolidate his gains. He begins by emphasizing his point: "See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand." The "large letters" emphasize the importance of his perspective. The personal handwriting inserted here at the end of the letter is a vivid reminder of the person behind the letter, the one they once welcomed as an angel of God (Gal 4:14).<sup>89</sup>

He contrasts himself and his example with that of his opponents. He has been willing to be persecuted for the cross of Christ (Gal 1:12), while his opponents do not even obey the law they claim to support (Gal 6:13). In terms of human examples, Paul is a surer one to follow.

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<sup>87</sup>Dahl observes that "Paul's use of the letter as a vehicle for scriptural interpretation . . . seems to be an innovation in the history [of] epistolography." Dahl, "Paul's Letter to the Galatians: Epistolary Genre, Content, Structure," unpublished monograph-sized paper delivered at the SBL Seminar on "The Form and Function of the Pauline Letter" (1970-1975) in 1973, cited in Hester, "Epistolography in Antiquity and Early Christianity," 12.

<sup>88</sup>". . . here, instead of sin as the jailer, law is the warden or custodian--a distinction without much difference, so that the reader might be disposed to ask, like the imaginary interlocutor of Rom. 7:7, 'Is the law sin?'" Bruce, Galatians, 181.

<sup>89</sup>Burton, Galatians, 347-348, Betz, Galatians, 313-314, Bruce, Galatians, 268 and Fung, Galatians, 301.

Yet, while Paul is in the process of winning this argument, he does not allow the attention of the Galatians to remain on the rights and wrongs of the poor example of the Judaizers. He shifts his ground and returns to his central orientation point: the cross of Christ. He is not really concerned about the superiority of his grounds for boasting. He is concerned that the Galatians should experience new life, something which they can only do by means of the cross.

Betz has commented on the awkwardness of the sentence structure of Gal 6:14, which is linked with the clash between "boasting" as an exercise in self-praise and "boasting in the Lord" as a kind of hymn or doxology:

The incompatibility of the literary forms seems to match the strange sentence structure of the strong denial coupled with the subsequent exception, which in effect cancels the denial and calls for a reformulation of the entire sentence.<sup>90</sup>

However, the strangeness of the sentence structure can also be seen as an intentional anacoluthon. "Intentional anacolutha (like unintentional ones) can, by disrupting the syntax, alert the reader or complicate or retard his perceptive process and introduce an element of discontinuity."<sup>91</sup>

Paul begins his conclusion with a blessing: "Peace and mercy to all . . . even the Israel of God" (Gal 6:16). Again, his opponents would identify strongly with this appellation. Yet he qualifies the blessing: it is only for

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<sup>90</sup>Betz, Galatians, 318.

<sup>91</sup>R. H. Stacy, Defamiliarization in Language and Literature (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1977), 61, cited by Cronjé, "Defamiliarization," 221.

those who follow the rule of "new creation." (Compare 2 Cor 5:17.)

Having majored on a strategy of estrangement, it is not surprising that Paul chooses to end on a strong identificatory note: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers" (Gal 6:18). The last word of the letter, barring the liturgical "Amen", is "brothers". It functions as a substitute for the personal, even physical expressions of his affection he would have shown to his "dear children" if he had been able to be with them (Gal 4:19,20). It is strong internal evidence that he expected his strategy to be successful and that he and the Galatian churches would soon share the same perspective again and all be one in Christ Jesus (3:28).

#### Form and Redaction Criticism

Form-critical analysis (in the sense of Gattungskritik) confirms what we have already noted and discussed in some detail: that Galatians is an epistolary circular letter, following the canons of ancient Hellenistic epistolography in broad outline, but adapted in tone and style in accordance with Paul's role, character, circumstances and needs. As the apostle to the Gentiles and the founder of the Galatian churches, Paul writes to dissuade the Galatian congregations from following the teachings of some interlopers who have intruded in his absence.

Apart from the proposals of O'Neill, which have received little support,<sup>92</sup> and the recent hypothesis of Smit "that Gal 5.13-6.10 contains a rounded off fragment of Paul

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<sup>92</sup>O'Neill, Recovery.

added to the letter at a somewhat later time,"<sup>93</sup> there is no evidence of redactional activity in the letter. Thus, we are able to pass on immediately to the important question of the reception of Galatians.

### Reception Analysis

A very important aspect of Paul's persuasive strategy is his selection of a particular letter form. He is in the awkward position of not being able to put his case to the Galatians in person (Gal 4:20).<sup>94</sup> This would seem to place him at a disadvantage. As Bruce observes, a letter is a poor substitute for a passionate speech made in person:

There are situations in which the tone of voice and even the look on the face convey nearly as much as the words that are said, but when one is writing from a distance only the words can be conveyed.<sup>95</sup>

Paul's solution to his epistolary problem is essentially rhetorical. However, it is not easy to identify precisely what rhetorical approach Paul has adopted, if indeed he does follow one approach exclusively. We saw in Chapter 2 that, despite a number of recent attempts to analyze Galatians from the viewpoint of classical rhetoric, there is still a wide range of opinion. Moreover, as we noted there too, Dahl believes that Paul used elements from

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<sup>93</sup>Smit, "Letter of Paul," 25.

<sup>94</sup>We do not know why he could not visit them then. Knox thinks that Paul may have been in prison at the time. J. Knox, "Galatians," in Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 343, cited in Bruce, Galatians, 213. "For many commentators, interpretation here becomes merely guesswork." Betz, Galatians, 236.

<sup>95</sup>Bruce, Galatians, 213.

a variety of models and styles in writing letters to meet particular needs.<sup>96</sup>

Betz's analysis of Galatians as an apologetic letter belonging to the judicial species is the standard contemporary starting point for any rhetorical analysis of the letter. For this reason, we have made his analysis the point of departure throughout this study. Betz identifies Galatians as an apologetic letter because this genre combines both autobiography and apologetic speech.<sup>97</sup> Read as a judicial letter, Galatians places its readers in the position of a jury in a courtroom. The Galatians (as the jury) listen to Paul (the defendant) conduct his defence speech against his accusers.

Betz's analysis has been challenged by other rhetorical schemas, but here we are more concerned with seeing how any rhetorical divisions compare with those arrived at via discourse analysis, and to see in what respects, Rousseau's multi-dimensional approach confirms, or conflicts with, a rhetorical one.

First, we make a brief rhetorical analysis using the steps proposed by Kennedy:<sup>98</sup>

(1) The rhetorical unit in this case is the entire letter, with its clearly marked epistolary prescript and

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<sup>96</sup>Dahl, "Paul's Letter to the Galatians," outlined in Hester, "Epistolography in Antiquity," 10-14.

<sup>97</sup>Momigliano traces the genre back to Socrates and describes it as combining reflections on eternal problems and personal experiences. Arnaldo Momigliano, The Development of Greek Biography (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 62, cited in Betz, Galatians, 15.

<sup>98</sup>Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 33-38. See Chapter 2 above.

postscript.

(2) The question of the rhetorical situation, the author's idea of the situation to which he is called to respond, is a complex one. It is defined by Kennedy as roughly equivalent to the Sitz im Leben of form criticism.<sup>99</sup> As our primary source of information for this is the internal evidence of the text itself, we are faced with all the problems associated with mirror reading.<sup>100</sup> However, we may accept the traditional consensus that Paul sees his opponents as Jewish-Christian missionaries who were pressing the Galatians to be circumcised and obey the Torah.<sup>101</sup>

(3) The rhetorical problem arises out of the rhetorical situation. In Galatians, Paul faces the problem

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<sup>99</sup>Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 34. In contrast, Lategan defines "rhetorical situation" as the "strategies used by the writer to effect persuasion." His corresponding term is "argumentative situation". B. C. Lategan, "The Argumentative Situation of Galatians," preliminary unpublished paper delivered at the Mini-Congress of the Pauline Sub-Group of the New Testament Society of South Africa on 24 November 1989, 2.

<sup>100</sup>In addition to the discussion in Chapter 2, see J. M. G. Barclay, Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 40-41 for guidelines for appropriate mirror-reading: (1) Each type of statement is to be open to a range of interpretations. (2) A statement with emphasis and urgency may indicate a real bone of contention. (3) Repetition may suggest an important issue. (4) An ambiguous word or phrase is a shaky foundation on which to build. (5) An unfamiliar motif may reflect a particular feature in the situation responded to. (6) Consistency is to be maintained in drawing a picture of the opponents. (7) The results are to be historically plausible. This summary is taken from Lategan, "The Argumentative Situation of Galatians," 3.

<sup>101</sup>For a fuller description of aspects relating to the rhetorical situation, see the discussion of the pre-canonical contexts of Galatians in Chapter 4 above.

of how to persuade the Galatian churches to return to the gospel which he had originally preached to them.<sup>102</sup>

(4) The last preliminary matter to be considered is the question of identifying the rhetorical species.<sup>103</sup> As we observed in Chapter 2, different scholars have identified Galatians as belonging to each of the three species: forensic, deliberative and epideictic. The recent scholarly consensus seems to agree with Kennedy in identifying Galatians as deliberative. The principal objections to Betz's forensic-apologetic proposal is that he wrongly identifies the narrative section (1:12-2:14) as an account of the facts at issue<sup>104</sup> and underestimates the importance of the parenesis (5:1-6:10).<sup>105</sup> He depends excessively on the voluminous works of the Roman Quintilian (ca. A.D. 90), rather than drawing on Cicero's De Inventione and the anonymous Rhetorica ad Herennium.<sup>106</sup> Thus, Galatians is best treated as belonging loosely to the deliberative (or symbouleutic) genre, which was used particularly in public

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<sup>102</sup>" . . . it is not justification by faith but the fact that in Christ the Jews are called to unity with the Gentiles which is the real issue of the letter." Smit, "Galatians," 8.

<sup>103</sup>Kennedy also refers to stasis theory, but regards it as too complex to be used without extensive reading in the rhetorical sources. Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 36.

<sup>104</sup>See Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 146.

<sup>105</sup>"This exhortation is a problem for Betz's theory, since exhortation, as he recognizes, is not regarded as a part of judicial rhetoric by any of the ancient authorities." Kennedy Rhetorical Criticism, 145. Smit wishes to excise the parenesis from the original letter on the grounds that it has no place in classical rhetoric. Smit, "Galatians," 4, 8.

<sup>106</sup>Smit, "Galatians," 6.

gatherings or legislative assemblies, for the purposes of persuading or dissuading hearers about a future course of action.<sup>107</sup>

(5) At this point, it is possible to reconsider the arrangement of material in the text. If we arrange the material as an example of the deliberative genre, we get:<sup>108</sup>

Salutation (1:1-5)  
Proem (1:6-10)  
Proof (1:11-4:11)  
 Start of First Heading (1:11-12)  
 Extended Narrative (1:13-2:14)  
 Epicheireme (argument with parts fully stated)  
     concluding the first heading (2:15-21)  
 Second Heading (3:1-4:11)  
Personal Appeal (4:12-20)  
Allegory of Sarah and Hagar (4:21-31)  
Exhortation (5:1-6:10), which includes:  
 Negative injunction against circumcision and positive  
     injunction to love (5:2-14)  
 Synkrisis of the works of the flesh and the Spirit  
     (5:19-24)  
Epilogue (6:11-18)

It must be admitted at this point that the problem of pericope demarcation, which we encountered when using discourse analysis, remains a problem here. Ancient rhetoric is of more value in making us aware of the principles of ancient persuasive tactics, than it is in

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<sup>107</sup>See Hester, "Rhetorical Structure," 224, Duane F. Watson, who classifies Philippians as deliberative in "A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians and Its Implications for the Unity Question." Novum Testamentum 30 (1988): 59-60, Hall, "Rhetorical Outline," 277-287, and Smit, "Galatians," 22-24.

<sup>108</sup>The arrangement given is that of Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 147-151. It broadly resembles the deliberative outline of Smit, "Galatians," 9-22 and corresponds with the principles of Hall's divisions in "Rhetorical Outline," 282-287, though he groups all of the headings from Gal 1:10-6:10, including Betz' narratio and exhortatio, together under the heading Proof.

providing us with watertight textual subdivisions. It is helpful to look at Galatians as if it were a forensic, deliberative, or even epideictic letter. We need to resist the temptation to force the letter to conform to any single rhetorical species.<sup>109</sup> For this reason, we retain our macrostructural configuration, with its pericope demarcation following that used by Betz. However, we recognize that the letter is more deliberative than apologetic.<sup>110</sup> This has implications for our rhetorical analysis of some of the individual pericopes.

(6) Finally, we "look back over the entire unit and review its success in meeting the rhetorical exigence and what its implications may be for the speaker or audience."<sup>111</sup> Hall argues that:

Analyzing Galatians as deliberative permits a unified grasp of Paul's purpose in writing the letter . . . . The various parts of the letter all cohere around this purpose. The salutation introduces the lines of argument to be followed. The proposition succinctly and forcefully states what Paul wants the Galatians to do: to repudiate his opponents or anyone who preaches a gospel other than the one Paul preached to them. The proof offers various headings in support of this purpose. . . . The epilogue briefly recapitulates the earlier arguments and presents a last appeal . . . .<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>Du Toit relates his text-immanent analysis extensively to the rhetorical approach of Betz, but he says, "Dit is egter duidelik dat [die retoriese benadering] as sleutel tot die ontsluiting van die tema, die pragmatiek, die makro- en mikroverdelings en opbou van 'n brief soos Galasiërs meer onsekerheid en gevare as voordele inhou." Du Toit, "Analise van die Gedagtegang en Opbou," 3.

<sup>110</sup>". . . Galatians can be read as a deliberative letter with apologetic features." See Aune, The New Testament, 207.

<sup>111</sup>Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 38.

<sup>112</sup>Hall, "Rhetorical Outline," 287.

Although Paul makes extensive and successful use of the resources of rhetoric in his persuasive strategy, he does not depend on rhetoric alone. It is his recognition of this which leads Betz to propose that Paul was also making use of the "magical letter" genre. This proposal has been severely criticized, yet it has value if it draws our attention back to the fact that Paul was depending supremely on the persuasive power of the Spirit.<sup>113</sup> His letter functions as an instrument of cursing or blessing, just as Deuteronomy does, by facing its readers with a crucial spiritual choice.

By including this dimension of magic [spiritual power], Paul repeats the Galatians' initial confrontation with the gospel. His letter is not merely a piece of rhetoric, but it is composed in such a way that it functions at the same time as an efficacious display of the divine Spirit and Power . . . .<sup>114</sup>

Acceptance of Paul's message removes the curse which they have placed themselves under by adopting the perspective of the Judaizers (Gal 3:1) and reveals his gospel to be of divine origin (Gal 1:12).

Thus Paul uses all his resources, rhetorical and spiritual, to bring the Galatians back to his Christ-centred perspective. He uses rhetorical and communication skills to commend his perspective to the Galatians and to force them to question the validity of that of his opponents, and he uses to the full the spiritual resources which are at the centre of his perspective.

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<sup>113</sup>This is also evident in the fact that he does not proliferate arguments in the way recommended by the rhetoricians. See Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 151.

<sup>114</sup>As in 1 Cor 2:4-5. Betz, Galatians, 25.

As he identifies himself fully with Christ, so he is confident that Christ's power in him is able to overcome the spiritual powers (those "weak and miserable principles", Gal 4:9) which are represented by his opponents' perspective. As Paul makes his appeal, warns of condemnation, and pronounces blessing, it is as if Christ is appealing through him. (Compare 2 Cor 5:20.) The nature of this appeal is seen in those verses which are highlighted by the cluster configurations of the three sections at the start, middle and end of the body of the letter:

Pericope 6 (Proposition or Epicheireme): We who are Jews have put our faith in Christ (Gal 2:15).

Pericope 10 (Digression or Heading): Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law (Gal 3:25).

Pericope 14 (Exhortatio): It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery (Gal 5:1).

#### Critical Evaluation

This concludes our multi-dimensional introduction to Galatians. The multi-dimensional exegetical model we have employed has directed our attention to the three major dimensions of Galatians as an act of communication: the static syntactic structure of the letter, its dynamic cosmological perspective and its dialectical communication strategy. This has enabled us to see how Paul structures his letter in accordance with his persuasive purpose, how he orientates his letter around the cross of Christ, and how he enhances the conflict between his perspective and that of his opponents by stylistic and rhetorical means to persuade the Galatians to share his perspective once again.

The multi-dimensional model used may be judged to range too widely and eclectically, or to mix ancient and modern critical viewpoints indiscriminately. However, it simply brings together critical methods which are already being used in isolation from one another. Biblical studies are by nature multidisciplinary. By bringing a range of critical approaches together within a single communication paradigm, Rousseau's model facilitates a fruitful process of mutual correction and cross-fertilization. The process of relating different approaches also encourages a movement from complexity to simplicity. This is further illustrated in the Bible study method presented and applied in Part III.

The Essential Contribution  
of a Liberation Hermeneutic

As discussed in Chapter 3, the move from exegesis to hermeneutics requires us to use our multi-dimensional model in a contemporary paradigm. The paradigm chosen for this study is that of liberation.

The liberation paradigm, as developed within the theology of liberation, arises out of concrete experiences of social misery. The three mediations by which theological insights are brought to bear on these experiences are: (1) a Marxist, dialectical analysis of the social reality in question, (2) a theological reading of this reality in which the practical meaning and transforming power of the biblical text is sought to address particular problems, and (3) a practical implementation of the insights arrived at.

In liberation theology, the first mediation is done from a particular cosmological perspective: that of dialectical materialism. The second may well also be done from the same perspective, leading to a materialist reading

of the biblical text. Here it is valuable to introduce an exegetical method which draws attention to the cosmological perspective of the author of the biblical text, and which highlights the persuasive agenda of the text itself. Such exegesis enables us to read our social context from the cosmological perspective of the biblical author, rather than that of dialectical materialism. This perspective is then able to govern the third mediation of practical implementation.

The communication and liberation paradigms may thus complement one another. The communication paradigm shifts attention away from literal correspondences between biblical and contemporary social circumstances, to the way the cosmological perspectives of the New Testament challenge opposing cosmological perspectives within every social situation. The liberation paradigm, in turn, focuses attention on the particular social circumstances of the exegete. As the exegete looks at these circumstances from the cosmological perspective of the text, his or her own perspective on them is challenged.

Lastly, the liberation paradigm emphasizes the role of the Christian community in the interpretive process. If the multi-dimensional exegetical model is to be used within the wider Christian community, it needs to be simplified without distortion. Part III introduces and illustrates such an integrated method of multi-dimensional and contextual group Bible study.

**PART III**  
**BIBLE STUDY**

## CHAPTER 6

AN INTEGRATED METHOD  
FOR CONTEXTUAL GROUP BIBLE STUDY

What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?  
What concord is there between the Academy and  
the Church?

Tertullian, De praescriptione haereticorum.

The issue, then, is not which approach to reading Scripture is correct and ought to be imposed but rather what can be done to help readers in a specific cultural context make the deepest connections between their lives and the message of Scripture.

Christine E. Gudorf, "Liberation Theology's Use of Scripture: A Response to First World Critics."

Biblical Studies and Bible Study Methods

Up to now this study has primarily considered how Galatians is read by biblical scholars and trainee clergy in the context of South African universities and seminaries. Our multi-dimensional exegetical model has served to illustrate how biblical studies are enriched by being conducted within such an environment. As Ebeling has said: ". . . we must not underestimate the dire consequences for the study of the Bible if contacts with other disciplines of learning and the exchange of learning should ever be impeded or cut off."<sup>1</sup> As an academic discipline, Biblical Studies is profoundly dependent upon insights from other disciplines. This is as it should be, for

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<sup>1</sup>Gerhard Ebeling, "The Bible as a Document of the University," in The Bible as a Document of the University, ed. Hans Dieter Betz (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981), 14.

the idea that a document of faith can be interpreted only from within faith is an impossibly solipsistic position: carried to its logical conclusion, it could only mean that no one could say anything about any ideological position which he himself did not share.<sup>2</sup>

However, there is another South African context on which our understanding of Galatians depends: the church. The church, even more than the university, is the place in which Galatians is read. Indeed, even the academic study of a New Testament text such as Galatians is conducted on behalf of the church. Church members make up the bulk of the theological teaching staff and students studying the New Testament in Departments of Divinity or Religious Studies. Thus, it is important to conclude this study by considering how Galatians may be read in the context of the South African church.

We saw, at the end of the previous chapter, that this is also the logical outcome of our use of a liberation paradigm. Local communities of ordinary Christians have the responsibility of interpreting Galatians for themselves and applying their discoveries to their own circumstances.

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<sup>2</sup>James Barr, "The Bible as a Document of Believing Communities," in The Bible as a Document of the University, ed. Hans Dieter Betz (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981), 37. The same objection needs to be made when people such as Nolan assert that valid context analyses can only be taken by those who share the same experiences and ideological position. See Nolan, "Critics Lack Experience of the Struggle," 9 and Durand's rejoinder in, "Engelssprekende Kerke," 31.

Small Groups  
in the Contemporary South African Church

The context in which most contemporary church Bible study takes place today is the small group.<sup>3</sup> This rediscovery of the importance of small groups in the life of the church has a variety of origins: in the Bible study groups fostered by evangelical student movements;<sup>4</sup> in the charismatic and neo-pentecostal renewal movements, and the church growth and the restoration movements, all within Protestantism; and in the Basic Christian communities arising out of the Latin American Roman Catholic Church.<sup>5</sup> Whatever their origins, the practical result is the same: small groups<sup>6</sup> of lay Christians gathering in homes for the purpose of sharing and

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<sup>3</sup>Barr observes that most contemporary preaching is not based on "a careful and detailed interpretation of scripture, in which a genuine attempt is made to discover and interpret what it really means, as against our antecedent expectation of what it ought to mean." Barr, "The Bible," 36.

<sup>4</sup>See, for example the British Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship handbook: Word Alive! A Handbook for Leaders and Members of Bible Study Groups (Leicester: Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, n.d.)

<sup>5</sup>Basic Christian Communities are the context in which the see, judge and act model of reflection is most commonly used. See José Marins' portrait of a Basic Christian Community in Joseph G. Healey, "Basic Christian Communities: Church-Centred or World-Centred?" Missionalia 14 (April 1986): 18-19.

<sup>6</sup>"Small group" can refer to any size between five and fifty, the ideal size for the purpose of Bible study being under twenty. Liberation theology uses the term "basic" rather than "small" to refer to groups which go to the basis of the Christian faith, which come from the base of society, which represent the laity of the church and which develop a true sense of local community. See Healey, "Basic Christian Communities," 25.

developing their Christian faith. One of the major means of doing this is through group Bible study.

### Bible Study

#### A Method for Doing Contextual Bible Study

We now move on to the question of how to use our exegetical and hermeneutical insights in a Bible study method for use in small groups.

The liberation paradigm provides us with the overall pattern, based on the "hermeneutical circulation" of Segundo and Croatto, or the three mediations described by Boff: analysis of social reality; theological reading of reality; and application of new understanding in praxis.

Thus, a one and a half hour gathering could be divided into three parts as follows.

#### 1. Focus on Our Own Situation

We use the first half hour for discussion of aspects of our daily lives and report back on any specific actions we undertook in faith, whether the results were successful or unsuccessful. This may lead on to the discussion of some related problem which now needs to be tackled, or some new challenge may be raised.

If the group is a new one, members will need time to get to know one another and develop trusting relationships. In this case, the initial problem chosen should be a simple one raised by a particular member of the group or suggested by the leader. What is important is that the problem should be a real one, and be recognized as such by the group.

This problem is then analyzed. There are of course a variety of ways of analyzing a situation, and the liberation

paradigm encourages an unmasking of the ideological and socio-economic factors which are assumed to underlie every social problem. However, it is also possible to experiment with other forms of analysis. We will have to begin by asking some general questions about the situation. For example: What do we think happened? How much information do we have? Why did it happen? How do we feel about it? Who suffers and who gains in the situation?

We may then go on to analyze it.<sup>7</sup> To avoid introducing too many different concepts, it is possible to do this using the same questions as we use to analyze the text:

Describe the static thrust of the problem

Who is involved?

What has been/is being said, thought or felt repeatedly?

Reach the heart of the problem

Why is the problem a problem? How should things be?

What symbolizes the problem? What are the key elements that have gone wrong?

What, above all, needs to be put right?

Study the strategies of both sides

What is our strategy?

What is the strategy of our opponents?

How have our opponents managed to gain the upper hand?

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<sup>7</sup>A fuller description of how to do social analysis is given in Richard Broderick and Cora Richardson, Love Your Neighbour: Christian Social Analysis (Delmenville: Lumko Institute, 1989), a new publication, which was received too late to be incorporated more fully into this study.

Is there anything they say or do repeatedly which defeats us?

Finally, sum up the problem as the group sees it.

## 2. Turn to the Bible Together

At the start of the second half hour, we allow the problem facing us to suggest a biblical passage<sup>8</sup> for study. We look for a passage which contains a similar problem, or in which similar perspectives oppose one another. This is not difficult, once we have learnt to expect and to notice such oppositions.<sup>9</sup> Once we have selected our passage, we study the internal conflict between perspectives using a simplified version of our multi-dimensional exegetical model:

### Map the static shape of the passage

Who are the most important people involved? What are the most important things that happen? What is said repeatedly?

What are the main parts of the passage? Where are the natural divisions? What does each part deal with?

What are the most important verses in the passage? Why do they stand out as important or memorable?

Goal: identify the important parts of the passage.

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<sup>8</sup>In group Bible study the term "passage" is to be preferred to "pericope" or "text". "Pericope" is a technical term and not widely known, while "text" may be misunderstood as referring to a single verse.

<sup>9</sup>"The Bible is . . . like a battlefield in which different traditions strive against one another: Deuteronomy's picture of Israel's destiny differs from Paul's own letters, St. John's Gospel gives a quite different picture of Jesus from that which any or all of the Synoptic Gospels gives." Barr, "The Bible," 28.

Reach the heart of the passage

What are the most important symbols used in the passage? Why are these ones used to express the writer's point of view?

What roles do the important people play in one another's lives?

What important perspectives govern the way these people relate to one another?

Goal: identify the central commitment underlying the passage.

Feel the persuasive force of the passage

How does the writer argue? What stylistic or rhetorical techniques are used by the writer to persuade the readers?

What form of writing (genre) has the writer chosen to use? How does this choice increase the likelihood of persuading the readers?

How does the writer present the interaction of the characters involved? Do they conform to their roles, or do they break out of them?

Finally, sum up the message of the passage as the group understands it.

**3. Resolve to Act in Faith**

During the last half hour session, we re-examine the problem we analyzed earlier, this time from the perspective of the passage we have studied. We reflect on how the conflict between perspectives within the text suggest ways of dealing with the problem we face.

. . . the Bible recalls the believing community to its origins; it suggests that the way in which these men of older times reacted to their problems can be and should be suggestive and rich in paradigmatic guidance for us when we face the problems of the community today.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Barr, "The Bible," 38.39.

Our goal at the end of this session and the goal of the entire process, is to plan and carry out a specific Christian course of action. The key question here is: "Who will do what, and when?"<sup>11</sup>

It is important to recognize that a particular perspective has little meaning as an abstract entity. Thus, a "Christocentric perspective" only has meaning when it determines behaviour in a particular context in which there are other perspectives competing for our attention and support.

It also needs to be recognized that all the steps in this process have a subjective dimension, and that the method therefore operates within the postmodern philosophical framework given in Chapter 4.

Our method can be illustrated by the diagram below:<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Oswald Hirmer, Our Journey Together: A Guide for the Christian Community to Accompany Adult Catechumens on their Journey of Faith (Delmenville: Lumko Institute, 1986), 207-210.

<sup>12</sup>The diagram is an adaptation and development of methods described in Albert Nolan, and Richard F. Broderick, To Nourish Our Faith: The Theology of Liberation in Southern Africa (Hilton: The Order of Preachers, 1987), 98-99 and Hirmer, Our Journey Together, 210. See also Broderick and Richardson, Love Your Neighbour.

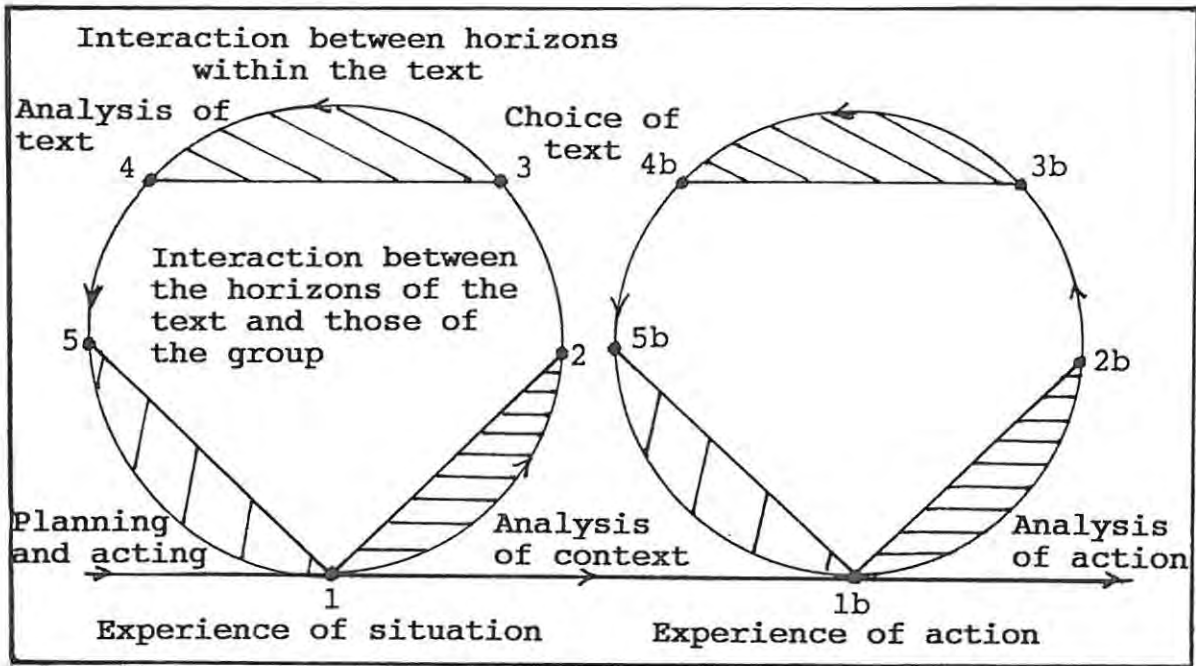


Figure 1. Illustration of the Contextual Bible Study Process.

1. The experience of a problem or issue is the first inductive element (drawing on our own horizons or cosmological perspectives).
2. This is then analyzed by a consideration of the conflict between different horizons (cosmological perspectives) within our situation.
3. The group, aided by the leader, then chooses a biblical passage in which there is a similar interaction of horizons (conflict between perspectives), or which relates in some other way to the problem faced. This is the second inductive element.
4. The shape, perspective and persuasive strategy of the passage is then studied by the group in more detail. Particular attention is paid to the conflict between perspectives within the passage.
5. The group then moves on to consider and plan a specific course of action.

#### Suggested Bible Studies of Galatians

Insights gained from the Introduction to Galatians in Chapter 5 can also be used to suggest how various parts of

the letter may be grouped together for contextual Bible study.

The macrostructural configuration of Galatians suggests the following clusters:

The salutation (A) and conclusion (A1) are important individual pericopes and should be studied together.

Pericopes 2 and 3, 4 and 5 should also be linked together as two groups (B) and should be studied together with pericopes 15 and 16 (B1).

Similarly, pericopes 6, 7, 8, and 9 form a group (C1), pericope 10 forms a "group" on its own (C2) and pericopes 11,12,13 and 14 form a third group (C3). These groups labelled C1, C2 and C3, also need to be studied together.<sup>13</sup>

It is not the purpose of this study to provide a complete set of Bible study outlines. However, we will use the three pericopes analyzed in Chapter 5, namely 1, 10 and 17, as an extended practical illustration and application of the method proposed. A full set of study outlines would include such topics as:

1. **Introduction:**

An overview of the static thrust (shape), the dynamic perspective (heart) and dialectical strategy (persuasive power) of the letter.

2. **Two studies on making and keeping contact with people**

A Christian greeting (1:1-5)

A personal goodbye (6:11-18)

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<sup>13</sup>It is important to note that traditional chapter divisions should not be used to provide units for study. For example, if Gal 3 and 4 are taken to indicate the body of the letter, the summary passages (Gal 2:15-21 and Gal 5:1-12) are separated from the body of the letter.

### 3. Three studies on Christian Living

The place of honesty and confrontation in relationships  
(1:6-11; 2:11-14)

The importance of personal experience and testimony to  
it (1:12 - 2:10)

Living out spiritual values (5:13 - 6:10)

### 4. Three (or more) studies relating beliefs to life

Human experience and scripture (2:15 - 3:18)

Law and faith today (3:19 - 25)

Christian experience (of tradition and of friendship)  
and Scripture (3:26 - 5:12)

These sections may appear to be too small or too large, but experience suggests that people appreciate variation, consolidation and application: variation in length of passage studied; periodic reviews of the overall argument; and ample opportunity to relate Paul's experience and perspective to their own. Thus, the outline above provides a variety of studies, all representing aspects of the structure and argument of the letter itself. It is important to recognize that the whole letter does not have to be studied.

#### Studies of Selected Pericopes

The studies presented here only deal with the second phase of the contextual Bible study method.<sup>14</sup> Instead of

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<sup>14</sup>Although this parallels what the Boffs call the second mediation (the final stage of Segundo's hermeneutical circle), it is not identical with either of them. Our method pays closer attention to the content of the biblical passage, as well as emphasizing "the process of learning how to learn". See Fiorenza, "Toward a Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics," 371. Compare Miguez-Bonino: "We must insist that the penetration of the original historicity of the biblical events is basic for its present demand and efficacy." See "Hermeneutics, Truth and Praxis," 356.

presenting an hypothetical situation to which the passages might relate, each step begins by suggesting the kind of problems the passage might address. These suggestions are based on our prior multi-dimensional exegesis of the passage.

Each step of the textual analysis ends with some questions for reflection, to aid the group in relating the passage to their present situation, and a closing reflection to aid the group in their commitment to carry out their planned course of action.

#### Outline 1: A Christian Greeting (Gal 1:1-5)

##### 1. Focus on Our Own Situation

The kind of problems this passage might address and other statements in the letter which suggest such issues:

- a) How to approach someone you are deeply concerned about.

"I am astonished . . ." (Gal 1:6).

"I fear for you . . ." (Gal 4:11).

"I plead with you, brothers . . ." (Gal 4:12).

- b) How to tackle someone about a sensitive issue.

As above;

"I want you to know, brothers . . ." (Gal 1:11).

- c) The need to re-establish bonds with a Christian group from which your group has drifted away, or about which you have heard disturbing things.

"My dear children . . . how I wish I could be with you now . . ." (Gal 4:19).

". . . I write to you with my own hand" (Gal 6:11).

2. Notes and Reflections on the Passage

The static thrust  
(shape) of the passage

The most important people mentioned here are:

Paul and the brothers;  
the churches in Galatia;  
Jesus Christ and God the Father.

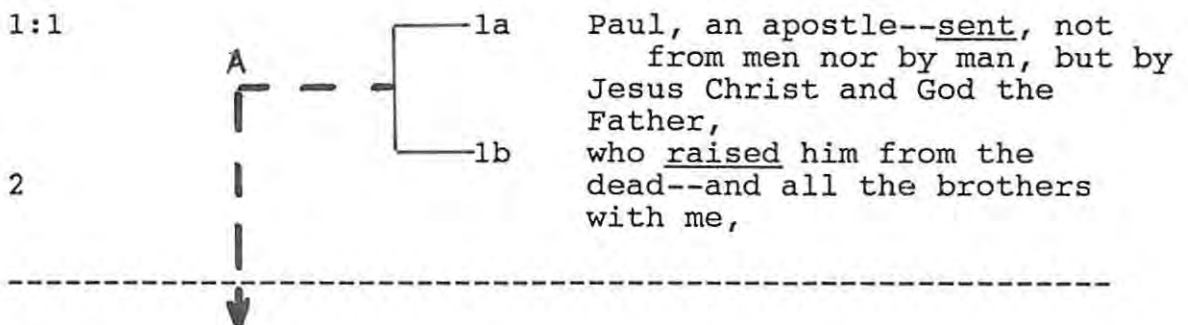
The most important events are:

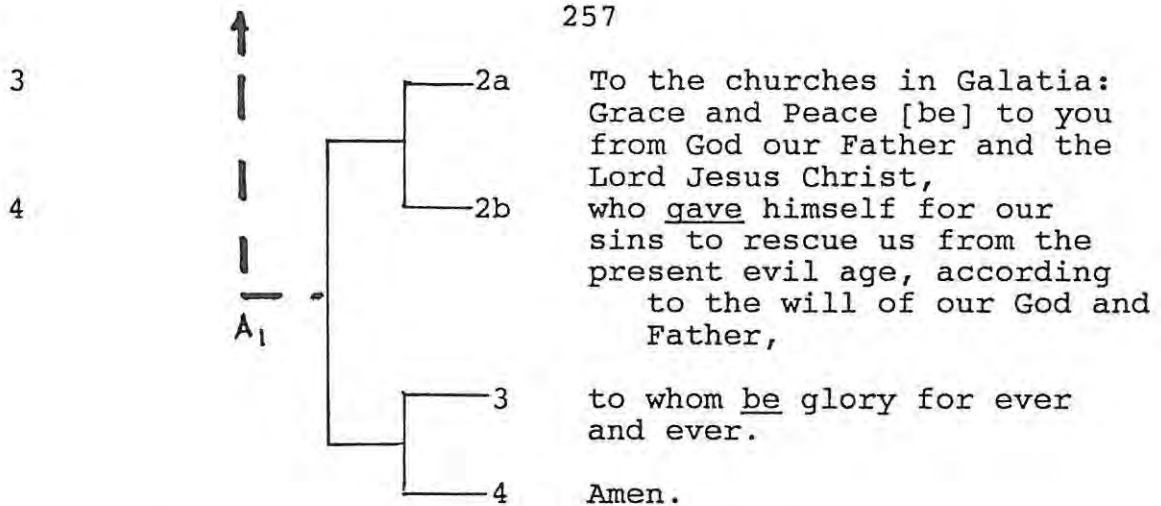
Paul's appointment by Jesus Christ and God the Father as an  
apostle to the Gentiles;  
The self-giving of Jesus Christ and his resurrection by God  
the Father;  
The establishment of the Galatian churches;  
Praise to God the Father and Jesus Christ.

The topics spoken of repeatedly are:

The actions of God the Father and Jesus Christ: in sending  
Paul, raising Jesus, giving grace and peace, and rescuing  
people from the present evil age;  
Praise of God and Jesus Christ.

The main parts and most important verses can be seen by  
looking at our discourse analysis.





Thematic Markers: Jesus Christ, God, Father, who

Main parts:

These correspond with the conventional Hellenistic letter opening:

Gal 1:1-2 (colon 1) sender;

Gal 1:3 (colon 2) recipient;

Gal 1:4 (cola 3-4) greeting.

We note, in addition, how this standard pattern has been expanded, in Paul's description of himself in Gal 1:1 and in his statements about Christ and salvation in Gal 1:4.<sup>15</sup>

The most important verses:

All the verses are important in this pericope, and this is reflected in the balanced (A - A1) cluster configuration.

Paul (A) and the Galatians (A1) are related to one another as correspondents. Yet they also each have relationships as Christians with Jesus Christ and God the Father (B, B1). Paul expands on these Christian bonds in

<sup>15</sup>See Betz, Galatians, 37.

this salutation and they constitute an initial introduction to the theme of the rest of the letter.

Questions for reflection

- a) What relationship do we have with those we are concerned about?
- b) What relationship do we and they have with God the Father and Jesus Christ?

The dynamic perspective  
(heart) of the passage

For an analysis of the most important symbols and roles see Chapter 5. They are:

Jesus Christ: sender, rescuer, Messiah, Lord;

God: sender, rescuer, Father;

Paul: apostle; church founder; letter writer; co-worker;

Galatians: rescued Gentile sinners;

Brothers: fellow Christians; co-workers;

Man: humanity;

The present evil age: world in rebellion against God.

These symbols are chosen because: they represent the fundamental relationships with which Paul is concerned. It is significant that Paul does not mention his opponents in this salutation.

The perspective of this passage:

The writer and the readers of this letter are all seen from the perspective of the rescue work of Christ.

The difference between Paul and the Galatian churches is that he is living out the consequences of his rescue, while nothing is said (yet) about whether the Galatians are

doing so or not. We suspect that they are not, and this is confirmed by the opening sentences of the following pericope.

Questions for reflection

- a) As we consider the problem we are facing, what is our deepest commitment (or perspective)?
- b) Is our perspective centred on Christ, or on something or someone else?
- c) What important symbols do we share with those we are concerned about?

The dialectical strategy  
(persuasive force) of the passage

We analyzed the persuasive strategy of the letter as a whole in Chapter 5. Here and below, we see how this is done with individual passages.

How does Paul argue? What stylistic techniques does he use to persuade the Galatians?

Paul writes from a position of estrangement from the Galatians. He writes to defend his position as church founder and authentic apostle. Thus, he begins his defence immediately, in his opening salutation, using various devices of estrangement. This is evident in his unusual "not by. . . but by" definition of himself as an apostle. He further expands the conventional salutation by indicating the uniqueness of Jesus Christ ("raised . . . from the dead"), his selflessness ("gave himself"), and the benefits of his passion ("to rescue us").

Paul also reinterprets symbols which are important both to him and his readers, for example: apostle; messiah;

brother; father. These symbols express his Christ-centredness but (in the rest of the letter) expose the other commitments of the Judaizers. The Judaizers reject Paul's Christ-appointed apostleship; they undervalue Jesus' messianic status; they are like the 'false brothers' who spied on Paul earlier; they undervalue or reject Christ's rescue work which was an expression of God the Fathers' will. Thus they cannot claim to be his sons. The effect of this is to lead the Galatians to question their own ultimate commitments.

This strategy of estranging the Galatians is softened by his use of "our" and "we" in his naming of the Galatians as the addressees. In this way, he introduces the key issue of whether in fact they do still share in the benefits of Christ's work of salvation.

What genre has Paul chosen? How does this advance his case?

Paul adapts the conventional letter opening to introduce his central perspective and concerns, as we have seen. Hall notes that, "By anticipating two major lines of argument that he will later develop in the letter, Paul has added to his salutation features expected in an exordium."<sup>16</sup> At this stage Paul only presents the positive side of his argument, again following rhetorical principles. Hall notes that his real argument begins with Gal 1:6.

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<sup>16</sup>Hall, "Rhetorical Outline," 283.

How does Paul present the interaction of the characters in the passage?

He emphasizes his role as an apostle. This entitles him to write to the Galatians as he does.

He also emphasizes the saving role of Jesus and makes it clear that God is the initiator of the Christian faith he proclaims. Thus, if the Galatians wish to challenge Paul, they are in fact challenging the will and purpose of God.

Paul also relies on the power of the perspective he lives by. As one sent by Jesus himself, he is confident of the power for good inherent in his blessing on the Galatians. "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:3).

Questions for reflection

- a) What are the consequences of our perspective; where is it pointing to?
- b) Is our perspective in harmony with Paul's?
- c) Are there important symbols in our context which do not point to Christ? What changes need to be made in our lives to correct this?
- d) How can we use shared symbols to appeal to those we are concerned about to share our Christ-centred perspective?

The message summed up

Paul writes to the Galatian congregations which he founded. He reminds them, in this opening salutation, that his apostleship and their existence as Christian churches are founded on the work of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

### 3. Planning for Action

Who will do what, and when?

#### Closing Reflection

Father you willed and planned our rescue.  
 Lord Jesus you gave yourself for our sins  
 and rescued us from the evil around us.  
 Father, you raised Jesus from death.  
 Together you sent Paul to the Gentiles  
 and he went, wholeheartedly.  
 You have done so much for us.  
 As people who know they are yours, we go now,  
 to do what we believe you have told us.

#### Outline 2: A Personal Goodbye (Gal 6:11-18)

##### 1. Focus on Our Own Situation

The kind of problems this passage might address and other statements in the letter which suggest such issues:

- a) What to do after an argument or confrontation with someone.

"You foolish Galatians! . . . are you so foolish?"  
 (Gal 3:1,3)

- b) How to conclude an argument in such a way that a person or group is sure to face the issues involved and not just become angry about the conflict of viewpoints.

"Consider Abraham . . ." (Gal 3:6).

"Brothers let me take an example from everyday life"  
 (Gal 3:15).

"I plead with you brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong"  
 (Gal 4:12).

". . . I am perplexed about you" (Gal 4:20).

"Stand firm then . . ." (Gal 5:1).

"You, my brothers, were called to be free . . ."

(Gal 5:13).

- c) How to evaluate the behaviour of others.

"Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you [from us] so that you may be zealous for them. It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good . . ."

(Gal 4:17,18).

"Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the One who calls you" (Gal 5:7,9).

- d) How to console someone who is suffering because of Christian conflicts.

"If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Gal 1:10).

"Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?" (Gal 4:16)

". . . I am again in the pains of childbirth . . ."

(Gal 4:19).

## 2. Notes and Reflections on the Passage

The static thrust  
(shape) of the passage

The most important people mentioned here are:

Paul, the Galatians, the Judaizers, Jesus Christ and the "Israel of God".

The most important events are:

The writing of the conclusion by Paul in his own hand;

Pressure from the Judaizers for the Galatians to be circumcised;

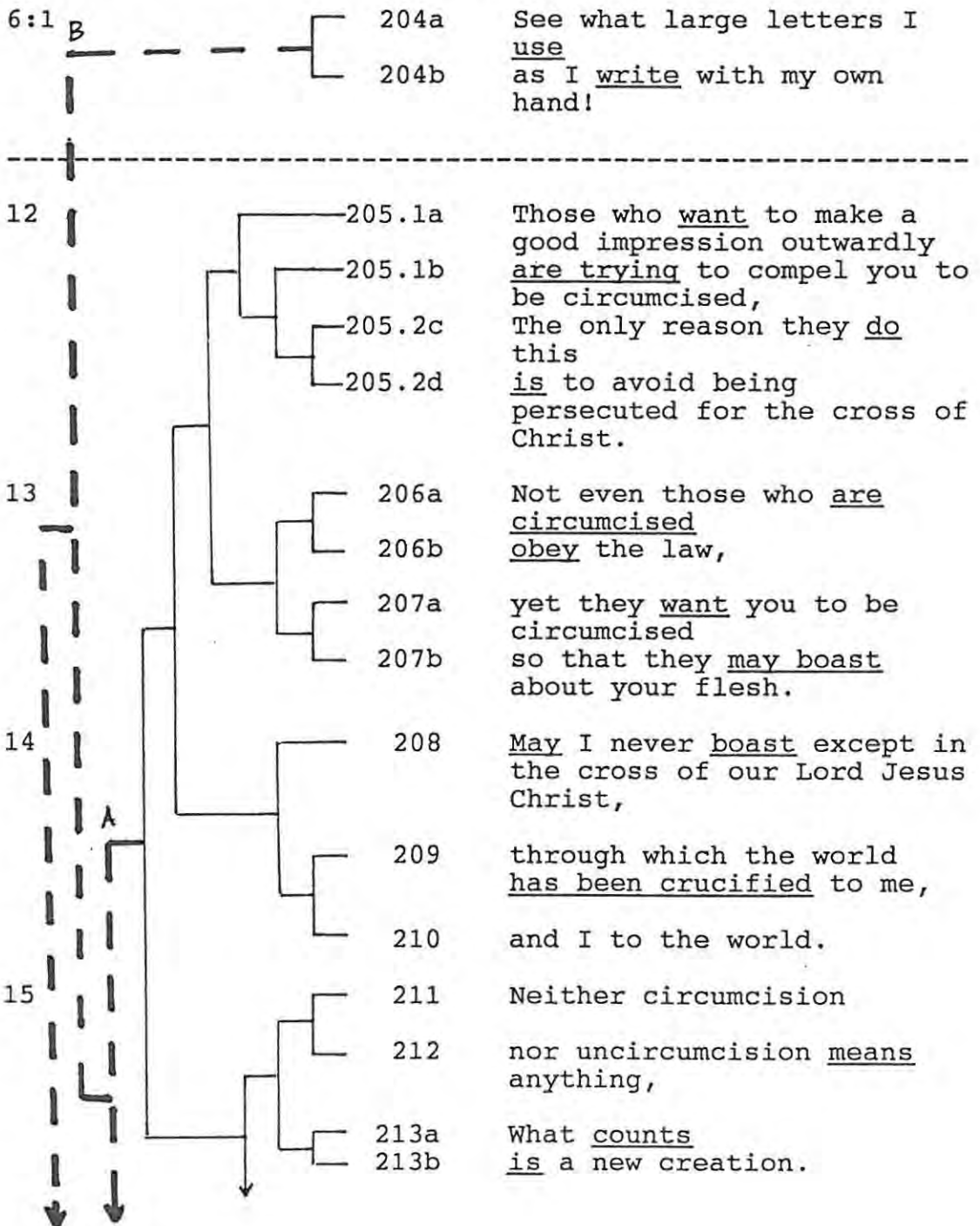
The crucifixion of Jesus Christ;

Obedience to the Jewish law or to the Christian rule of "new creation";

Opposition to Paul from the Judaizers;

The experience of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The main parts and most important verses can be seen by looking at our discourse analysis.





Our analysis of the thrust of this passage makes it clear that this is a very important section of the letter.<sup>17</sup>

The colon configuration shows that the beginning and the end, verse 11 (B) and verse 18 (B1), correspond. Verse 11 not only draws attention to his traditional handwritten postscript, but Paul's "large letters" also indicate the importance of all that the postscript says in verses 12-17. Verse 18 is the traditional blessing which ends not only this section but the whole letter. Again, Paul has adapted it to his needs here. This is the only benediction of Paul's which includes the word "brothers", a term which is very important in Galatians.<sup>18</sup>

The body of the salutation also has a clear inner structure, verses 12-16 (A) and verse 17 (A1) correspond to form a parallelism.<sup>19</sup>

This means that Paul's conclusion is in the form of an inverted parallelism: B - A - A1 - B1.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>See Betz, Galatians, 312-313.

<sup>18</sup>See Gal 1:2,11; 2:4; 3:15; 4:12,21,28,31; 5:11,13; 6:1,18. In addition, Gal 4:22-31 presents Paul's argument in terms of an allegorical story of two brothers.

<sup>19</sup>It is not easy to decide how best to link cola 205-207. The reason for this is, it is not clear whether "those who are circumcised" mentioned in V13a (colon 206a) are the same as, or different from, the Judaizers mentioned in verses 12 and 13b (cola 205 and 207) who are troubling the Galatians. I have tentatively decided, with Bruce (Galatians, 269-270), that they are the same people, but recognize that this cannot be proven conclusively. ("A decision on this problem is impossible." Betz, Galatians, 316.) It is thus not clear whether the bad example of the Judaizers (verse 13a), or the good example of Paul (verse 14), is the main point of verses 12-14. I have chosen the latter.

<sup>20</sup>For a useful discussion of the distinction between a chiasmus (A - B - C - B1 - A1) and an inverted parallelism (A - B - B1 - A1), see John Breck, "Biblical Chiasmus: Exploring Structure for Meaning," Biblical Theology Bulletin 17 (April 1987): 71-73.

Questions for reflection

- a) Do we have a personal relationship with those we differ from?
- b) Have we argued in such a way that the door remains open for reconciliation?
- c) What is our view of the place of non-rational, emotional appeals in our argument?
- d) How can we ensure that such appeals are still based on the facts of our experience and are consistent with our perspective?

The dynamic perspective  
(heart) of the passage

For an analysis of the most important symbols and roles see Chapter 5. They are:

Paul: apostle, church founder, brother, opponent;

The Galatians: letter recipients, new creations, the uncircumcised;

Judaizers: advocates of Christian circumcision and observance of the law, the circumcised, trouble makers;

Those the Judaizers wish to please: the circumcised;

Jesus Christ: crucified messiah, Lord;

Israel of God: descendants of Abraham, God's people;

Cross of Christ: Paul's boast, source of persecution, source of new creation, replacement for the law;

Law/circumcision: outward observance, part of old creation, means of avoiding persecution.

These symbols are chosen because:

They sum up Paul's dispute with his opponents in terms of the cross of Christ. People are either circumcised to avoid persecution for their adherence to the cross or they are persecuted and transformed through making it their rule of life.

The perspective of the passage

Thus, Paul's perspective is dominated by the cross of Christ.

The difference between Paul's perspective and that of the Galatians is: Paul's life is centred on the cross of Christ and his body marked by this commitment, while the Galatians have not understood the importance of the cross and are therefore considering undergoing a physical rite advocated by those who also undervalue the cross.

The perspective of this pericope is very close to that of pericope 14 (Gal 5:1-12), the conclusion to the body of the letter.<sup>21</sup>

Questions for reflection

- a) Do we share Paul's view that the cross of Christ alone brings new creation?
- b) Are we willing to bear the marks of Jesus?

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<sup>21</sup>See, for example, "Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you" (Gal 5:2). Compare, also, Gal 5:3-6 and Gal 6:13-15.

- c) Are we marked in some way already because of the cross? In what way(s)?

The dialectical strategy  
(persuasive force) of the passage

Here, again, we see how the principles discussed in Chapter 5 can be applied to a single passage.

How does Paul argue? What stylistic techniques does he use to persuade the Galatians one last time?

Our analysis of the thrust of this passage has already indicated how important this closing section is to the success of Paul's argument. Paul wants the Galatians to identify with him, not distance themselves from him. He has already warned them that the Judaizers want to "alienate" them from him (Gal 4:17).

Paul draws attention to his own handwriting to emphasize that he is personally identified with his argument. If the Galatians choose to be circumcised they must understand that they are thereby rejecting all that Paul stands for. Verses 11, 17 and 18 recall the personal appeal of Gal 4:12-20, especially verses 12 and 16: "I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you . . . . Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?"

However, Paul also uses devices of estrangement: the intentional anacoluthon in which Paul never boasts, yet boasts in the cross! He makes effective use of the metaphor "Israel of God". This is a metaphor which the Judaizers and their followers would gladly identify with. Yet Paul reserves it for those who follow the rule of new creation.

What genre has Paul chosen? How does this advance his case?

This passage is the epilogue to the letter. Rhetorically it forms the peroratio or conclusio.

Seen as a rhetorical feature, the peroratio becomes most important for the interpretation of Galatians. It contains the interpretive clues to the understanding of Paul's major concerns in the letter as a whole and should be employed as the hermeneutical key to the intentions of the Apostle.<sup>22</sup>

There is little difference between forensic and deliberative species at this stage in the argument.<sup>23</sup> The body of peroratio contains important sub-sections, which restate the case and aim to make a strong emotional appeal to the Galatians. Betz identifies three rhetorical strategies here: the recapitulatio, verses 12-17, which "sharpens and sums up the main points of the case", the indignatio, verses 12-13, which "arouses anger and hostility against the opponents" and the conquestio, verse 17, which "stimulates pity".<sup>24</sup> Betz does not identify verses 15-16 as a special rhetorical element, but notes that the rule spoken of in 15-16 "consists of several definitions and represents the cutting-edge of the letter."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Betz, Galatians, 313.

<sup>23</sup>"The epilogue, as Betz rightly recognizes, consists of the postscript of 6:11-18. It attacks Paul's opponents, recapitulates his most important injunction, that against circumcision (6:15), and has, as Betz suggests, some undercurrent of pathos. Kennedy, Rhetorical Criticism, 151. See also Hall, "Rhetorical Outline," 286.

<sup>24</sup>Betz, Galatians, 313.

<sup>25</sup>Betz, Galatians, 319.

How does Paul present the interaction of the characters in this passage?

Paul contrasts the master symbol representing his perspective with that of his opponents. "New creation" points to "the cross of Christ", while "circumcision" points to the entire law. He then asks the Galatians to consider the importance of these perspectives to those who advocate them. Paul is utterly committed to the cross of Christ. The scars on his body show this. The Judaizers, in contrast, have bodies which apparently show they uphold the law, and yet they do not! Whose example then, asks Paul, is more worthy of imitation?

And yet, his argument does not rest there. It rests on the issue of whether or not Jesus is the Christ, the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham. If so, to receive Jesus as the Christ, is to enter a new world of peace, mercy and grace, a world so new that it can best be described as "new creation".<sup>26</sup>

Questions for reflection

- a) Are we willing to take personal responsibility for our views?
- b) Are we willing to suffer for them?
- c) If we suffer for our views, can other people see the reason we do so (even if they disagree with us)?

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<sup>26</sup>Bruce quotes B.D. Chilton, who suggests that ktisis here may mean 'humanity': "God has set aside the polarity of Jew and Gentile (cf. 3:28) in favour of an altogether 'new humanity'. There is available for 'anyone in Christ' (2 Cor 5:17) a status before God which frees him from the constraints which he once suffered." B. D. Chilton, "Galatians 6:15: A Call to Freedom before God," Expository Times 89 (1977-1978): 311-313, cited in Bruce, Galatians, 273.

- d) Are there inconsistencies between our views and our behaviour? (Other people will see this.)
- e) Who or what demands that we "be circumcised" today?

Theologically the demand for 'circumcision' can take many forms. It appears whenever one thinks along these lines: 'Faith in Christ is fine as far as it goes, but your relation to God is not really right and your salvation not adequate unless . . . .' It does not matter how the sentence is completed. Whenever such fine print is introduced to qualify trust/faith there is 'circumcision' and Paul's defense of the adequacy of trust/faith is necessary.<sup>27</sup>

- f) Does our group look as if it is part of the new humanity?
- g) In what ways are we still playing safe, and avoiding pain?
- h) In what ways are we experiencing peace and mercy?

#### The message summed up

Circumcision, a symbol of the law, cannot be reconciled with the rule of Christ. Moreover, to agree to be circumcised merely to avoid trouble is to return to the old world with its hypocritical concern with outward appearances. Thus, the avoidance of persecution for the sake of the cross results in the grave loss of the "new creation" and the blessings of peace and mercy.

### 3. Planning for Action

Who will do what, and when?

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<sup>27</sup>Leander E. Keck, Paul and His Letters, Proclamation Commentaries, ed. Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 88.

Closing Reflection

Jesus our Lord,  
 we accept your cross,  
 Yes, we accept it,  
 and the suffering it brings.  
 When we suffer  
 may people see you in us,  
 and also see  
 your peace and mercy among us.  
 As brothers and sisters  
 we ask you to use us.  
 As we live by your cross,  
 bring new life to the world.

Outline 3: Law and Faith Now (Gal 3: 19-25)

## 1. Focus on Our Own Situation

The kind of problems this passage might address and other statements in the letter which suggest such issues:

- a) A study on how we all come to scripture with a preconceived dogmatic framework (for example, a Lutheran view of the law, or one strongly influenced by the teaching of Romans).

". . . some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal 1:7).

"How is it then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?" (Gal 2:14)

- b) A study on how scripture can be used and abused in theological debate.

"The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: . . ." (Gal 3:8).

"The Scripture does not say 'and to seeds', meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ" (Gal 3:16).

"But what does the Scripture say?" (Gal 4:30)

- c) How to keep two important matters in tension, while emphasizing the most important aspect.
- "For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism . . ." (Gal 1:13).
- "James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship . . ." (Gal 2:9).
- "When Peter came to Antioch I opposed him to his face, . . ." (Gal 2:11).
- "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' . . ." (Gal 2:15).
- d) How to encourage people to live out their Christian freedom.
- ". . . some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves" (Gal 2:4).
- "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).
- References to the slave woman and the free woman in Gal 4:22-31.
- "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1).
- "You, my brothers, were called to be free" (Gal 5:13).

## 2. Notes and Reflections on the Passage

The static thrust  
(shape) of the passage

The most important people are:

Paul and the Galatians;

Abraham's seed, the angels and the mediator;

God and Jesus Christ.

The most important events are:

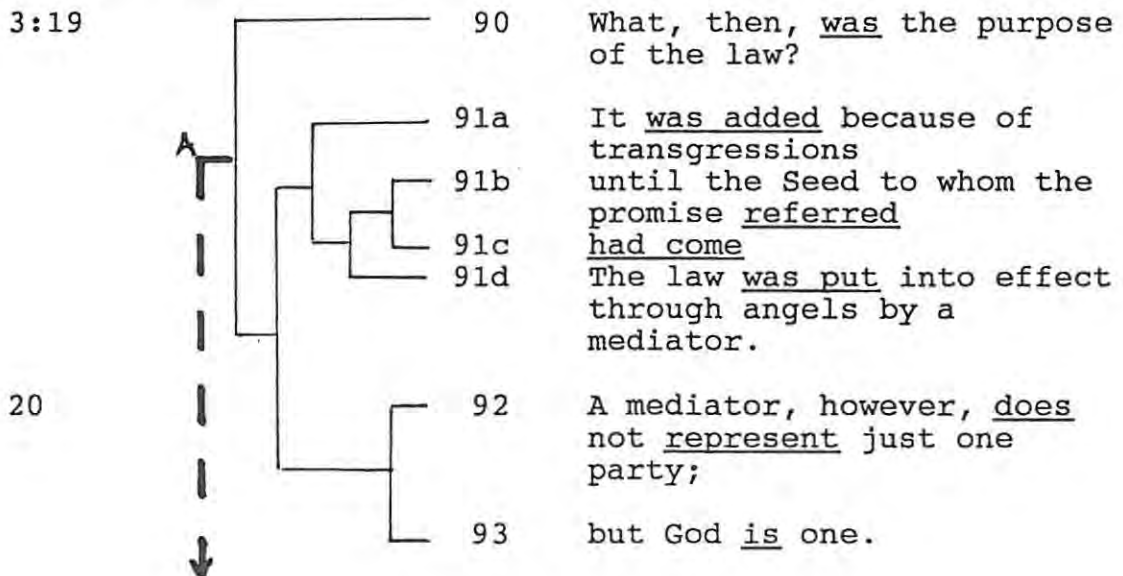
the giving of the promise to Abraham;  
 the giving of the law through Moses;  
 the coming of Jesus Christ.

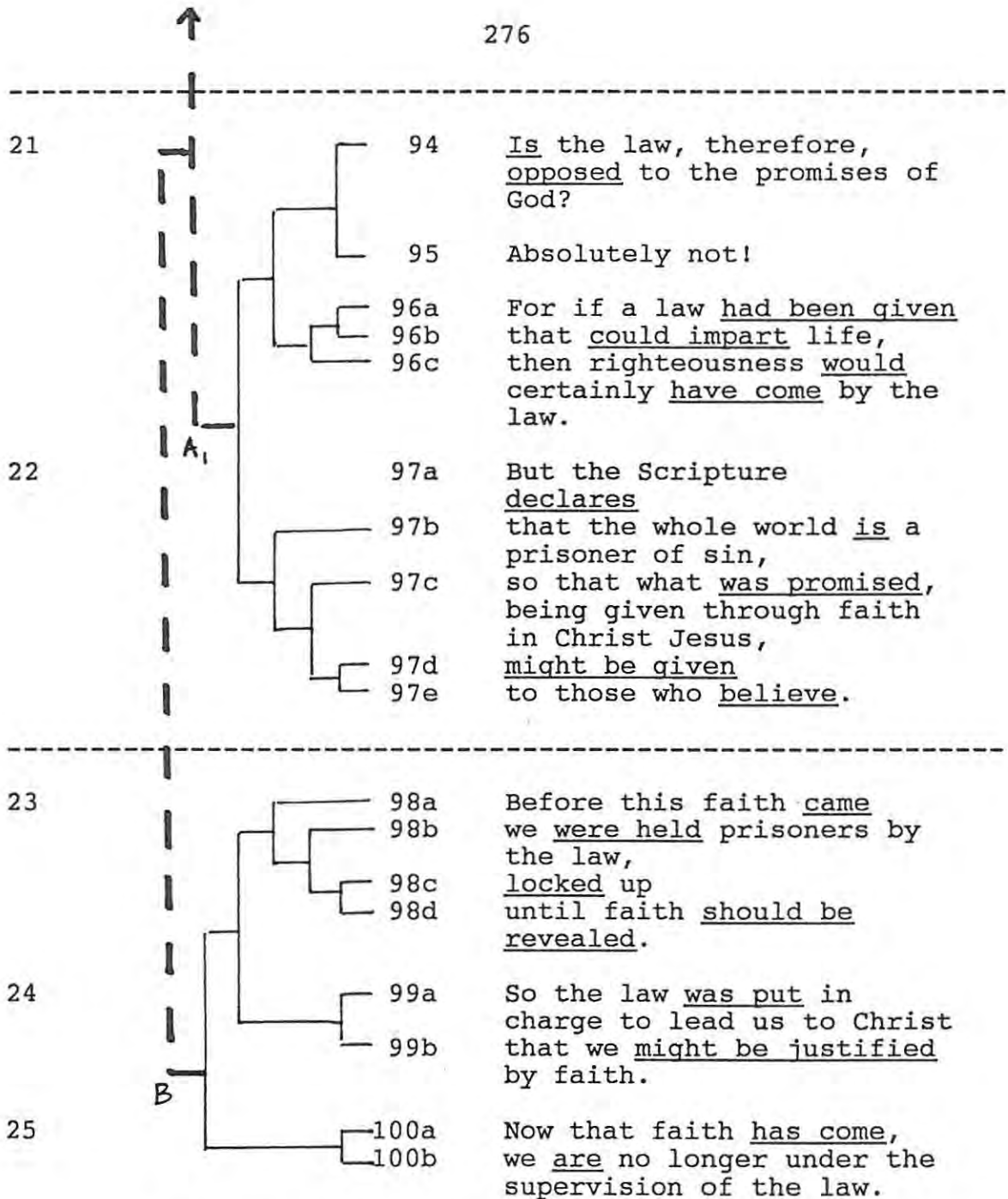
The topics spoken of repeatedly are:

God's law: its purpose, its relation to God's promise to Abraham, its relation to transgressions, its inability to impart life.

God's promise: its reference to Abraham's seed, its revelation, its fulfilment through faith in Jesus Christ, its relationship to justification, its ability to free us from the control of the law.

The main parts and most important verses can be seen by looking at our discourse analysis.





Thematic Markers: law, promise, mediator, God, faith, transgression/sin, life/righteousness/justified, the seed/Christ

Main parts:

The purpose of the law: 3:19-20 (cola 90-93);

The relationship of the law to the promise: 3:21-22 (cola 94-97e);

The relationship of the law to faith in Christ: 3:23-25 (cola 98a-100b).<sup>28</sup>

Most important verses:

verse 19 (the turning point of 3:19-20) a rhetorical question;

verses 21a and 22a (turning points of 3:21-22) rhetorical question and explanation of scripture;

verse 25 turning point of whole pericope (statement of principle that faith in Christ supersedes observance of the law).

Questions for reflection

- a) How do we understand faith in Jesus Christ for our community?
- b) What do we consider to be contemporary equivalents to the law in the Christian community to which we belong?

The dynamic perspective  
(heart) of the passage

For an analysis of the most important symbols and roles see Chapter 5. They are:

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<sup>28</sup>Although the NTSSA discourse analysis places a pericope division between Gal 3:22 and Gal 3:23, du Toit's analysis indicates that there are good grounds for not breaking the text there: "Aan die einde van perikoop 10 [Gal 3:19-22] het pistis as aanknoopwoord na vore betree. In kontrastering met nomos (kk.98b,99a) funksioneer die geloof nou sterk in die eerste helfte van perikoop 11 (kk.98ad,99b,100a,101) . . . " du Toit, "Analise van die Gedagtegang en Opbou," 18.

Paul: Jewish Christian, the teacher of scripture, believer in Jesus, brother and pastor to the Galatians;

The Galatians: Christian believers, apostates, brothers;

The law: pedagogue, scripture, warder;

Israel: God's people;

Sin: transgression of the law;

Jesus: Christ, Seed, fulfilment of the promise, divine son;

Promise: scripture;

God: divine father, giver of the promise, giver of the law, giver of Jesus Christ;

Angels: messengers, God's servants;

Mediator: God's servant, Moses;

Life/righteousness: greatest human needs;

Faith: source of life and righteousness, trust in God, realizer of promise;

Humanity: God's creation, descendants of Abraham, prisoners of sin.

These symbols are chosen because: they lie at the heart of the perspective of Paul's Jewish opponents.

The perspective of this passage:

Paul reinterprets all the symbols in terms of his faith that it was fully in accordance with God's nature and purpose that Jesus should be the messiah and fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham. Because the promise is now fulfilled, the law has no further purpose.

Questions for reflection

- a) As we consider the problem we are facing, is our fundamental orientation faith- or law-centred?

- b) Are we imprisoned by sin or the law?  
 c) What symbols are most important to us as we face our present concern?

The dialectical strategy  
(persuasive force) of the passage

How does Paul argue? What stylistic techniques does he use?

Paul uses rhetorical questions to introduce what he wants to say about the law. As Betz has pointed out, after all that Paul has said about the Torah, how is the Torah to be defined?<sup>29</sup> Thus, he asks, "Why, then, the law?"<sup>30</sup> and, "Is the law, then, contrary to the promises [of God]?"<sup>31</sup> While the answers to these questions are by no means as self-evident as those posed in Gal 3:1-5, they do touch the heart of the problem that Paul is discussing.

He reinterprets the central traditions and confession of Judaism: symbols such as "transgressions", "angels", "a mediator", "righteousness", "faith", "the law", "the promise", "the Scripture" and the central Jewish confession, "God is one" (Deut 6:4).

Paul retains a balance between identification and estrangement in his discussion of the law. He does not actually say that the law is bad. However, he does radically devalue it by making it an addition to the promise to Abraham,<sup>32</sup> and by describing it via unusual metaphors:

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<sup>29</sup>Betz, Galatians, 162.

<sup>30</sup>Fung, Galatians, 159.

<sup>31</sup>Betz, Galatians, 173.

<sup>32</sup>"So great was the esteem for the Torah in Jewish thought that to think of it as an addition would have required a complete reappraisal of its real significance. But this is precisely what had happened in Paul's thought."

those of custodian and pedagogue.

What genre has Paul chosen? How does this advance his case?

Cronjé comments that Paul reserves the use of rhetorical questions for moments of intense emotion.<sup>33</sup> This suggests that this passage is more than a "digression":<sup>34</sup> it is the centre of Paul's argument. This is confirmed by our macrostructural configuration which places this passage at the centre of the letter's chiasmic structure.<sup>35</sup>

This section represents the centre of Paul's deliberative "speech". His discussion of the law forms a point of equilibrium between his strenuous efforts to dissuade the Galatians from following the Judaizers and his efforts to persuade them to follow his example. He has to avoid dismissing God's law, but indicate its secondary role after the coming of this faith.<sup>36</sup>

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Guthrie, Galatians, 104.

<sup>33</sup>See Cronjé, "Defamiliarization," 219.

<sup>34</sup>Betz, Galatians, 163. It is true that Betz uses the word "digression" as a rhetorical term. He does not suggest that the passage is unimportant.

<sup>35</sup>"By detecting genuine chiasmic patterns, as distinct from various parallel arrangements, we discover the 'pivot' or central theme about which the author has developed other related elements in concentric symmetry." Breck, "Biblical Chiasmus," 73.

<sup>36</sup>". . . there is an article [in verses 23 and 25] which should be observed in English if the full meaning is to be brought out." Guthrie, Galatians, 108.

How does Paul present the interaction of the characters in this passage?

Paul presents the law as given indirectly, via angels and a human mediator. In contrast, the gospel precedes the law, by going back to the promise. It is also given directly via faith. It thus corresponds better with the oneness of God.

The role of the law is to guard and lead to Christ. With his coming, all people share direct access to God by means of faith in him.

Questions for reflection

- a) Are we able to distinguish between the essentials of our faith and the subordinate factors? Can we do so without writing off the subordinate elements?
- b) What argumentative strategies do we use in times of intense emotion?

The message summed up

Jesus is the promised seed of Abraham and the fulfilment of God's promise, through whom all nations are to be blessed. The means by which such blessings are received is faith in this messiah, Jesus.

### 3. Planning for Action

Who will do what, and when?

Closing Reflection

Thank you, God, for all your gifts:  
for your promise to Abraham  
of blessing for all nations;  
for your law, given through Moses,  
to hold and guard us  
until the promise should be fulfilled.  
And thank you for your anointed one  
who has, at last,  
set us free from your law's control,  
and restored to us the fullness  
of your gift of life.

## CHAPTER 7

## CONCLUSION

The faith once for all delivered to the saints is not something which can be caught and tamed; it continually leads the saints forth to new ventures in the cause of Christ, as God calls afresh.

F. F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews.

Review

Our goal has been to provide the South African church with resources for Bible study drawing on the riches of contemporary biblical criticism. We have also wanted to suggest that the results of biblical scholarship could benefit from a process of ongoing application and testing within the life of the church. It is not easy to find a place where biblical scholarship and the everyday needs of the church can meet to draw on the resources of the Bible together.<sup>1</sup> One suitable place is the small group, meeting for contextual Bible study.

Various methods for contextual Bible study have been developed for use in the South African church. Two that we have looked at are, the Portraits of Jesus series,<sup>2</sup> which

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<sup>1</sup>Gerald Hawkes recalls, in his days as a theological student, how his fellow students asked the staff to lead them in some Bible studies. "They agreed to do so, but the experiment proved a dismal failure. We simply got extra lectures, in the evening!" Gerald Hawkes, "Beyond Criticism: Bible Study Today," Journal of Theology for Southern Africa 65 (December 1988): 60.

<sup>2</sup>See Domeris, Matthew and Germond, Luke.

use Gadamer's concept of different horizons of interpretation, and those based on the hermeneutical circle of liberation theology.<sup>3</sup>

Each of these approaches has merits. The first introduces Bible study group members to the various horizons within the New Testament and shows how different these are from their own. It also provides comment on the biblical text based on contemporary scholarship.

The second begins the interpretive process with questions from our own context and introduces the hermeneutics of suspicion. It helps group members to recognize different ideological interests behind different interpretations of social circumstances and biblical texts. This method allows for scholarly comment via contributions from the "technician".<sup>4</sup>

The weakness of both methods is that they deny group members the opportunity of learning exegetical skills which they can use for themselves. Unaided, they are denied the opportunity of learning from the history of exegesis.

What is needed is some way of informing these contextual Bible study methods with a flexible, but rigorous, exegetical procedure. Rousseau's multi-dimensional model, which follows the process by which an ancient canonical text communicates, goes some way towards providing the basis for this. Thus, we have developed here

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<sup>3</sup>Nolan and Broderick, To Nourish Our Faith, 20-29 and 89-102, and Hirmer, Our Journey Together, 207-210.

<sup>4</sup>All the members of the group are considered to be theologians. The technician is the person with specific theological training and technical skills, such as knowledge of biblical languages.

a contextual Bible study method which begins and ends with the practical imperatives of liberation theology, but which places a thorough exegesis of the biblical text at the heart of the interpretive process.

Because this study has not been a work of interpretive theory alone, all the above considerations have been made with reference to Paul's letter to the Galatians. Apart from its importance within the Pauline corpus, its manageable size and the wide range of recent research upon it, this letter was chosen as being particularly suitable for contextual Bible study in the South African context.<sup>5</sup>

#### Evaluation

At this point it is important to evaluate our study, both theoretically and practically.

Theoretically, we need to ask whether it makes good use of the critical approaches and interpretive contexts discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, and of the hermeneutical principles of liberation theology discussed in Chapter 3.

Rousseau's model does not integrate all the critical approaches we reviewed above. This is not necessarily a weakness, for it is a positivist fallacy to imagine that a perfect exegetical model is possible.<sup>6</sup> However, future multi-dimensional models could make more use of the

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<sup>5</sup>John de Gruchy recommended it to me as being ". . . pristine Paul, a gutsy epistle that has had a long history of transforming people, and one which opens up some very basic issues--Christian freedom being the main one, and relations between groups being a focal point." Personal letter dated 15 March 1988.

<sup>6</sup>The communication process within the biblical documents themselves resists such a "positivistic fallacy". See Rousseau, "Beyond Exegesis," 17.

distinctions between readers made by literary criticism and North American reader-response.<sup>7</sup> Also, particularly in South Africa, more use could be made of Wuellner's understanding of rhetorical criticism, with his insistence on "a reading which generates and strengthens ever-deepening personal, social and cultural values."<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, Rousseau's model does not take account of all the contexts of interpretation discussed in Chapter 4. Even though his model is based on modern communication theory, he makes no provision for the analysis of the contexts of contemporary interpreters. This is a need which is not yet being addressed in South African biblical scholarship. Biblical scholars need to become better acquainted with the analytical procedures of sociology and cultural anthropology for the purpose of first and twentieth century context analysis. They need to be able to select and use particular social science models, and be able to account for the presuppositions inherent in the approaches they choose.<sup>9</sup>

The liberation paradigm we incorporate recognizes this need. Having acknowledged, with Rousseau, the importance of taking account of the different perspectives within the church of the first century, we are encouraged: (1) to note the different horizons within our own social and ecclesiastical contexts and, (2) to note the gap between the

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<sup>7</sup>For instance, between the implied reader (what the reader ought to be) and the narratee (what the reader is).

<sup>8</sup>Wuellner, "Rhetorical Criticism," 461.

<sup>9</sup>This is true for the analysis of first century or twentieth century contexts.

horizons of the churches of first century Asia Minor and twentieth century South Africa. The three mediations of liberation theology provide an excellent means of acknowledging these crucial gaps.

Practically, we need to ask whether the method of Bible study we propose can be implemented. While empirical testing lies beyond the scope of this study, parts of it have been circulated to a number of clergy and biblical scholars for critical comment.<sup>10</sup>

The Bible study method has also been extensively discussed in a local interdenominational ministers' fraternal. As a result of this discussion, two Bible study groups adopted the method proposed and have used it in different contexts.<sup>11</sup>

The method was initially found to be exegetically over-complex in places, but otherwise valuable in encouraging the participants to relate and apply the biblical message to their practical circumstances. It was also found to be valuable in helping group members to be honest about the problems they faced in living out their Christian convictions.

The issue of complexity is two-edged. It may be objected that Rousseau's model is already over complex, even

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<sup>10</sup>An earlier study, on which parts of this are based, was kindly reviewed by Prof J. W. de Gruchy, Dr W. Domeris and Dr J. Rousseau. The names of some of the clergy who reviewed this material are given in the acknowledgements.

<sup>11</sup>One interdenominational group, with members from Anglican, Baptist, Greek Orthodox, Methodist and Roman Catholic backgrounds, successfully used the method to study most of 1 Corinthians. The other group, comprised of people from a single denomination living in a poorer community, used the method for contextual Bible studies of John's gospel.

before it is placed within a wider hermeneutical framework. It may further be objected that the resultant mixture cannot be simplified without distorting the many critical questions it raises.

The first answer to these objections is that the complexity of Rousseau's model merely reflects the difficulty involved in bringing various exegetical approaches together in one model. While complex questions ought not to be avoided or over-simplified, new light may be shed on them by attempting to interrelate them and use them within the wider church community. Liberation theology insists that theological reflection is the task of the whole church.<sup>12</sup>

Secondly, because of the distance between the New Testament world and our own, the study of the New Testament, whether in the classroom or in the local church community, always requires hard work.

However, by using the method over a period of time, Bible study group members have shown that they are able to understand it and develop the habit of looking out for the shape of the text, main characters, important symbols, and so on. By keeping larger units of the Bible in view, they are able to avoid the distortions which arise from

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<sup>12</sup>This is consistent with a postmodern philosophical perspective, as we have seen.

dismembering the text into isolated verses.<sup>13</sup> The focus on the shape of the text, the perspective of the author and the interaction of the text with its original recipients encourages an understanding of faith-perspectives and how they are communicated. In addition, the emphasis on solving practical problems is one which is welcomed by group members.

The challenge to grasp and apply the perspectives of the Bible is an ongoing one. Further empirical research on the use of methods such as this one is needed, to see whether they do in fact make specialist exegetical knowledge available to ordinary church members. We need to remember that the majority of people in the South African church are still relatively uneducated, poor and politically powerless. No single method alone can link church and university in a way which is mutually enriching. A process of ongoing dialogue between the two interpretive contexts is essential.

#### Recapitulation

This study has shown we need to make a critical study of our context before we interpret the Bible. Such an analysis needs to be made with full awareness of our analytical presuppositions. We need to recognize that ours is not the only perspective on the situation, and that other

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<sup>13</sup>One member of our contextual Bible study group illustrated the absurdity of fragmenting the Bible into unrelated verses by described his experience of using a Bible promise box, which contained single biblical texts printed on small cards. The first time he used it, he reached for a card towards the back, hoping to find a text from one of the gospels. The card he drew out read:

perspectives may well be in conflict with our own.

Once we have completed our analysis of our situation, and established how our perspective relates to those of others around us, we are able to turn away from ourselves to the New Testament.

In our study of Galatians we saw the different social contexts in which Paul, his opponents, and the Galatian congregations were living. We noted their different perspectives. All were struggling to relate their beliefs to their lives. We saw how Paul strove to communicate the distinctive difference made by his central commitment to "live by faith in the Son of God".

After making these discoveries, we need to ask whether we share Paul's perspective or not. Are we willing to change the way we look at life?

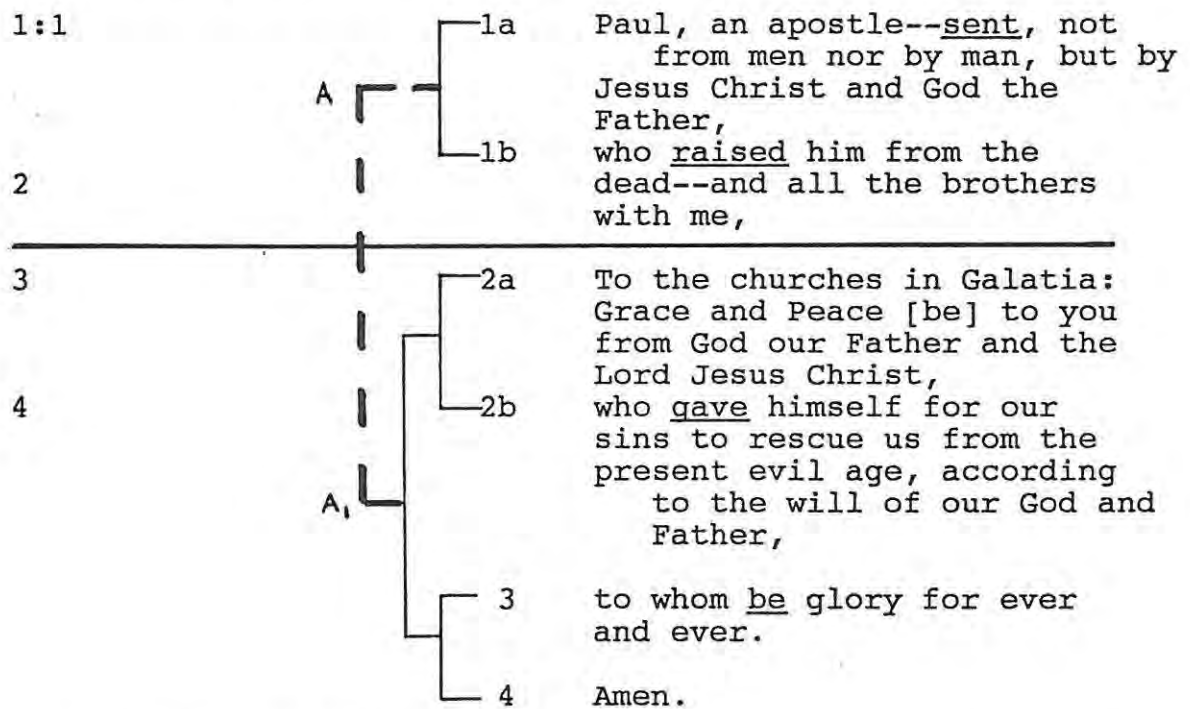
Having faced these questions, we consider our own situation once again. If our perspective has been strengthened or changed, we become aware of compelling new imperatives. The reflective process ends when we make specific plans to act, plans which are rooted in the perspective of the passage we have studied, yet specific to our place, time and circumstances.

In the action which follows, we discover more about the perspective of faith, ourselves and our circumstances. Our understanding is never complete, yet what we have learnt encourages us to begin the interpretive process once again.

## APPENDIX 1

## DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF EACH PERICOPE IN GALATIANS

Note: The colon configuration is shown by a solid line, and the cluster configuration by a broken line.

Pericope 1: Salutation (1:1-5)

Note: Instead of listing all the colon- and cluster-grouping criteria mentioned in Chapter 5, we simply list the important thematic markers in this pericope and in the pericopes below.

Thematic Markers: Jesus Christ, God, Father, who

Pericope 2: Introduction (1:6-11)

1:6		5a	I <u>am</u> astonished
		5b	that you <u>are</u> so quickly <u>deserting</u>
		5c	the one who <u>called</u> you by the grace of Christ
		5d	and <u>are turning</u> to a different gospel--
7	A	6	which <u>is</u> really no gospel at all.
		7	Evidently some people <u>are throwing</u> you into confusion
		7b	and <u>are trying</u> to pervert the gospel of Christ.
8		8a	But even if we or an angel from heaven <u>should preach</u> a gospel
		8b	other than the one we <u>preached</u> to you,
		8c	<u>let him be</u> eternally <u>condemned</u> .
9	A <sub>1</sub>	9.1a	As we <u>have</u> already <u>said</u> ,
		9.1b	so we now <u>say</u> again:
		9.1b.1a	If anybody <u>is preaching</u> to you a gospel
		9.1b.1b	other than what you <u>accepted</u> ,
		9.1b.1c	<u>let him be</u> eternally <u>condemned</u> !
10		10	<u>Am</u> I now <u>trying</u> to win the approval of men, or of God?
		11	Or <u>am</u> I <u>trying</u> to please men?
	B	12a	If I <u>were</u> still <u>trying</u> to please men,
		12b	I <u>would</u> not <u>be</u> a servant of Christ.
11		13a	I <u>want</u> you to know brothers
		13b	that the gospel I <u>preached</u>
	C	13c	<u>is</u> not something
		13d	that man <u>made up</u> .

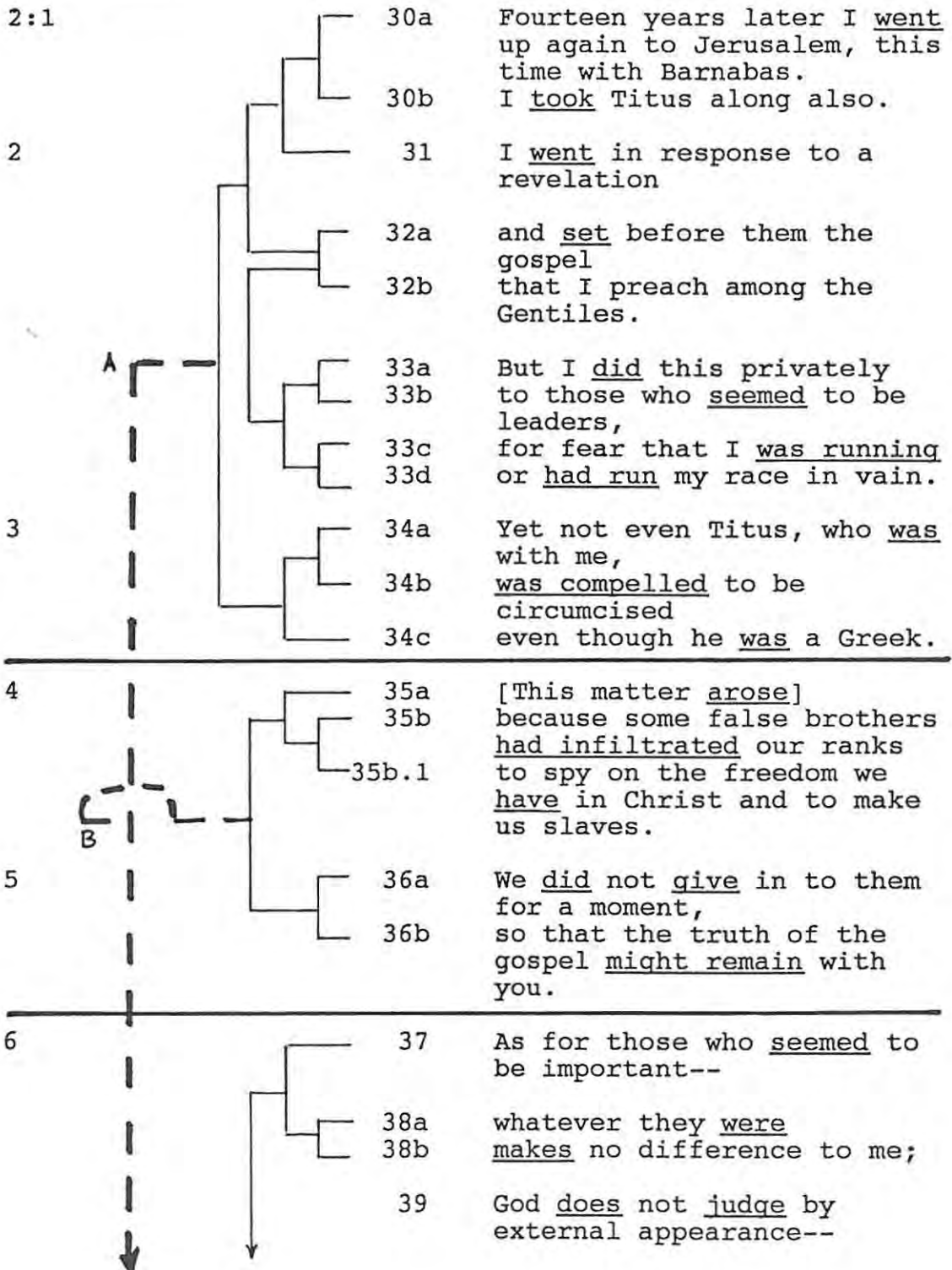
Thematic Markers: Christ, gospel, preach, condemn, please, man/men.

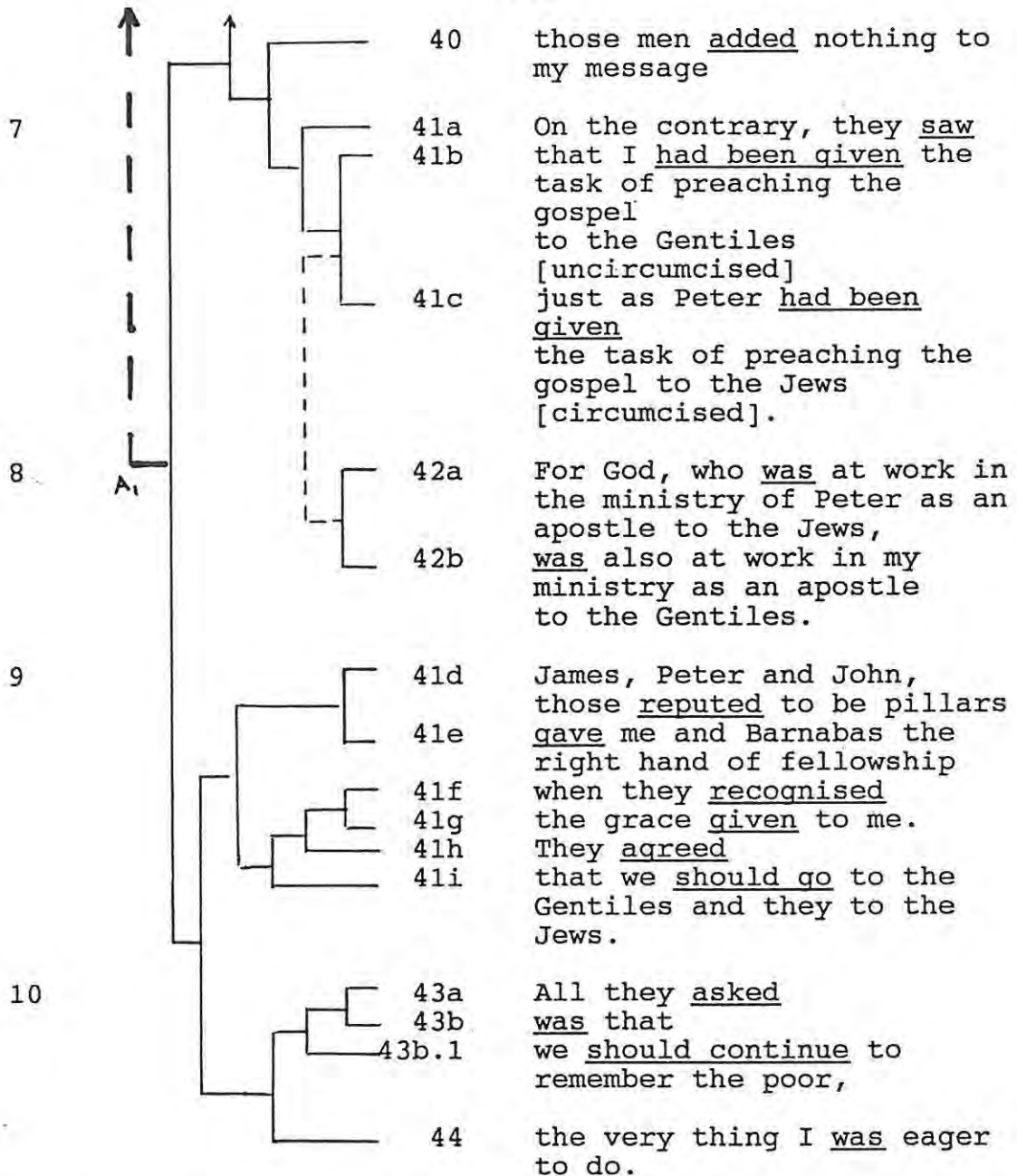
Pericope 3: Statement of facts (1:12-24)

1:12	E	14	I <u>did not receive</u> it from any man
		15	nor <u>was</u> I <u>taught</u> it;
		16	rather I <u>received</u> it by revelation from Jesus Christ.
<hr/>			
13	A	17.1	For you <u>have heard</u> of my previous way of life in Judaism,
		17.1.1	how intensely I <u>persecuted</u> the church of God
14		17.1.2	and <u>tried</u> to destroy it.
		17.1.3a	I <u>was advancing</u> in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age,
		17.1.3b	and <u>was</u> extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.
<hr/>			
15		18a	But when God, who <u>set</u> me <u>apart</u> from birth
16		18b	and <u>called</u> me by his grace,
		18c	<u>was pleased</u> to reveal his Son in me
		18d	so that I <u>might preach</u> him among the Gentiles,
17	A <sub>1</sub>	19a	I <u>did not consult</u> any man
		19b	nor <u>did</u> I <u>go</u> up to Jerusalem
		19c	to see those who <u>were</u> apostles
		19c.1	before I <u>was</u>
		20	but I <u>went</u> immediately into Arabia
		21	and later <u>returned</u> to Damascus.
<hr/>			
18		22	Then after three years, I <u>went</u> to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter
		23	and <u>stayed</u> with him fifteen days.
19	B	24	I <u>saw</u> none of the other apostles--only James the Lord's brother.



Pericope 4: Statement continued (2:1-10)





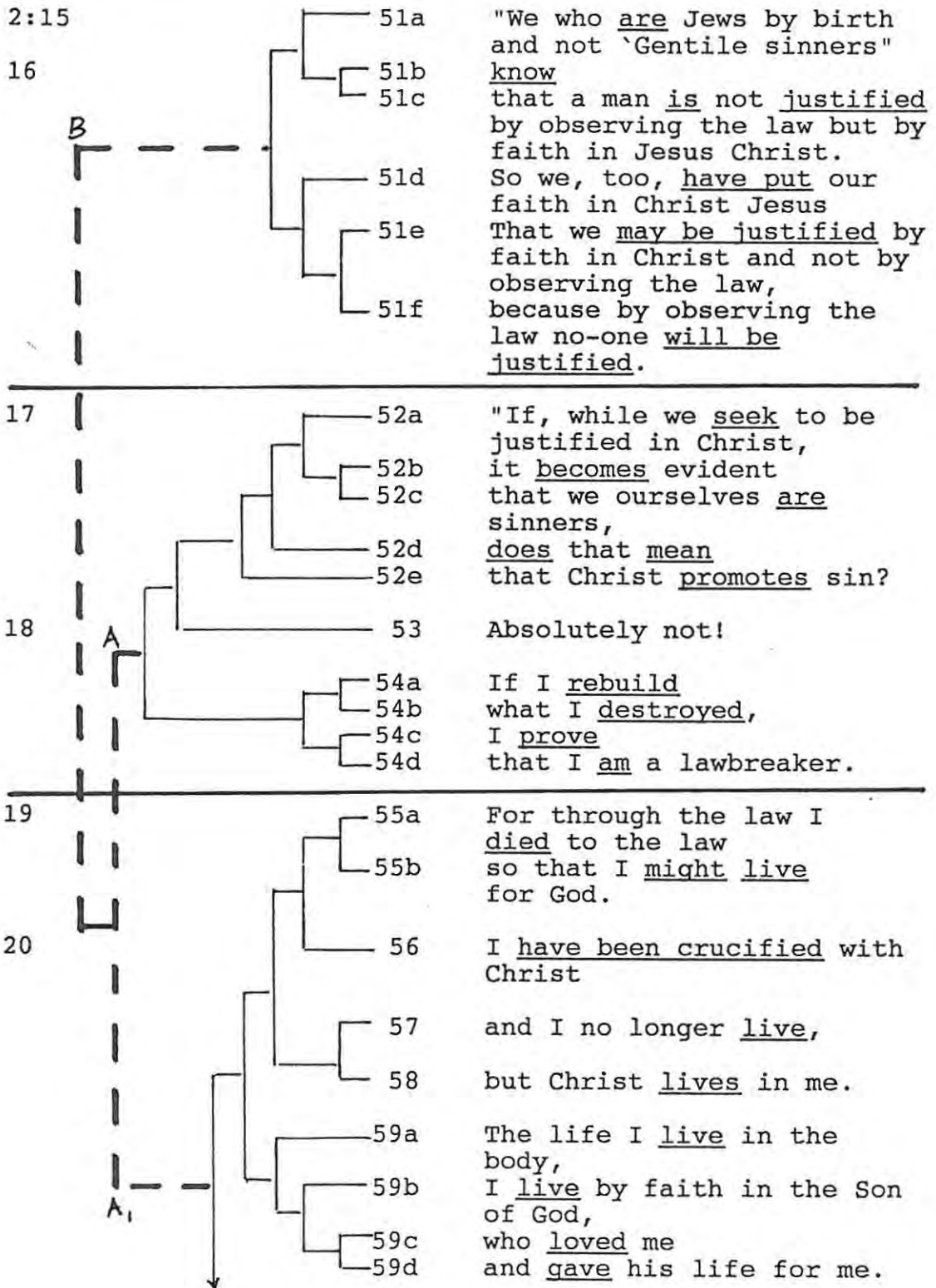
Thematic Markers: I, Titus, went, them/leaders/Peter, gospel, circumcision/the circumcised (Jews), false brothers/them, seem/external appearance

Pericope 5: Statement continued (2:11-14)

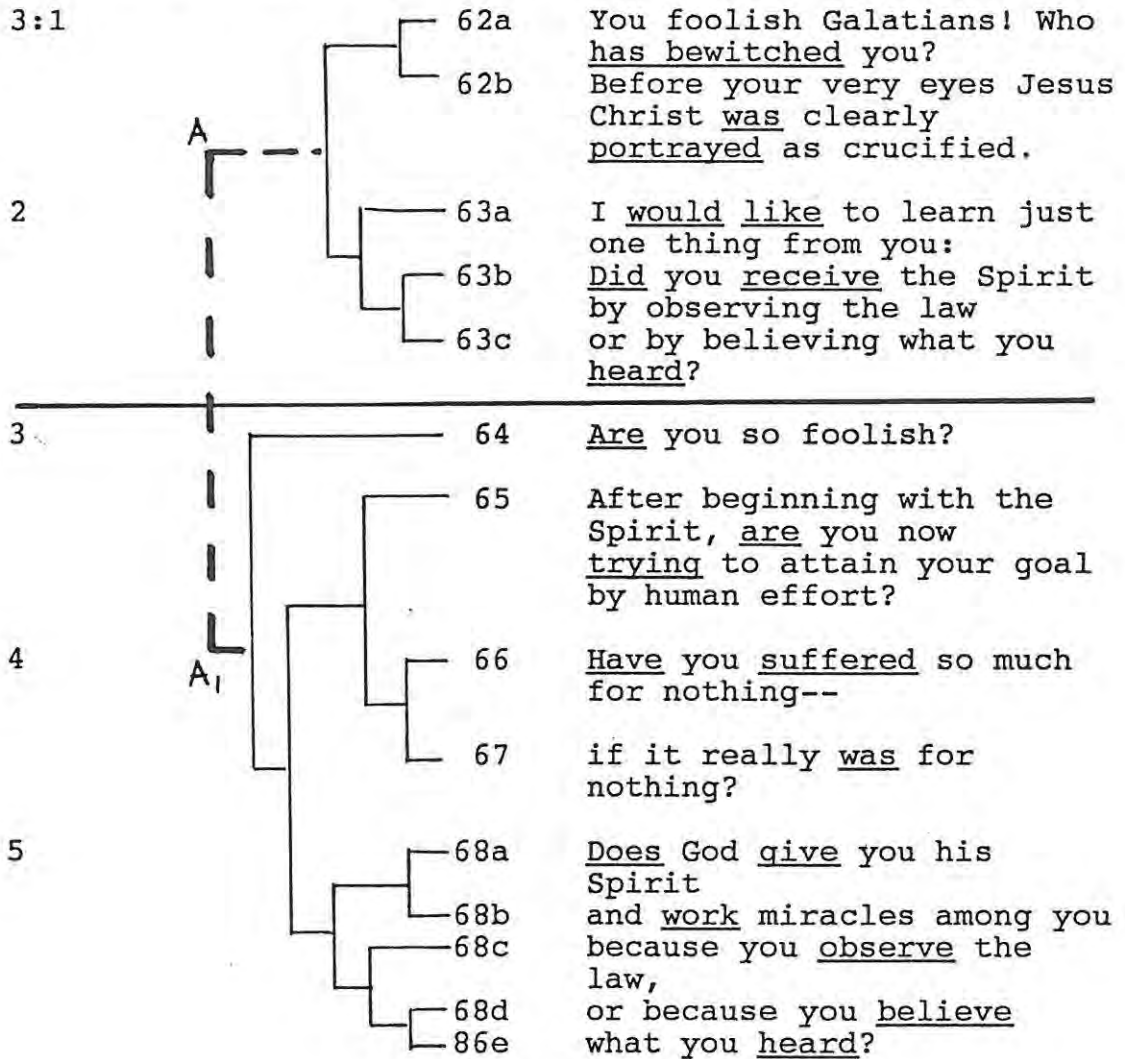
2:11	B	45a	When Peter <u>came</u> to Antioch,
		45b	I <u>opposed</u> him to his face
		45c	because he <u>was</u> in the wrong
12		46a	Before certain men <u>came</u> from James
		46b	he <u>used</u> to eat with the Gentiles.
		47a	But when they <u>arrived</u>
		47b	he <u>began</u> to draw back
	A	48a	and separate himself from all the Gentiles
		48b	because he <u>was</u> afraid
		48c	of those who <u>belonged</u> to the circumcision group.
13		49a	The other Jews <u>joined</u> him in his hypocrisy,
		49b	so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas <u>was led</u> astray.
14		50a	When I <u>saw</u>
		50b	that they <u>were not acting</u> in line with the truth of the gospel
	A <sub>I</sub>	50c.1	I <u>said</u> to Peter in front of them all,
		50c.1.1a	"You <u>are</u> a Jew,
		50c.1.1b	yet you <u>live</u> like Gentile and not like a Jew.
		50c.1.1c	How <u>is</u> it, then,
		50c.1.1d	that you <u>force</u> Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?

Thematic Markers: Peter, I, certain men/they, Gentiles, the  
circumcision group/Jews

Pericope 6: Summary linking statements and arguments  
(2:15-21)

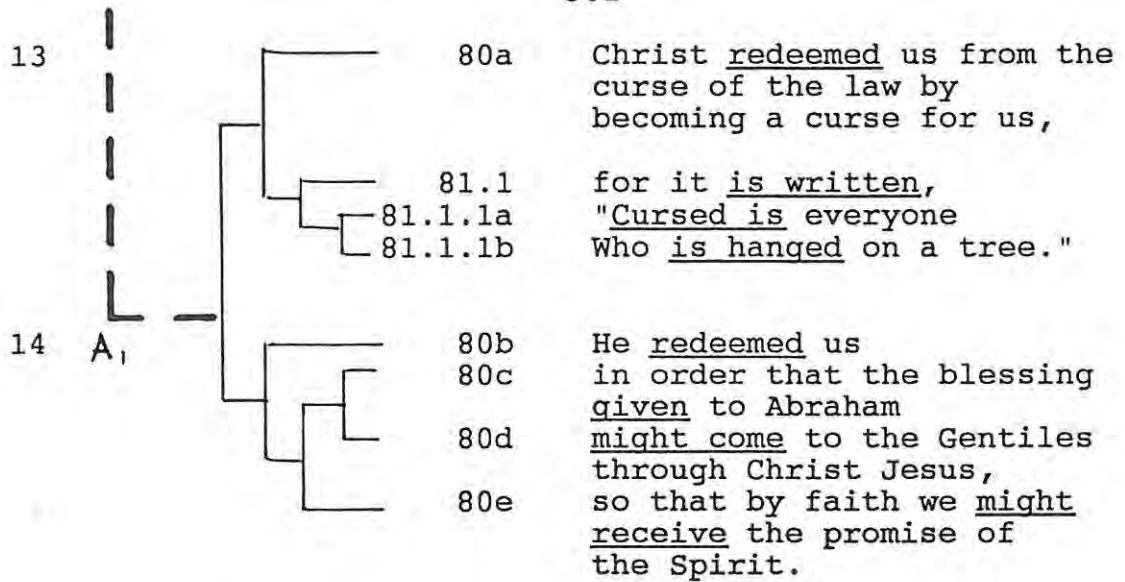




Pericope 7: Argument A (3:1-5)

Thematic Markers: you/your, foolish, Spirit, law, believe





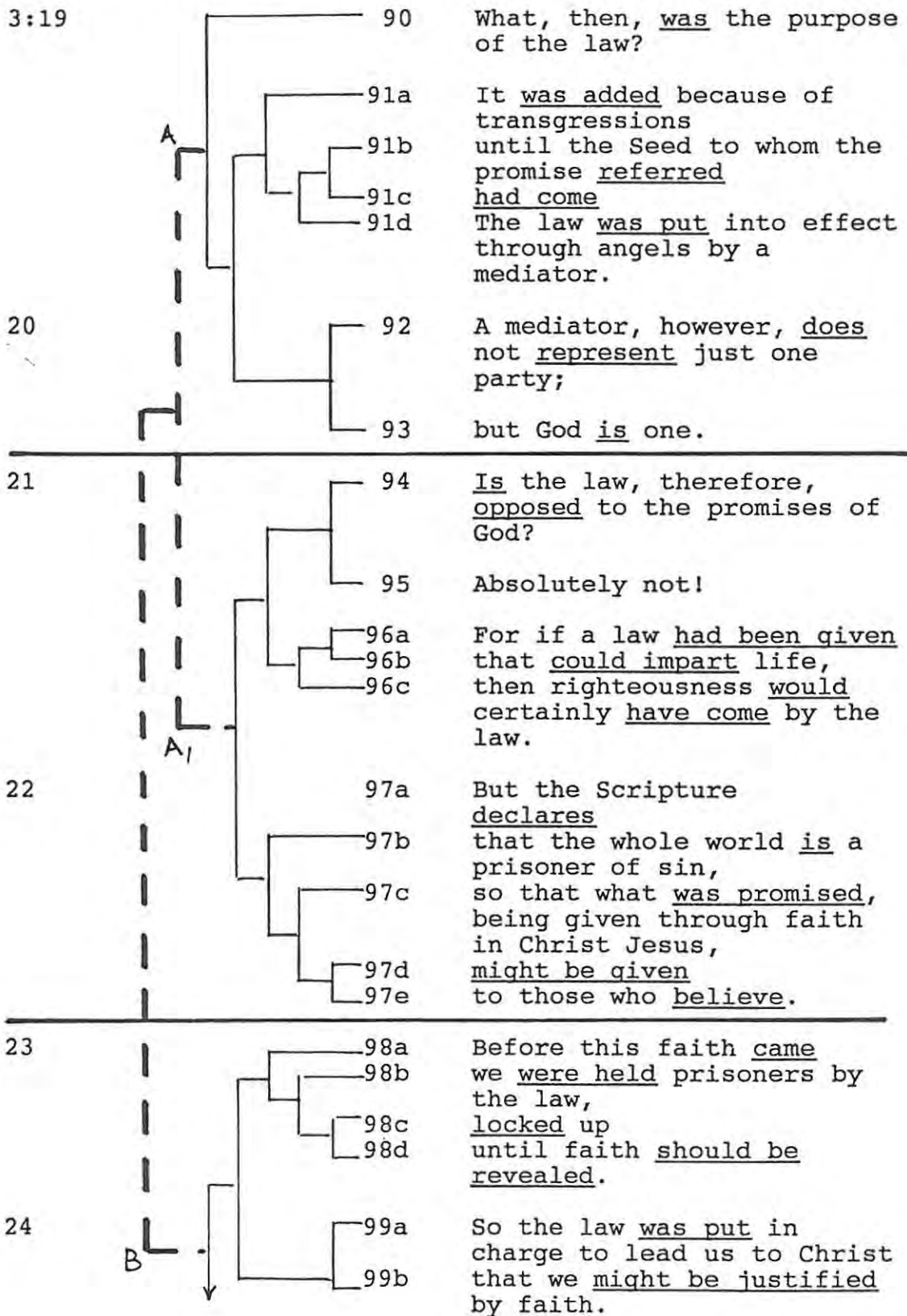
Thematic Markers: Abraham, believe/faith, righteousness, law, curse, do/does, live, redeemed, Christ

Pericope 9: Argument (3:15-18)

3:15		82	Brothers <u>let</u> me <u>take</u> an example from everyday life.
		83a	Just as no-one <u>can set</u> aside or <u>add</u> to a human covenant
		83b	that <u>has been</u> duly <u>established</u> ,
		84	so it <u>is</u> in this case.
<hr/>			
16		85	The promises <u>were spoken</u> to Abraham and to his seed.
		86.1	The Scripture <u>does not say</u> "and to seeds", meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person,
		86.1.1	who <u>is</u> Christ.
<hr/>			
17		87.1	What I <u>mean</u> is this:
		87.1.1a	The law, <u>introduced</u> 430 years later,
		87.1.1b	<u>does not set</u> aside the covenant
		87.1.1c	previously <u>established</u> by God
		87.1.1d	and thus <u>do</u> away with the promise.
18		88a	For if the inheritance <u>depends</u> on the law,
		88b	then it no longer <u>depends</u> on a promise;
		89	but God in his grace <u>gave</u> it to Abraham through a promise.

Thematic Markers: example/as/so, covenant/inheritance, promise, Abraham, law

Pericope 10: Argument D (3:19-25)



25

↑  
└─100a  
└─100b

Now that faith has come,  
we are no longer under the  
supervision of the law.

Thematic Markers: law, promise, mediator, God, faith,  
transgression/sin, life/righteousness/justified, the  
seed/Christ

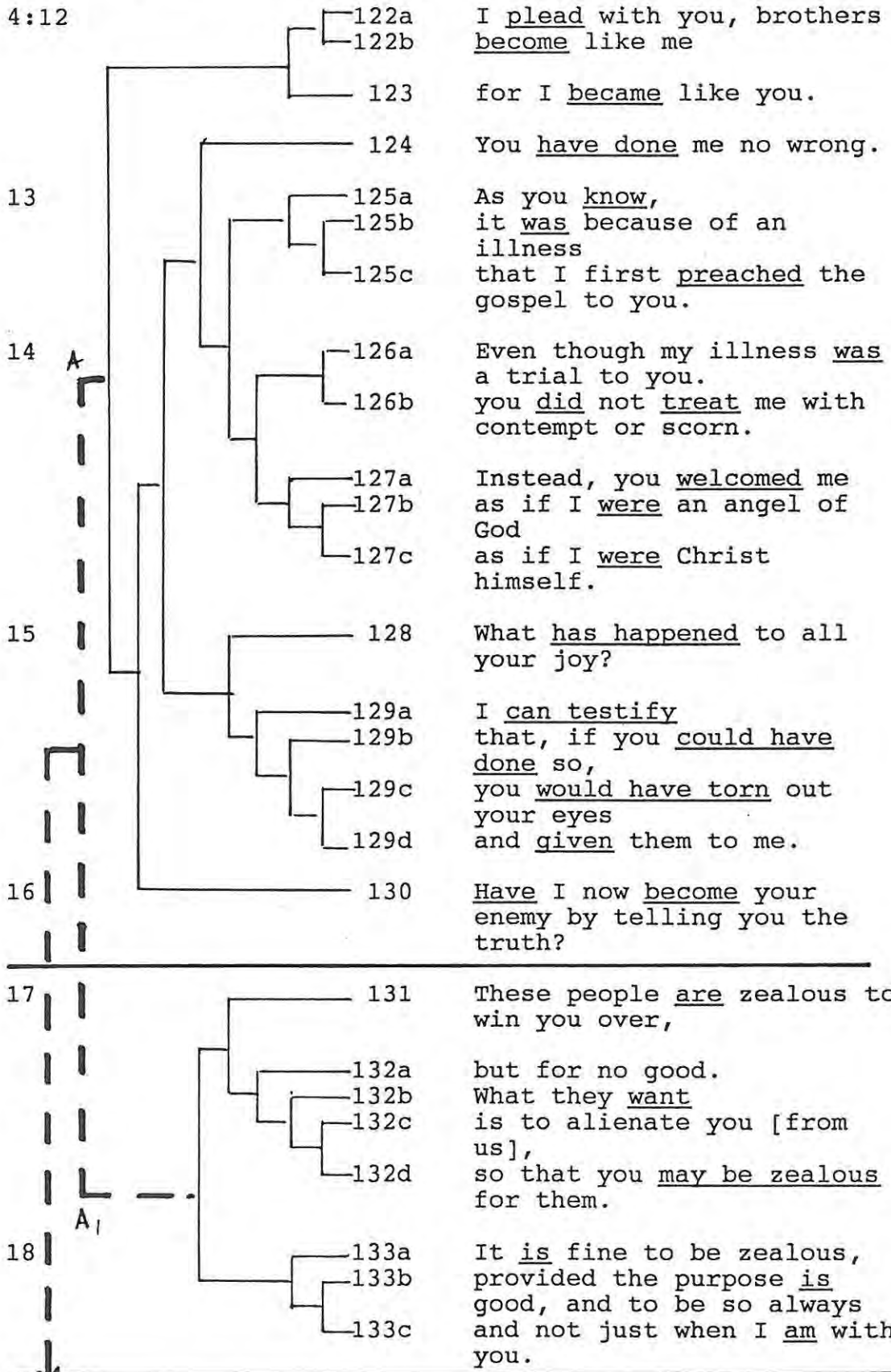
Pericope 11: Argument E (3:26 - 4:11)

3:26		101	You <u>are</u> all Sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,
27		102a	for all of you who <u>were baptized</u> into Christ
		102b	<u>have clothed</u> yourselves with Christ.
28		103	There <u>is</u> neither Jew
		104	nor Greek,
		105	slave
		106	nor free,
		107	male
		108	nor female,
		109	for you <u>are</u> all one in Christ Jesus.
29	110a	If you <u>belong</u> to Christ,	
	110b	then you <u>are</u> Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.	
<hr/>			
4:1		111	What I <u>am</u> saying
		111.1	<u>is</u>
		111.1.1a	that as long as the heir <u>is</u> a child,
		111.1.1b	he <u>is</u> no different from a slave,
		111.1.1c	although he <u>owns</u> the whole estate.
2		111.1.2a	He <u>is</u> subject to guardians and trustees
		111.1.2b	until the time <u>set</u> by his father.
3		112a	So also, when we <u>were</u> children,
		112b	we <u>were</u> in slavery under the basic principles of the world.

4		113a	But when the time <u>had</u> fully <u>come</u> ,
		113b	God <u>sent</u> his Son,
		113c	<u>born</u> of a woman,
		113d	<u>born</u> under law,
5		113e	to redeem those under law, that we <u>might receive</u> the full rights of sons.
<hr/>			
6		114a	Because you <u>are</u> sons,
		114b	God <u>sent</u> the Spirit of his Son into our hearts,
		114c	the Spirit who <u>calls</u> out, " <u>Abba</u> , Father."
7		115	So you <u>are</u> no longer a slave,
		116	but a son;
		117a	and since you <u>are</u> a son,
		117b	God <u>has made</u> you also an heir.
<hr/>			
8		118a	Formerly, when you <u>did</u> not <u>know</u> God,
		118b	you <u>were</u> slaves
		118c	to those who by nature <u>are</u> not gods.
9		119a	But now that you <u>know</u> God--
		119b	or rather <u>are known</u> by God--
	119c	how <u>is</u> it	
	119d	that you <u>are turning</u> back to those weak and miserable principles?	
10	119e	<u>Do you wish</u> to be enslaved by them all over again?	
	120	You <u>are observing</u> special days and months and seasons and years!	
11	121a	I <u>fear</u> for you,	
	121b	that somehow I <u>have wasted</u> my efforts on you.	

Thematic Markers: you, all, sons, Christ/Jesus, heir(s), child(ren), slave/slavery/redeem, not gods/miserable principles, I

Pericope 12: Argument F (4:12 - 20)

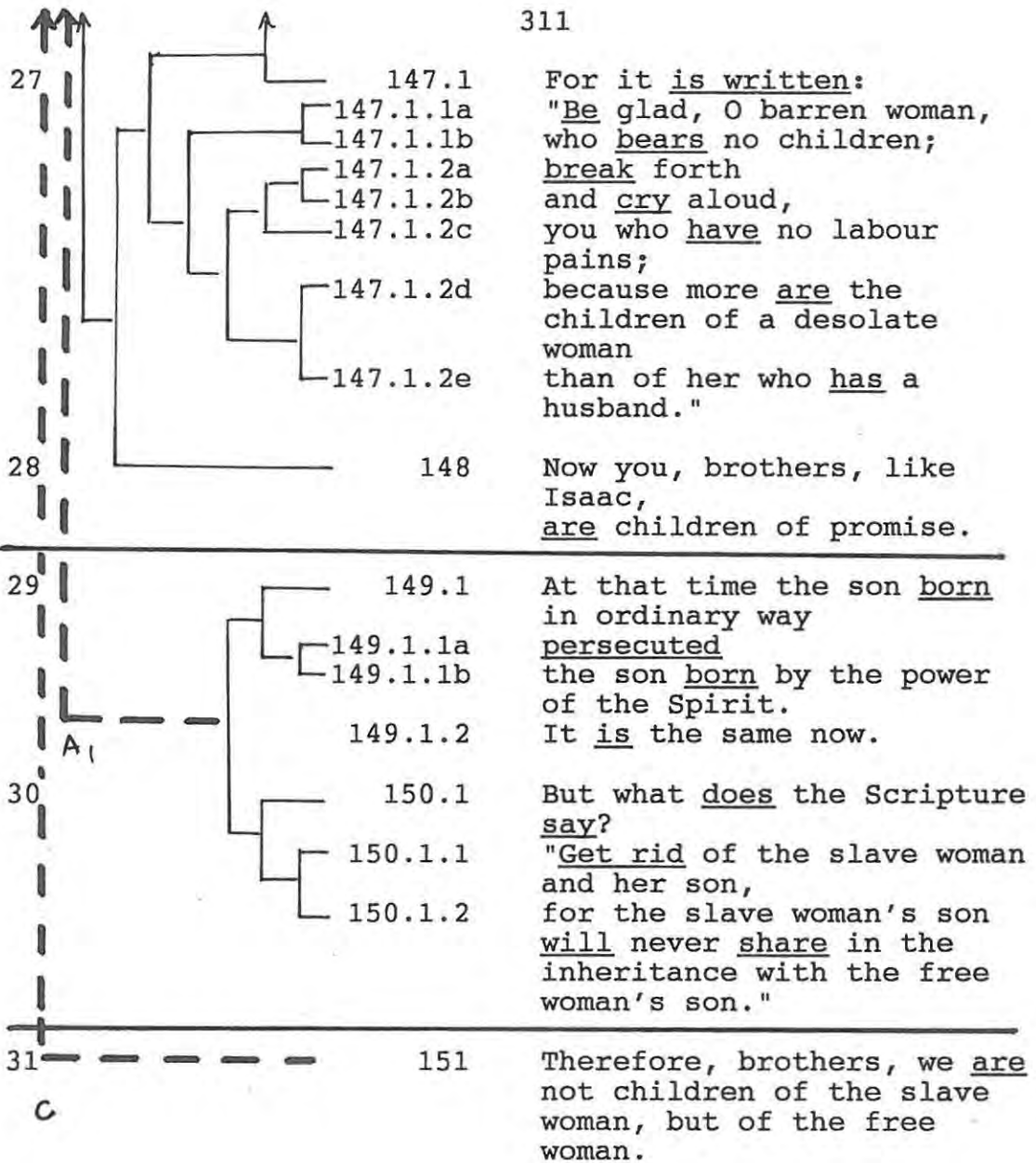




Pericope 13: Argument G (4:21 - 31)

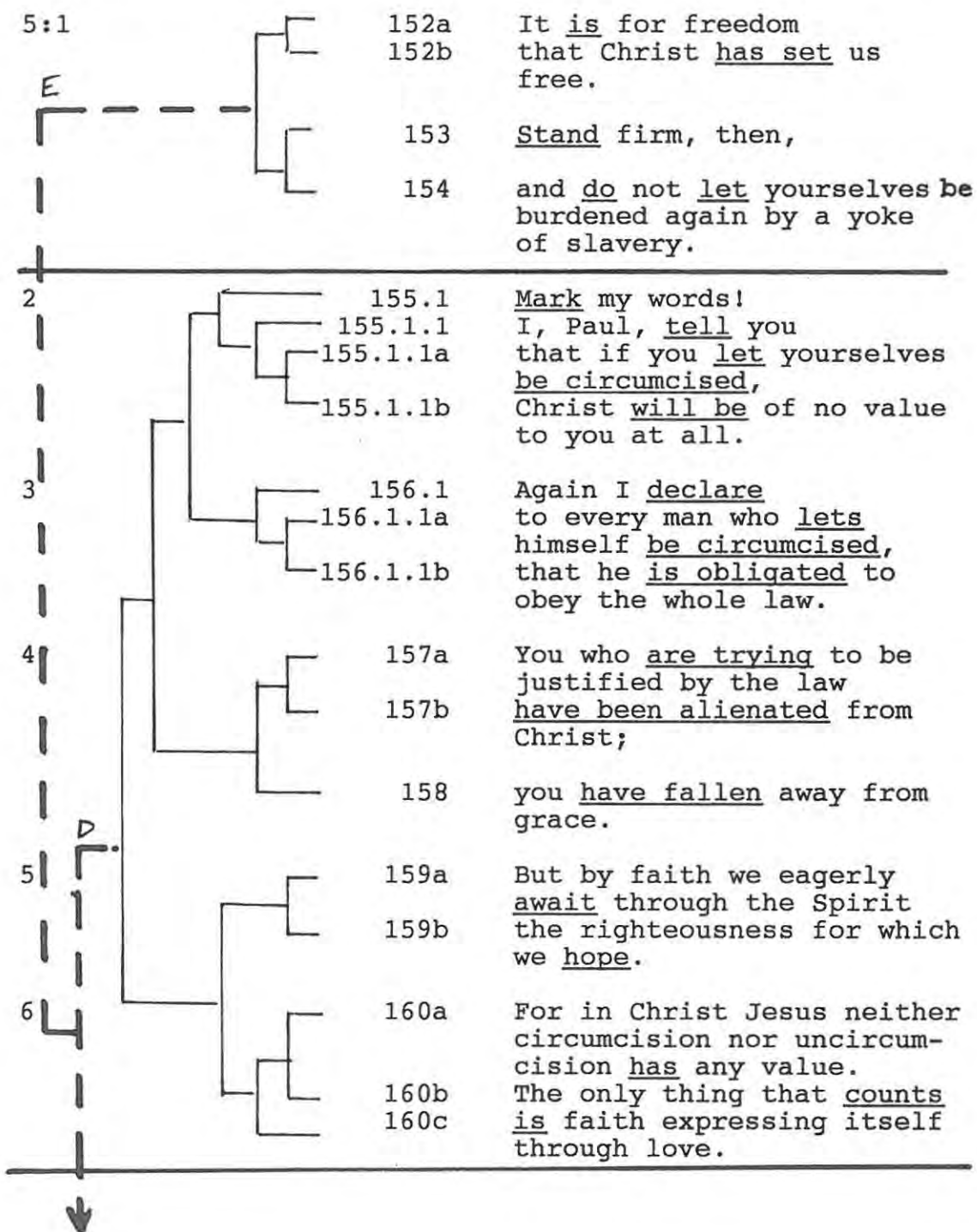
4:21	136.1	Tell me,
	136.1.1a	you who <u>want</u> to be under
	136.1.1b	the law,
	136.1.1c	<u>are</u> you not <u>aware</u>
		of what the law <u>says</u> ?
22	137.1	For it <u>is written</u>
23	137.1.1a	that Abraham <u>had</u> two sons,
		one by the slave woman and
		the other by the free
		woman.
	138	His son by the slave woman
		<u>was born</u> in the ordinary
		way;
	139	but his son by the free
		woman <u>was born</u> as a result
		of a promise.
<hr/>		
24	140	These things <u>may be taken</u>
		figuratively,
	141	for the women <u>represent</u> two
		covenants.
	142a	One covenant <u>is</u> from Mount
		Sinai
	142b	and <u>bears</u> children
	142c	who <u>are</u> to be slaves:
	142d	This <u>is</u> Hagar.
25	143	Now Hagar <u>stands</u> for Mount
		Sinai in Arabia
	144	and <u>corresponds</u> to the
		present city of Jerusalem,
	145	because she <u>is</u> in slavery
		with her children.
26	146a	But the Jerusalem that <u>is</u>
		above
	146b	<u>is</u> free,
	146c	and she <u>is</u> our mother.





Thematic Markers: law/written/Scripture, son(s), slave woman/Hagar, free/barren/desolate woman, born, figuratively/represent, covenant(s), Sinai, children, Jerusalem

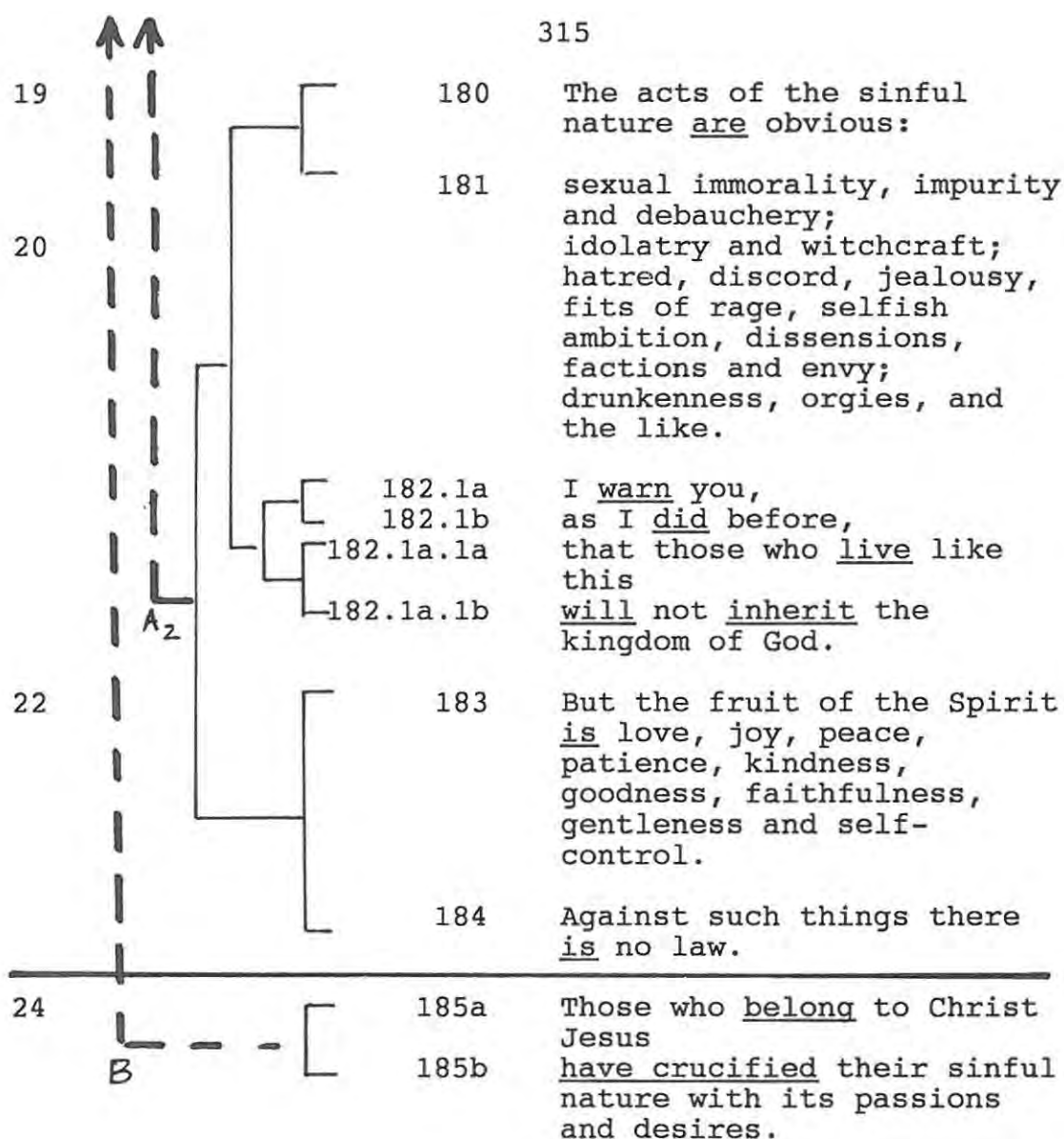
Pericope 14: Summary linking arguments and exhortations  
(5:1-12)





Pericope 15: Exhortation (5:13 - 24)

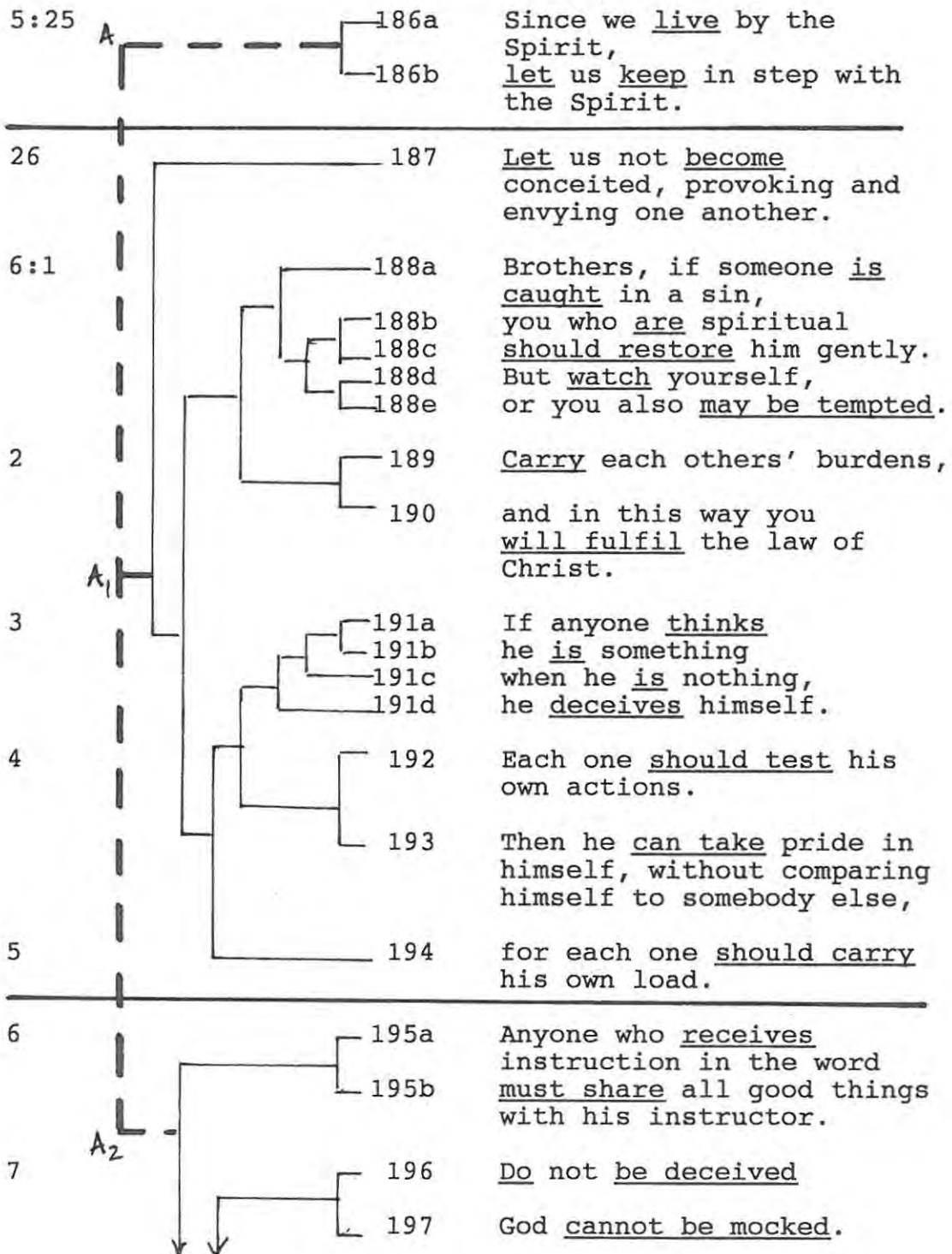
5:13		170	You, my brothers <u>were called</u> to be free.
		171	But <u>do not use</u> your freedom to indulge the sinful nature;
		172	rather, <u>serve</u> one another in love.
14	A	173a	The entire law <u>is summed up</u> in a single command:
		173b	" <u>Love</u> your neighbour as yourself."
15		174a	If you <u>keep on biting</u>
		174b	and <u>devouring</u> each other,
		174c	<u>watch out</u>
		174d	or you <u>will be destroyed</u> by each other.
<hr/>			
16		175.1	So I <u>say</u> ,
		175.1.1	<u>live</u> by the Spirit,
		175.1.2	and <u>do not gratify</u> the desires of the sinful nature.
17		176a	For the sinful nature <u>desires</u>
		176b	what <u>is</u> contrary to the Spirit,
	A <sub>1</sub>	177	and the Spirit what <u>is</u> contrary to the sinful nature.
		178a	They <u>are</u> in conflict with each other,
		178b	so that you <u>do not do</u>
		178c	what you <u>want</u> .
18		179a	But if you <u>are led</u> by the Spirit,
		179b	you <u>are</u> not under the law.

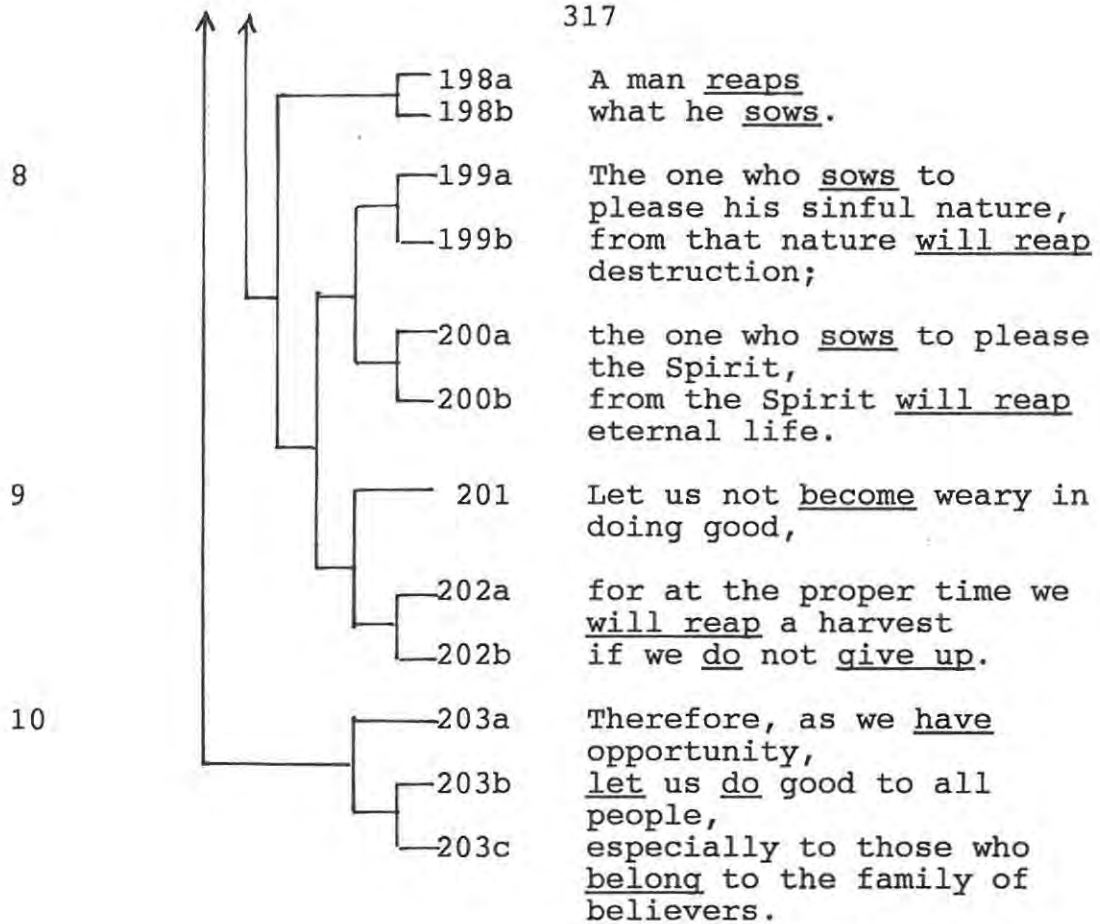


Thematic Markers: brothers, free/freedom, sin/sinful nature, one another/each other, love, Spirit

(The structure of this pericope reveals three parallel groups of sentences each dealing with the flesh-spirit conflict, and the ultimate resolution of this conflict in the cross, v24).

Pericope 16: Exhortation continued (5:25 - 6:10)





Thematic Markers: Spirit, let us/should/must, conceit/pride,  
sin/tempt/deceive, carry, his own, reap, sow, do good



↑  
18  
└──  
B<sub>1</sub>



319

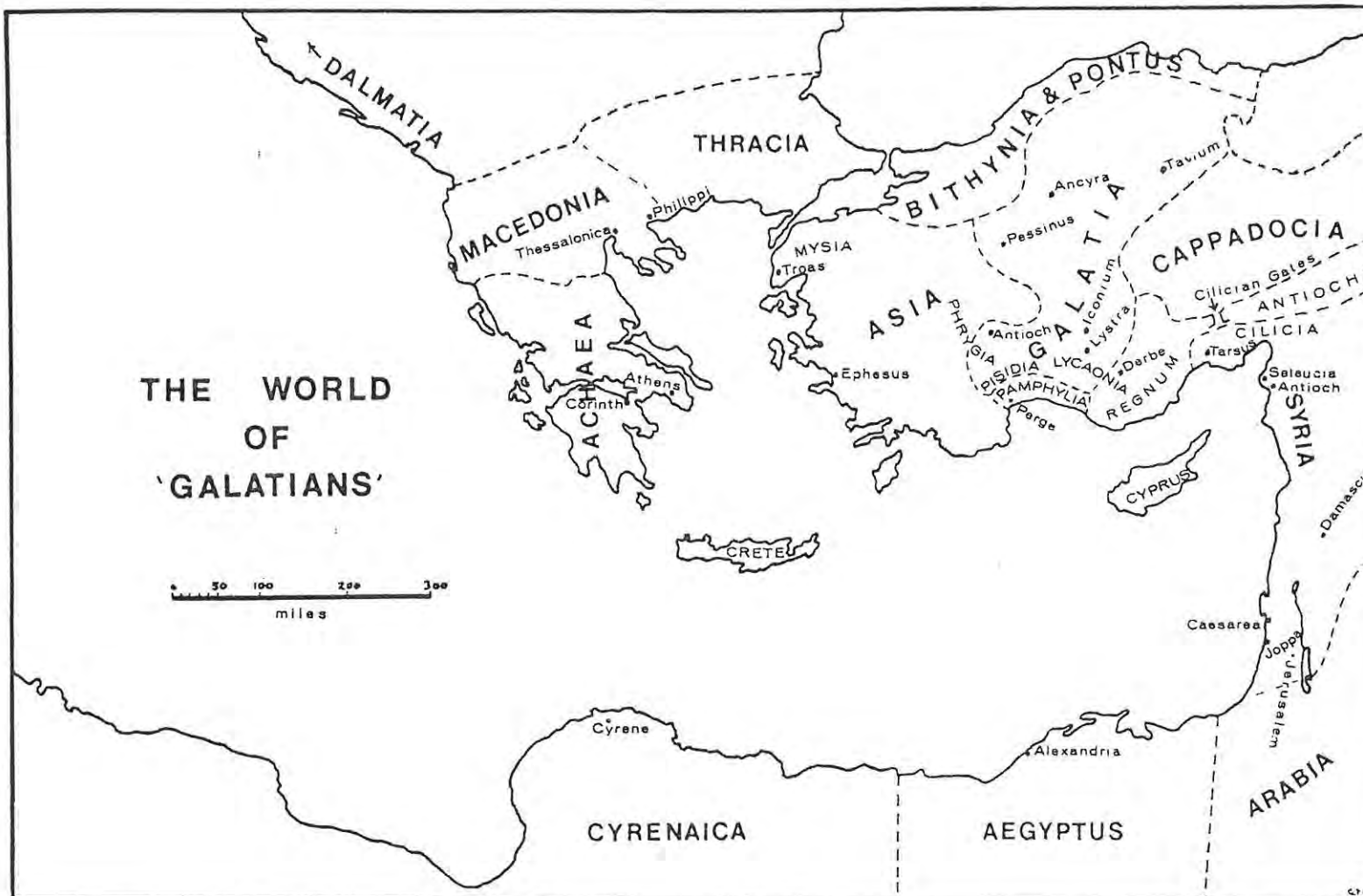
216

The grace of our Lord  
Jesus Christ be with your  
Spirit, brothers.

217

Amen.

Thematic Markers: I, those, circumcised,  
cross of Christ/marks of Jesus/new creation/  
this rule, boast, means anything/what counts



**MAP: THE WORLD OF 'GALATIANS'**  
 Reprinted from John Bligh, *Galatians* (London: St. Paul Publications, 1970), 2.

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