

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This thesis puts forward the case that in Paul's letter to the Galatians¹ his thought is dominated and controlled by the two concepts of grace and justification by faith. Each concept plays a different role. His thought has both a focus and a theological framework within which that focus is expressed. On the one hand, his theological framework is dominated by the key concept of grace. Three other concepts also emerge as significant components of his framework: the fulfillment of salvation history; eschatology; and "in Christ".² On the other hand, the concept of justification by faith is the central concept of Paul's message, and therefore the focus of his thought.

This thesis emerges out of recent debate which has questioned the Reformation understanding of the place of grace and justification by faith in Paul's thought and will at times also touch on the debate about whether or not Paul had a center to his thought. Carson refers to the 'slipperiness of much of the debate over the "centrality" of justification in Paul'.³ O'Brien says that some have used the terms 'centre' and 'central' to describe what they consider basic to Paul, though it is infrequently mentioned.⁴ However, as the methodology chapter of this introduction points out this is too intangible. This thesis shall use the term 'coherent centre' to refer to one concept which coherently holds all others together.⁵ The term 'dominant' shall be used to refer to concepts which stand out among others. The term 'central' shall be used of concepts which are dominant and indispensable to Paul's thought.

A brief history of the significant literature within the debate follows. Salvation by 'grace alone' through 'faith alone' in 'Christ alone' were basic tenets on which the Reformation was set in motion⁶. The main leaders of the Reformation, Luther and Calvin, saw justification by faith as the central pillar of Paul's thought. Luther in his

¹ The term 'Galatians' will be used to mean the believers in the churches in Galatia. For example, 'Paul's letter to the Galatians' means his letter to the church, not to all people living in Galatia.

² Scholars vary on the terms 'history of redemption' and 'history of salvation'. Unless directly quoting a scholar, this thesis shall use the term 'history of salvation' in order to avoid what this thesis considers an undue emphasis on redemption as a key term in Paul's thought.

³ D A Carson, 'Introduction', in *Right with God: Justification in the Bible and the World*, Ed. D A Carson, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1992, p.14.

⁴ P T O'Brien, 'Justification in Paul and some crucial issues of the last two decades', in *Right with God: Justification in the Bible and the World*, Ed. D A Carson, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1992b, p.80)

⁵ Hendrikus Boers, *The Justification of the Gentiles: Paul's Letters to the Galatians and Romans*, Hendrickson, Peabody (Mass.), 1994, p.32.

⁶ *Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Solo Christus*

lectures on Galatians said justification by faith is “the principal doctrine of Christianity”.⁷

Luther’s teaching on Paul’s writings strongly emphasizes a contrast between works and grace as a means of salvation. He teaches that salvation is by grace alone and states that justification by faith is the defining element of the grace of God. Justification by faith is an entry point doctrine for Luther.⁸ He sees it as “the principle doctrine of Christianity” because of the believer’s need for imputed righteousness on account of “sin still clinging to our flesh during this life”; and faith in Christ as “the means and the merit by which we obtain the forgiveness of sins and righteousness.”⁹ Though he understands it as an entry point doctrine he sees it as having great application to the Christian

⁷ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians 1535 Ch 1-4* (Vol. 26 Luther’s Works), Trans. Jaroslav Pelican, Concordia, Saint Louis, 1963, p.106.

⁸ Luther (*Galatians*, p.127) says, “a man is not justified by the deeds of the law, whether they are those that precede or those that follow justification.”

⁹ Luther, *Galatians*, p.132-33. ‘Justify’ and ‘righteousness’ are related terms from the one word group. BAGD (p.249) defines δικαιόω (justify) as “to take up a legal cause; to render a favorable verdict; to cause someone to be released from personal or institutional claims that are no longer to be considered pertinent or valid; to demonstrate to be morally right.”. BAGD (pp. 247-249) defines δικαιοσύνη (righteousness) as “the quality, state, or practice of judicial responsibility; quality or state of judicial correctness; the quality or state of upright behaviour.” While shades of nuance exist, the two words are generally synonymous as noun-verb equivalents (JA Ziesler, “The meaning of Righteousness in Paul”, Cambridge Uni Press, London, 1972, p.147; Stephen Motyer, “Righteousness by faith in the New Testament”, in *Here We Stand: Justification by Faith Today*, Ed. David Field, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1986, p. 55). Justification is primarily a legal term (Schrenk, Gottlob, ‘δίκη κτλ’ in *TDNT*. Vol. II, Eds Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964, pp. 202 & 215). In the context of Paul’s writings it refers to one’s status in reference to the judgment of God. However, while the concept was drawn from the law courts, in Jewish thought it was a relational concept; to have met the claims others had on the individual by virtue of their relationship (JDG Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, A & C Black, London, 1993 p.134; Edmund P Clowney, ‘The biblical doctrine’, in *Right with God: Justification in the Bible and the World*, Ed. D A Carson, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1992, p.22) (for example, many of the speeches of Lysias show that justice in Athens always had more to do with doing the right thing for the city and its citizens than it had to do with impersonal legal principles). Paul usually used δικαιόω both forensically and relationally (Brad Eastman, *The Significance of Grace in the Letters of Paul*, Peter Lang, New York, 1999, p.75). Righteousness as a ‘legal fiction’ fails to take into account the relational aspect of righteousness and justification (PT O’Brien, ‘Justification in Paul’, p.78). The terms refer both to entering into, and being in, a right relationship with God. Not only does the righteousness word group contain both forensic and relational aspects of meaning, it may also have a behavioural sense in its meaning (FF Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Paternoster, Exeter, 1982, p.138). Righteousness is acting appropriately within the relationship (Clowney, ‘The biblical doctrine’, p.21). This thesis will, therefore, when speaking about the ‘entry point’ aspect of justification, refer to ‘forensic’ or ‘relational’ righteousness (or justification), and when speaking of the behavioural aspect of righteousness refer to ‘lifestyle’ or ‘behavioural’ righteousness.

lifestyle.¹⁰ Living by faith by looking to Christ is a constant refrain in Luther's writings.¹¹

Calvin agrees with Luther on the centrality of justification. He says, "this is the main hinge on which religion turns."¹² He sees it as primarily an entry point doctrine, though he also stresses its significance as a foundation for a "pious" life before God.¹³ For Calvin all righteousness is a gift of God and received by faith alone.¹⁴ This is what makes justification by faith "the hinge on which religion turns." The views of Luther and Calvin remained the dominant view of Protestant scholarship, until the early 1900's.¹⁵

Early in the twentieth century two works were published which played a prominent part in challenging the Reformation view of the centrality of justification within Paul's thought. In 1908 William Wrede published *Paul*, in which he claims that scholars have read justification by faith as the centre of Paul's thought because they have reflected the personal struggles of Martin Luther into Paul's writings.¹⁶ He says the main concept for Paul was Christ's redemption of us from the spiritual powers which held us captive.¹⁷ Justification by faith was a 'polemical doctrine' (*Kampfeslehre*) specifically for arguing against the Jews and the law in order to maintain the freedom Christ's redemption had

¹⁰ The term 'entry point' doctrine is a term regularly used by NT Wright to speak about the entry point into God's people as opposed to the life of faith lived within the community of God's people. This thesis, while not sharing Wright's conclusions about justification by faith, has adopted the term to make the same distinction.

¹¹ Luther (*Galatians*, p.134) said that when burdened by guilt or tempted by sin the believer was to "look to Christ, and when he has taken hold of Him by faith, he has present with him the Victor over Law, sin, death, and the devil."

¹² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2 Volumes, Ed. by John T McNeill, Trans. by Ford Lewis Battles, Westminster, Philadelphia, 1960, p.726 (3.11.1). He expanded on that by saying, "For unless you first of all grasp what your relationship to God is, and the nature of his judgment concerning you, you have neither a foundation on which to establish your salvation nor one on which to build piety toward God."

¹³ See Calvin's later chapter (*Institutes*, p.768f., 3.14) where he says, "The beginning of Justification and its continual process."

¹⁴ However, when speaking of the lifestyle of faith in his later chapter entitled "The beginning of Justification and its continual process," he continued to stress that "in no respect can our works serve as the cause of our holiness" (*Institutes*, p.783f., 3.14.17), and that "works are God's gifts and cannot become the foundation of self confidence for believers" (*Institutes*, p.786f., 3.14.20).

¹⁵ For details of scholars in this intervening period who challenged this and other views on Paul, but failed to influence the majority opinion, see Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His interpreters: A Critical History*, Eerdmans, New York, 1951 (Ger. Ed. *Geschichte der Paulinische Forschung*, 1912).

¹⁶ W. Wrede, *Paul*, American Unitarian Association, Boston, 1908. (Ger. Ed., *Paulus*, 1908), p.146.

¹⁷ Wrede saw redemption as the essential Pauline doctrine. Regarding Justification by faith, he (*Paul*, p.123.) contended that "the whole Pauline doctrine can be expounded without a word being said about this doctrine."

brought.¹⁸ Wrede was the first scholar to gain acceptance for questioning Luther's thesis that justification by faith was the centre of Paul's thought.¹⁹

In 1912 Albert Schweitzer published *Paul and His Interpreters* and in 1931 *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*. He follows Wrede in claiming that redemption was the essential doctrine in Paul's theology, but goes on to say that it had three aspects: eschatological; mystical; juridical.²⁰ Mystical redemption was the main one in which the centre of Paul's thought was contained.²¹ It was the result of dying and rising with Christ.²² Regarding the juridical Schweitzer contends that "the doctrine of righteousness by faith is therefore a subsidiary crater, which has formed within the main crater – the mystical doctrine of redemption through the being-in-Christ".²³

From that time on, the thought that our understanding of Paul might have been distorted by Luther has grown in acceptance. Despite this, for most of the rest of the century this debate made little progress beyond Wrede and Schweitzer.²⁴

In 1948 Davies published *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*. Davies also relegates justification by faith "to the periphery ... of Paul's thought" but for reasons of his own.²⁵ For Davies, the real centre of Paul's thought "is to be found not in Paul's attack

¹⁸ Wrede (*Paul*, p.14) says, "it is the polemical doctrine of Paul, only made intelligible by the struggle of his life, his controversy with Judaism and Jewish Christianity, and is only intended for this." See also pp.125-126.

¹⁹ Fung ('The status of justification by faith in Paul's thought: a brief survey of a modern debate', *Themelios* 6, 1981, p. 4-5) lists a series of scholars on whose previous work Wrede was building: Lisius, Lüdemann, von Weizsäcker, and Kabisch.

²⁰ Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of the Apostle Paul*, A & C Black, London, 1931, p.25.

²¹ Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, p. 74.

²² He sees it as an internal reality. The eschatological redemption was an external interpretation of the death and resurrection of Christ. This was the basis of the internal mystical redemption.

²³ Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, p. 225. Schweitzer (*Mysticism*, p.220) bases his conclusions on a "series of facts". Firstly, in Galatians justification by faith is not independent from the eschatological doctrine of the in-Christ mysticism. Secondly, in Galatians and Romans it only appears connected to Paul's scriptural argument. Paul "wants this subsidiary doctrine [to] enable him, on the basis of the traditional conception of the atoning death of Christ, to conduct his controversy with the law by means of the argument from scripture" (*Mysticism*, p.221). Thirdly, Paul does not connect justification by faith to other aspects of redemption. The doctrine of redemption cannot be developed from the juridical doctrine of righteousness by faith; only from the mystical 'in Christ' doctrine. For Schweitzer the juridical redemption was the fruit of righteousness by faith and "is only a fragment from the more comprehensive mystical redemption-doctrine, which Paul has broken off and polished to give him the particular refraction which he requires" (*Mysticism*, p. 220).

²⁴ For a good summary of the progress of the debate see Stephen Westerholm, *Israel's law and the Church's faith*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1988.

²⁵ WD Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, Torchbooks, New York, 1948, p.222.

on the old Torah but in his awareness that with the coming of Christ the Age to come had become present fact, the proof of which was the advent of the Spirit".²⁶

Bring's commentary on Galatians, published in 1961, presents Galatians as a letter which "pits freedom against bondage."²⁷ According to Bring the bondage which Paul was concerned about was bondage under law, sin and death. Christ has fulfilled the *Torah* and has given the *Torah* a totally new interpretation. The fulfillment of righteousness by Christ frees the believer from the need to work to attain that righteousness. The one without faith in Christ might reject the bondage to the *Torah* but would still remain in bondage to the flesh. The one who seeks release from the bondage to the flesh through obedience to the *Torah* ends up doubly in bondage. Now faith in Christ means "freedom from the necessity of seeking righteousness by the law."²⁸

The debate on the place of justification in Paul's thought re-erupted in the 1960's with a protracted debate between Käsemann and Stendahl.

Käsemann aligns his understanding of Paul's theology with the Reformers' understanding and maintains that any other perspective does not grasp the heart of Paul's theology.²⁹ He majors on the cross as the central focus of Paul's theology and states that the theology of the cross loses its meaning when it is made one theme among many themes.³⁰ Taking Paul's letter to the Romans as indicative of Paul's

²⁶ Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, p.223. His pathway to arrive at this conclusion involves the following arguments to dismiss justification by faith from its position as central to Paul's thought. Firstly, he argues that "in some contexts justification is merely one metaphor among others used by Paul to describe his deliverance through Christ, and we are not justified in petrifying a metaphor into a dogma" (p. 221). Secondly, he states "in those contexts where the idea of Justification by Faith (*sic*) is central, we find that this is so only because of certain polemical necessities" (p.222). Thirdly, he reasons that considering that Paul practiced the *Torah* and urged other Christians to do likewise, his attitude to the *Torah* is "only understandable when the doctrine of Justification by Faith (*sic*) is regarded not as the essential pivot of his thought but as a convenient polemic." Finally, he says that "a doctrine such as Justification by Faith (*sic*), which has always been hedged about so as not to lead to antinomianism, a plague that Paul dreaded, and which leads, as Schweitzer has rightly insisted, to an ethical cul-de-sac, cannot have been the dominant factor in the thought of one who could never have separated religion and life" (p. 222).

²⁷ R Bring, *Commentary on Galatians*, Muhlenburg, Philadelphia, 1961, p.9.

²⁸ Bring, *Galatians*, p.10.

²⁹ Käsemann ('The saving significance of the death of Jesus in Paul', in *Perspectives on Paul*, SCM, London, 1971, p.32) says, "Paul has to be understood in the light of the Reformation's insight. Any other perspective at most covers part of his thinking; it does not grasp the heart of it." By "the Reformation's insight" Käsemann meant the central place which the reformers gave to the doctrines of the cross, the righteousness of God and justification by faith. (I suspect that when Dunn coined the phrase 'the new perspective' to describe the recent theories, which are largely dependent on the work of Stendahl, he was polemically referring to this famous quote from Käsemann.)

³⁰ Käsemann, 'The saving significance', p.57.

thought, he says that Romans “subsumes the whole of the preaching and theology of Paul under the one head – the self-revealing righteousness of God.”³¹ Käsemann sees the cross as the centre of Paul’s theology³² and understands justification by faith as the anthropological application of the cross that gives it its true saving significance.³³ He sees the doctrine of justification as a theme that controls Paul’s entire theology.³⁴ To him Paul took the existing traditions about Jesus’ cross and appropriated them to make justification by faith based on the cross his interpretation of Jesus’ death.³⁵ In line with Luther and Calvin, Käsemann sees the righteousness which God grants to those who trust in Jesus, as a “gift.”³⁶ He makes a strong connection between grace and justification by faith,³⁷ arguing that justification by faith is the manifestation of grace in that it proclaims the nearness and presence of grace.³⁸

³¹ There is considerable debate about the meaning of the term ‘the righteousness of God.’ For example, note the disagreement between Käsemann and Bultmann. Käsemann takes it as “Gottes Heilshandeln” or “Gottes heilsetzende Macht” (‘Gottesgerechtigkeit bei Paulus’, ZTK 58, 1961, pp.370 & 378). Bultmann takes it as “die (dem Glaubenden) geschenkte Gerechtigkeit” (Rudolf Bultmann, ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΨΝΗ ΘΕΟΥ, JBL 83, 1964a, p.12). This thesis sees the need to distinguish between ‘righteousness’ and ‘the righteousness of God.’ It understands the righteousness of God to refer to God’s faithfulness to his covenant promises to Abraham (SK Williams, ‘The righteousness of God in Romans’, JBL 99, 1980, pp.265). This covenantal faithfulness is expressed in God’s saving activity. The righteousness of God in the Old Testament is a saving righteousness, not a condemning righteousness. In the Old Testament the Psalmist regularly appeals to the righteousness of God; i.e. an appeal to him to be true to his covenant promises (Motyer, ‘Righteousness by faith’, pp.46-48). Bornkamm (‘The revelation of Christ to Paul on the Damascus road and Paul’s doctrine of justification and reconciliation: A study in Galatians 1’, in *Reconciliation and Hope* (FS Leon Morris), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1975, pp.101-2) says that the righteousness of God firstly means the covenant faithfulness of God expressed in the atoning sacrifice to bring forgiveness for Israel’s covenant violations. Secondly, it means this righteousness is applied to all who accept it through faith in Jesus Christ. So God is seen to be righteous in his justifying act (Rom 3:26). Käsemann (‘The righteousness of God’, in Paul, in *New Testament Questions of Today*, SCM, London, 1965. p.168) says that this gives “the unique Pauline message a nucleus and a name” which enables it to be seen clearly against the background of the rest of the New Testament. He (‘The righteousness of God’, p.168) ventures as far as to say, “the central problem of Pauline theology is concentrated in this theme.” He believes that Paul describes God’s saving activity in the cross as righteousness. The Old Testament focus of righteousness is not on an ethical quality but is on relationship to the community (‘The righteousness of God’, p.171; he believes Schweitzer’s distinctions between ethical and juridical righteousness do not exist). God’s righteousness is more than simply “a property of the divine nature”. It is his “faithfulness in the context of the community” (‘The righteousness of God’, p.174). Paul uses the term δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ to refer to God’s covenant faithfulness (‘The righteousness of God’, p.177). God’s righteousness cannot for Paul be primarily God’s covenant faithfulness to Israel, but to the new creation (‘The righteousness of God’, p.178).

³² Käsemann (‘The saving significance’, p.59) said, “*Crux sola nostra theologia.*”

³³ Charles B Cousar, *A Theology of the Cross*, Fortress, Minneapolis, 1990, p.12.

³⁴ Ernst Käsemann, ‘The Spirit and the letter’, in *Perspectives on Paul*, SCM, London, 1971, p.164.

³⁵ Käsemann, ‘The saving significance’, p. 42. He (‘The saving significance’, p.46) states, “the justification of the ungodly is for Paul the fruit of Jesus death and nothing else ... [A] theology of the cross ... cannot be separated from the message of justification.”

³⁶ This gift is “the power which brings salvation” (Käsemann, ‘The righteousness of God’, p.168 fn.).

³⁷ Käsemann, ‘The righteousness of God’, p.170 (2 Cor 9:9ff, Phil 1:11). Käsemann (‘The saving significance’, p.40) says, “It follows that the faith which receives salvation is simply an ever-new acceptance of the divine gift.”

³⁸ Käsemann, ‘The righteousness of God’, p.177.

Eschatology also plays a significant part in Käsemann's understanding of the thought of Paul. He sees in Paul a type of 'double eschatology' in which the righteousness of God has a dual aspect. Salvation and its fruit is sometimes presented as a present possession and sometimes as a possession to be realized at the end.³⁹ He sees the doctrines of the righteousness of God and justification by faith which hold together the present and future eschatology as answering the quest for the unitary centre of Paul's thought.⁴⁰ Justification by faith is the doctrine that minimizes the eschatological problems that Paul faced. It is Paul's apocalyptic doctrine that spans the two ages.⁴¹

The writings of Stendahl form a central part of the bridge between Wrede and Schweitzer and the 'New Perspective' writers. Stendahl's famous article has placed a shadow of doubt over the traditional Lutheran interpretation of justification by faith.⁴² He claims that justification was not the key to Paul's theology, but was only used by Paul to argue for the inclusion of the Gentiles in the church.⁴³ Stendahl maintains that Paul's argument about justification was not primarily polemic, attacking Judaism and the law, but it was apologetic, defending the inclusion of the Gentiles in the church community.⁴⁴ He does not see the situation in the churches of Galatia as an issue of salvation but as an issue of the application of the *Torah*.⁴⁵ He sees Paul using justification sociologically rather than theologically,⁴⁶ arguing that for Paul justification addressed the sociological issue of the inclusion of the Gentiles into the "messianic

³⁹ Käsemann, 'The righteousness of God', p.170.

⁴⁰ Käsemann, 'The righteousness of God', p.171.

⁴¹ Käsemann sees justification by faith as the centre of scripture (*als Mitte der Schrift*); the single formula that maintains both the historical-apocalyptic and existential-eschatological dimensions of history (Hendrikus Boers, 'The foundations of Paul's thought: A methodological investigation – The problem of the coherent centre of Paul's thought', *ST* 42, 1988, p57). Using his *Sachkritik* (content criticism), Käsemann concludes that the doctrine of the justification of the ungodly must be the "deciding criterion" (O'Brien, 'Justification in Paul', p.81).

⁴² Krister Stendahl, 'The apostle Paul and the introspective conscience of the west', *HTR* 56, 1963, pp. 199-215). Stendahl did not question the place of justification by faith. He only questioned the validity of interpretations in which justification was seen as the answer to introspective guilt. (For example, Allen (*Galatians*, SCM, London, 1951) says, "Thus we must regard his [Paul's] conversion as a deliverance from distress of conscience under the terrible threats of the law.") This has removed justification by faith from the 'sacred cow' status it held and in turn encouraged other scholars to question the place of justification by faith in Paul's thought.

⁴³ Krister Stendahl, 'Sources and critiques', in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and other Essays*, Fortress, Philadelphia, 1976, pp.131.

⁴⁴ Krister Stendahl, 'Sources and critiques', p.130. He goes as far as to say that there is "no basis for believing Paul had any personal difficulties in obeying the law." Previously he (p.127) had stated that 'Paul's argument about justification by faith neither grows out of his "dissatisfaction" with Judaism, nor is it intended as a frontal attack on Judaism.'

⁴⁵ He ('The introspective conscience', p. 206) says, "it is clear that Paul's problem is how to explain why there is no reason to impose the Law on the Gentiles."

⁴⁶ Krister Stendahl, 'The introspective conscience', p. 206.

community".⁴⁷ Stendahl does not see justification as holding the central place in Paul's thought that the Reformation Scholars gave it. He disagrees that it is central to the gospel,⁴⁸ confining it to Paul's thinking on God's plan to include the Gentiles in the church.⁴⁹

Debate on the issue then largely subsided again. However, debate continued to simmer on the related issue of whether or not there was a centre to Paul's thought.⁵⁰

In the 1970's Betz wrote various works on Galatians in which he, like Davies before him, contends for the Spirit being at the centre of Paul's thought. He argues that Paul's letter to the Galatians is a defence of the Spirit, which was given apart from the law.⁵¹ His groundbreaking rhetorical analysis of Galatians as an apologetic letter has been a basis for all serious academic work that has followed.⁵² Betz' argument is built on a dual foundation. The first foundation stone is that that receiving of the Spirit was the key experience of the Christian faith for the Galatians.⁵³ The second is his understanding that the Galatians problem was an ethical problem with the flesh ($\sigma\alpha\rho\xi$); in particular, "How can the "pneumatic ($\delta\pi\nu\mu\alpha\tau\iota\kappa\o$) live with "trespasses" in his daily life?"⁵⁴ Betz claims that both Paul's key methods of argument, firstly from

⁴⁷ Robert Smith, 'Justification in "the new perspective" on Paul', *RTR* 58, 1999, p.24. Stendahl ('The introspective conscience', p.206) says, "Where Paul was concerned about the possibility for Gentiles to be included in the messianic community, his statements are now read as answers to the quest for assurance about man's salvation out of a common human predicament."

⁴⁸ Stendahl ('Sources and critiques', p.130) says, 'I am not sure that "the gospel" can be so easily summarized under the rubric of "the justification of the ungodly" (Rom. 4:5; cf 5:6; Käsemann, p.75, 78, *et passim*).' On p. 131 he says, "Paul's idea of justification does not permeate his writings – and hence is ill suited to be the key to his theology." BAGB (p.402) defines 'gospel' ($\epsilon\nu\alpha\gamma\acute{e}\lambda\iota\o$) as 'good news'. Paul's gospel proclamation has specific content. Its content includes the details of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:2-6 Galatians 3:1). It also contains the message that Christ did these things "for us" (Gal.1:3) (Friedrich, ' $\epsilon\nu\alpha\gamma\acute{e}\lambda\iota\o$ ', TDNT, Vol.II. Eds Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964,).

⁴⁹ Stendahl ('Sources and critiques', p.131) says, "in Paul the very argument about justification by faith functions within his reflection on God's plan for the world."

⁵⁰ For example, CJA Hickling, 'Centre and periphery in the thought of Paul', *SB* 1978 III, p.199-214.

⁵¹ Betz, 'The literary composition and function of Paul's letter to the Galatians', *NTS* 21, 1975, p.378) says, "In effect, his defence amounts to a defence of the $\pi\nu\hat{\nu}\mu\alpha$ which was given to the gentile Galatians outside of the Torah." His case for the defense of the Spirit as the key to Paul's letter to the Galatians is based on the following arguments. He ('Spirit, freedom and law', *SEÅ* 39, 1974, p.147) singles out Galatians 3:26-28 as "most important," because it is located at the centre of the letter. Then after four pages of analysis of these verses, he concludes that they are about the experience of the Spirit. He (Betz, *Galatians*, Fortress, Philadelphia, 1979, p. 29) also puts forward the case that arguing from the Spirit is advantageous for Paul because it is the key experience of the Galatians; it avoids having to set himself up as the authority; and he can appeal to the "reason of the Spirit" as well as to common sense logic.

⁵² A detailed outline of that rhetorical analysis appears on pages 22-24.

⁵³ Betz ('Spirit, freedom and law', *SEÅ* 39, 1974, p.146) says, 'This reception of the "Spirit" is the primary datum of the Christian churches in Galatia.'

⁵⁴ Betz, *Galatians*, p. 8. For a slightly different wording on this see Betz, 'Spirit, freedom and law', p.154.

experience and secondly from scripture, are arguments defending the Spirit.⁵⁵ Finally, in discussing freedom, Betz says “It is Paul’s overall judgment that the only way to protect freedom and salvation is to rely on the “Spirit.”⁵⁶

Stuhlmacher suggests that the concept of reconciliation was the heartbeat of the local church and of Paul’s thought.⁵⁷ One of the primary concerns of his theory is not to detach the Old Testament and the New Testament from each other.⁵⁸ The cross is to be understood as the “sum” of Christ’s messianic work.⁵⁹ Jesus’ death and vicarious sufferings gained “access to God” for a people separated from God by sin.⁶⁰ He sees reconciliation as the overarching theme of Paul and the righteousness of God under that.⁶¹

While Stuhlmacher never uses the phrase ‘polemical doctrine’, he does contend that once the issues of Galatians and Romans had been settled the concept of justification faded into the background as only one expression of the over arching theme of reconciliation.⁶² For Stuhlmacher, expiation that leads to reconciliation is the answer to the Old Testament problem of sin, and reconciliation through Jesus Christ is the answer to “the Old Testament question about messianic realisation of the Kingdom of God as the community of God”.⁶³

⁵⁵ Betz, *Galatians*, p.30f. In a discussion of the knowledge of God in Galatians 4:8 which Betz (“Spirit, freedom and law”, p. 151) describes as Paul’s entire soteriology in a nutshell, he concludes that the sending of the Spirit is the final separate act of God.

⁵⁶ Betz, ‘Spirit, freedom and law’, p.158.

⁵⁷ Peter Stuhlmacher, ‘The gospel of reconciliation in Christ – basic features and issues of a biblical theology of the new testament’, *HBT* 1, 1979, pp.161-190.

⁵⁸ Stuhlmacher, ‘The gospel of reconciliation’, p.165.

⁵⁹ Stuhlmacher, ‘The gospel of reconciliation’, p.166.

⁶⁰ Stuhlmacher, ‘The gospel of reconciliation’, p.168.

⁶¹ He (‘The gospel of reconciliation’, p.169) states that the concept of justification by faith probably came from the circle of Stephen and the Antioch gospel. He (‘The gospel of reconciliation’, p.170) ties justification to “the sacrifice and expiation doctrine of primitive Christianity” and explains that it “springs” from Christ’s suffering death. Therefore, according to Stuhlmacher, the atonement tradition is the ground of Paul’s doctrine of justification.

⁶² He (‘The gospel of reconciliation’, p.170-171) claims that the “pinnacle phrase of the Pauline gospel of justification had been surrendered” by the time of the letters of Colossians and Ephesians, but that the gospel of reconciliation had not. Justification was just one expression used along the way to “the completed form of [the church’s] language”(‘The gospel of reconciliation’, p.183).

⁶³ He (‘The gospel of reconciliation’, p.181) promotes reconciliation as “the message of the unifying theme of the original early church material.” because he sees it as the key to understanding the messianic new creation. He (‘The gospel of reconciliation’, p.180) states, “The gospel of reconciliation ... is the heartbeat of the New Testament.”

In recent times the advocates of ‘the new perspective on Paul’, building on the shoulders of other scholars, have again brought under the spotlight the claim that justification by faith does not hold the place in Paul’s thinking that has been traditionally attributed to it.⁶⁴

Sanders’ contribution to the debate was to bring to the centre of the discussion the concept that modern Christians have a distorted view of Judaism which has led to distorted views of Paul.⁶⁵ The aspect of his theory which impacts on an investigation of the part of justification in the writings of Paul is his contention that Paul was “not primarily concerned with the juristic categories”.⁶⁶ For Sanders the centre of Paul’s thought was not justification.⁶⁷

Sanders takes up Schweitzer’s view that “being in Christ” is the centre of Paul’s thought. However, he has trouble with Schweitzer’s term ‘mystical union’ and prefers to speak of our ‘participation’ in or with Christ. He claims, “That Paul, in thinking of the significance of Christ’s death, was thinking more in terms of a *change in lordship* which guarantees future salvation than in terms of the expiation of past transgression”.⁶⁸ He sees the ‘death with Christ’ passages as the key to understanding Paul.

Dunn develops the ‘new perspective’ further by taking the foundation Sanders laid and drawing its implications for Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith.⁶⁹ For Dunn

⁶⁴ Three works have been taken as indicative of the ‘new perspective’. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, Fortress, Philadelphia, 1977, p.502-508; James Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, SPCK, London, 1990; Tom Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, Lion, Oxford, 1997, p. 59.

⁶⁵ Stephen Westerholm, *Israel’s Law*, p.4.

⁶⁶ EP Sanders, *Paul and Palistinian Judaism*, p.502. He (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, p.503) points out that Paul’s writings contain a “lack of terminology for guilt,” and that Paul “did not characteristically think in terms of sin as transgression which incurs guilt.”

⁶⁷ He (*Paul and Palistinian Judaism*, pp.438-440) reasons that “the heart of Paul’s theology cannot be centred on the individual,” but ‘the particular formulation “righteousness by faith” does primarily concern the individual’. Therefore he concludes that ‘the catch-word “righteousness by faith” must be given up as the clue to Paul’s thought.’

⁶⁸ EP Sanders, *Paul and Palistinian Judaism*, p.466.

⁶⁹ Dunn thinks Sanders did a great job of analyzing first century Judaism and showing it is not what the Lutheran view has always said it was. However, he (*Jesus, Paul and the Law*, p.187) claims Sanders has then stopped short of properly developing the implications of this for Pauline doctrines such as righteousness. Dunn criticizes Sanders because, after doing all his work on ‘covenantal nomism,’ Sanders still maintains a Paul that has “a sharp antithesis between faith in Christ and his Jewish heritage”. Dunn’s own views are concisely set out in his own treatment of Galatians 2:16 in his famous article ‘The New Perspective on Paul’ (*Paul and the Law*, p.188-200). He points out that in Galatians 2:16a justification is a concept that Paul assumes Jewish Christians accepted. Dunn then draws the conclusion that justification by faith is therefore a doctrine which Jews and Christians shared. From there he (*Paul and the Law*, p.190) explains justification in terms of God’s “verdict in favour of Israel on grounds of his covenant with Israel”.

justification by faith is not the initiatory act of making the covenant or of first accepting someone into it.⁷⁰ It is God's "acknowledgement that someone is in the covenant—whether this is an initial acknowledgement, or a repeated action of God's (God's saving acts), or his final vindication of his people."⁷¹ Dunn states that, therefore justification in Paul cannot be treated as an initiatory act.

The particularly unique aspects of Dunn's thesis is that he explains that he believes these "works of the law"⁷² that Paul was attacking in Galatians 2:16 are "particular observances of the law like circumcision and the food laws."⁷³ He claims the purpose of these laws was to serve as "badges of covenant membership."⁷⁴ This becomes a key term in Dunn's argument which he repeats regularly. He then develops that further making the point that the Jews never understood these works of the law as earning salvation.⁷⁵ The implication he draws from this is that "works of the law" do not mean good works in general such as those attacked by Luther and his followers.⁷⁶ The

⁷⁰ Dunn argues against the traditional understanding that the Judaizers were promoting a 'salvation by works' theology. He understands the term 'works of law' to be used with a polemical sectarian meaning to describe distinctive Jewish practices or 'boundary markers,' such as circumcision and food laws, as test cases of Jewish distinctiveness." Dunn's commentary (*Galatians*, pp.135-137) expands his definition of 'works of the law' to mean 'the obligations laid upon Israelites by virtue of their membership of Israel' and is far less polemical against the traditional Reformation understanding. However, the same underlying ideas and arguments remain.

⁷¹ Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, p.190.

⁷² For views which are variation of the Reformation understanding of this term see Ernst De Witt Burton, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1921, p.120; Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, Fortress, Philadelphia, 1986, pp.162-167; Lohmeyer quoted in Joseph B Tyson, "Works of law" in *Galatians*, *JBL* 92, 1973, p.424; Luther, *Galatians*, p.122; Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1988, p.114; Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 1*, SCM, London, 1952, p.283. For another view see Gaston, 'Works of law as a subjective genitive', *SR* 13, 1984, p.45. Schreiner ("Works of Law" in Paul', *NovT* 33, 1991, p.231) and Dunn (James D G, *Romans 2 vol*, Word, Dallas, p.154) thoroughly refute Gaston's view.

⁷³ Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, p.191. The immediate context of this incident at Antioch and the general context of the problem in the churches of Galatia are very Jewish situations where the matter at hand is not just works of merit (Tyson, 'Works of law', p.431). This does not mean that these verses do not have a theological or philosophical applicability to works of merit in general. But the original meaning and the application of that meaning to life and faith here and now are different issues. Bultmann and Küng (*Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection*, Burns & Oats, London, 1964 (Ger. Ed. 1957), p.300) are talking about the general application of the passage as opposed to its original meaning.

⁷⁴ Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, p. 191-192. Allan (*The Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians*, SCM, London, 1951, p.11) before him had used the term "badges of the Jewish nations separate existence". Schreiner ('Works of Law', p. 225-231) lists in his footnote a long list of scholars who find fault with Dunn's view.

⁷⁵ Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, p.194.

⁷⁶ Dunn also makes the point that these Jews understood and agreed that justification is by faith. For Dunn, (*Jesus, Paul and the Law*, p.195) what distinguishes Paul, Peter and the other Jewish Christians from the non-Christian Jews is the belief that Jesus is the messiah. He does not question that Paul has indeed created an antithesis between works of the law and faith. However, they are not different means of entry to the covenant, but different covenant identity markers (*Jesus, Paul and the Law*, p.196). With the coming of Christ the purpose of the Covenant and the *Torah* had been fulfilled. Therefore, to

conclusion of Dunn's thesis is that Paul never speaks against the *Torah* or *Torah* observance in general but only against works of *Torah*,⁷⁷ while works of the law are to be understood as the act of maintaining distinctively Jewish covenant identity markers. The wrong that Paul (as Dunn presents him) is countering is not the act of trying to achieve salvation by their own efforts, but the insistence on the compulsory use of particular badges of membership, which exclude Gentiles. Following Stendahl, Dunn's thesis moves justification by faith from the domain of soteriology to that of ecclesiology or sociology.⁷⁸ This sidelines the doctrine by making it far less significant to the believer and to the thought of Paul than it has been understood to be.

Wright's significant contribution to the debate on Paul has been to highlight the covenantal aspect of Paul's thinking. He points out that the starting point in justification by faith is the covenant law, not an abstract principle of moral law. When grounding his theory in the belief system of the first century Jews, Wright says "Jews like Saul of Tarsus were not interested in an abstract, timeless, ahistorical system of salvation ... They were interested in the salvation which they believed the one true God had promised to Israel."⁷⁹

The next step in logic for Wright is to give faith a place in Paul's thought that is quite different to the role it is normally understood to play.⁸⁰ He says, "Faith is the badge of

continue to insist on the Old Testament laws was to ignore that the fulfillment of the *Torah* had come (*Jesus, Paul and the Law*, p.198).

⁷⁷Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, p.200.

⁷⁸Dunn reveals Stendahl's contribution to his thought by favourably mentioning Stendahl's article 'The introspective conscience.' However, Dunn's dependence on Stendahl is greater than his referencing indicates. What Dunn does is blend Sanders' work on the *Torah* with Stendahl's work on justification by faith and then add a few clarifications of his own regarding 'Works of the Law.'

⁷⁹Tom Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, p.33.

⁸⁰Wright is following McGrath (*Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, Cambridge University, Cambridge, 1986, p.115) in challenging the traditional Reformation understanding of justification by faith. The traditional understanding of justification by faith has been that justification by faith refers to being legally reckoned by God to be righteous (or if the relationship language is preferred, to be reckoned to be in a right relationship with God) because one has believed in Jesus Christ. Thus the legal verdict is delivered not on the basis of one's real guilt or innocence in regard to personally keeping or breaking the law of God; but on the basis of having trusted God's gospel promise that Christ's penal payment and righteous life will be vicariously reckoned to all who trust in Christ. This doctrine, when viewed through the examples of Abraham and Genesis 15:6, could be misconstrued to see faith as an act to be seen and rewarded by God. However, the passages surrounding such quotes in Paul set a context of grace (Gal. 3:6, Rom. 3:24; 4:3-5; 22-23) (WG Kümmel, *The Theology of the New Testament*, SCM, London, 1974 (Ger. Ed. 1972), p. 200). It is not the faith that justifies; rather it is the grace of God in Christ that justifies. Faith is how one receives the justification wrought by grace (Allan, *Galatians*, p.50). To put that another way, faith is not the grounds of justification. The grounds are the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Faith is the means or instrument of receiving that grace. Paul repeatedly points out that God's act of justification applies to all who believe.

covenant membership, not something one performs as a kind of initiation test".⁸¹ He then goes on to make a distinction which is central to his theory; "Justification is not how someone *becomes* a Christian. It is the declaration that they *have become* a Christian."⁸² The implication of this redefining of the meaning, and reassigning of the role of justification by faith, is that what Wright has presented us with is a Paul who has the covenant at the centre of his thought. Justification by faith is then relegated to the part (albeit an important part) of being an expression of the fulfilment of God's covenant purposes.⁸³ Like Dunn's theory, Wright's sidelines justification by faith by giving it a far less significant role than it has traditionally been understood to have.

The theories of the advocates of this 'New Perspective' have not gone unchallenged. Modern scholars, such as Bornkamm,⁸⁴ Hübner,⁸⁵ Westerholm⁸⁶ and Räisänen⁸⁷ still maintain that justification by faith is the centre of Paul's thought. Others like Boers⁸⁸ have not agreed with the 'New Perspective', but have questioned not only whether justification is the centre of Paul's thought generally, but even whether it is the centre in Romans and Galatians. Boers has used what he calls a 'text-linguistic, semiotic method' to reach the conclusion that the centre of Paul's letter to the Galatians is an anti-circumcision message which reaches its climax in Galatians 5:2.

The claims that traditional Reformed theology has misunderstood the place of justification by faith in the thought of Paul are claims which cannot be ignored. They must be investigated. Is justification by faith as central to Paul's thinking as has been traditionally believed? If justification is not the central thought in Paul's theology, then what part does it play? Do the alternative proposals provide any better understanding of Paul and the place of justification by faith in his teaching or are they themselves

⁸¹ Tom Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, p.125. Although this is stated in language which is an exaggerated caricature of the Reformation view, his meaning is clear.

⁸² Tom Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, p.125.

⁸³ He (*What Saint Paul Really Said*, p.129) says, "justification, as in [Romans] 3:24-26, means that those who believe in Jesus Christ are declared to be members of the true covenant family; which of course means that their sins are forgiven, since that was the purpose of the covenant."

⁸⁴ Günther Bornkamm, *Paul*, Trans. D M G Stalker, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1971 (Ger. Ed. 1969). Although Bornkamm wrote before 'the new perspective' gained popularity, he has been included in this list because his work still has relevance to the new perspective.

⁸⁵ Hans Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*, trans. James C G Greig, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1984 (Ger. Ed. 1978).

⁸⁶ Stephen Westerholm, *Israel's Law*.

⁸⁷ Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*.

⁸⁸ Boers, *The Justification of the Gentiles*, p.30.

distorted? (It is one thing to spot a fault in someone else's work, it is another to have the right answer yourself.)

The main focus of this thesis will be an exegetically based contribution toward a clarification of Paul's thought. While the topic of this thesis is theological, it will be approached from an exegetical angle. The aim in taking this approach is to avoid removing verses from their *Sitz im Leben* to which Paul was responding as he wrote. While Paul's thoughts were shaped by his understanding of the Christ event,⁸⁹ they are cast in response to a particular historical setting. His christological, soteriological and eschatological thoughts can never be removed from their historical setting without losing some of the intent of their expression and risking a distorted understanding of Paul's thought in that verse. Therefore, this thesis will attempt to ground each verse it examines, firmly in its historical setting and within the flow of the logic of the surrounding letter.

It is probable that Paul developed his concept of justification by faith in the face of polemical arguments with Judaizers (though he equally may have developed it at a prior time and merely used it in this situation because of its applicability).⁹⁰ If he did develop it in the face of debates, that fact cannot be used to dismiss the relevance of Galatians to understanding Paul's thought. For such a line of thinking would separate Paul's thoughts from his life situations which must be taken into account in understanding a letter.⁹¹ Paul's thought did not exist in isolation to his life experiences. No one's thoughts do. Some of the greatest intellectual contributions to mankind have been developed in the furnace of polemical debate. To then dismiss them as "only polemical" and therefore not relevant to understanding the centre of the

⁸⁹ For Paul this meant primarily Calvary and Damascus.

⁹⁰ The term is derived from the word *ἰουδαῖζειν* (to live like Jews) which occurs in Galatians 2:14. It is used of one who tries to get Christians to live as Jews. There were degrees of assimilation to Judaism, with circumcision as the climax. Assimilation within Judaism did not necessarily include circumcision (Dunn, *Galatians*, p.129). The Judaizers could have been non-Christian Jews, Christian Jews, or even zealous Gentiles. The key issue for Judaism was to get people to carry out the Jewish rituals and practices, at times with incredible degrees of tolerance for what they believed (Terence L Donaldson, 'Zealot and convert: The origin of Paul's Christ-Torah antithesis', *CBQ* 51, 1989, p.670). Paul refers to his life as a Pharisee as his life in Judaism. Paul makes a distinction here between the Pharisaic religion and true Old Testament faith (Brian C. Wintle, 'Justification in Pauline thought', in *Right with God: Justification in the Bible and the World*, Ed. D A Carson, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1992, p.54).

⁹¹ C.K Barrett (*Freedom and Obligation: A study of the Epistle to the Galatians*, SPCK, London, 1985, p.17) makes the point that history is inseparable from theology and theology from history. Therefore, it is wrong to dismiss a doctrine on historical grounds.

author's thoughts would be a grave mistake. It could be argued that if engaging in polemical arguments against Judaizers was a central part of Paul's ministry (and a good case could be built for that), then that is reason to consider Galatians more relevant than other letters in understanding his thought. If the arguments of Galatians could be dismissed in such a way, then each of Paul's other letters could also be dismissed, because its particular life situation would be also distorting our ability to know the centre of his thought.

Another reason for approaching this thesis as an exegetical examination is because it is only from Paul's message that his thought can be accurately discerned. Another new angle, which shall be taken in this thesis, is to distinguish between the framework of Paul's thought and the focus of his thought. There is a distinction between these two. The debate regarding the centre of Paul's theology has rarely clarified that distinction. This lack of clarity has not helped the debate. While his theological framework is important to understand how he thought, his message is the focus of his thought. His theological framework reflects his theological presuppositions and may have its own central concepts, but his message reveals the true centre of his thinking. Therefore, an inductive exegetical examination of his letter will be the best method of finding the message or the focus of Paul's thought. At the same time a deductive exegetical examination will also reveal Paul's theological presuppositions, or the framework of his thought. While the theological concepts that comprise Paul's framework will sometimes spill over to form components of his message, the focus of his message will be the centre of his thought.⁹²

Because of the depth of work required for each verse examined in an exegetical approach, the number of verses that any investigation can examine is greatly reduced. Therefore, this thesis will be restricted to an investigation of Paul's thought in his letter to the churches in Galatia. However, this will not be a full exegesis of the book of Galatians at all. It will only deal with those verses relevant to the theological topic of the thesis; those verses to do with the question at hand.

⁹² This methodology for approaching the study of the centre of Paul's thought warrants further investigation and development, especially in the area of the inter-relationship and order of priority between the framework and the message. It is disputable whether his framework can have a centre. This thesis takes the view that the framework has a few key components.

There are several reasons for using Galatians as the place to test the validity of the propositions which deny that justification is central to Paul's thought. Firstly, the distribution of the noun and verb forms of grace ($\chiάρις$ and $\chiαρίζομαι$) and justification ($\deltaικαιοσύνη$ and $\deltaικαιόω$) are high in Galatians allowing a good examination of how they are consistently used when they occur. Secondly, it is a letter where the two concepts appear side by side in several verses, including in verses which will be argued are summary verses for the proposition of the whole letter. Thirdly, it is a letter that deals specifically with the essence of both concepts as well as with their application in the life of the believer. Fourthly, if justification by faith is indeed only a concept for arguing polemically against Jewish teaching, then that should stand out even in this polemical letter. Fifthly, one of the most significant and influential commentaries on Galatians (Betz) does not even recognize justification as the main thought to this polemical letter.⁹³ Sixthly, those epistles that deal with the central issues in Paul's life are the ones that will reflect the central concepts in Paul's thought. While the place of justification by faith in Paul's thought is a debated issue, few scholars would dispute centrality of the gospel to Paul's life and thought. Galatians is a letter about the gospel. Galatians is, therefore, a good letter to be examined to discover the concepts contained in the gospel and therefore in Paul's thought.

Chapters two, three and four will examine the text of Paul's letter to the Galatians. Each chapter will analyze the letter by means of asking a different question of the text.

Chapter two asks; what is the life situation that the letter is addressing?

Chapter three asks; what part does grace play in Paul's answer to the situation of the letter?

Chapter four asks; what part does justification by faith play in Paul's answer to the situation of the letter?

These questions have been specifically worded to be purely analytically probing questions. An effort has been made to avoid any leading questions which may preempt a particular answer.

⁹³ Betz ('Spirit, Freedom and Law', p.378) says, "In effect, his defence amounts to a defence of the πνεῦμα which was given to the gentile Galatians outside of the Torah." Another significant scholar in the field, Boers (*The Justification of the Gentiles*, p.30), questions not only whether justification is the centre of Paul's thought generally, but even whether it is in Romans and Galatians.

The first question is, “what is the life situation that the letter is addressing?” This grounds the discussion of the place of grace and justification by faith within the historical context in which Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians. The intention of this approach is to understand what was influencing Paul’s thinking when he used the word, for the following questions on the part of grace and justification by faith in the thought of Paul can never be answered properly unless the intention of Galatians is clearly understood.⁹⁴ Too often issues of grace, the law and justification are discussed as theological concepts removed from their *Sitz im Leben*.

The examinations within this thesis will be focused on the text of Galatians first, Acts second and will restrict interaction with Romans to rare occasions. Because both Galatians and Acts have many similarities in their accounts of Paul’s ministry and theology, the temptation often is to try to harmonize the accounts in a way that does justice to the intention of neither author. The question of the historical accuracy of Acts also cautions against placing great weight upon those accounts in places where Galatians also gives an account of the same incident.⁹⁵ To avoid these methodological problems, a foundation will be laid from the epistle alone before trying to line up the details with Acts. Evidence from Acts will be used, but only where there is no question of contradiction with the Galatians account. Far more weight must be given to the evidence of the letter itself than comparisons with Acts or other external considerations (e.g. contemporary Jewish writings). Because the gospel is a key concern of both Romans and Galatians, it is too easy to read Romans unintentionally into Galatians.⁹⁶ However, each has a unique *Sitz im Leben* which dictated how the letters were written and phrased. As there is insufficient space to come to terms with the historical situation behind Paul’s letter to the Romans, it will only be referred to on rare occasions to avoid the misunderstanding that can be generated by similar terms and concepts used for different purposes.

⁹⁴ J M G Barclay ('Mirror-reading a polemical letter: Galatians as a test case', *JSNT* 31, 1987, p.73) says that we will never understand any New Testament author's arguments until we have critically reconstructed the debate and the situation which his words are addressing

⁹⁵ Although this thesis prefers to follow scholars such as Bruce (*The Acts of the Apostles*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1951, pp.15-18) and Marshall (*Luke – Historian and Theologian*, Paternoster, Guernsey, 1988 (3rd)) in accepting the historical accuracy of Acts, the doubt that the debate sows weighs against relying on Acts as evidence in situations where there is conflict with the Galatians account.

⁹⁶ Käsemann has been accused of this.

In determining the historical situation in which Paul was writing, the most important task is to ascertain who the Agitators were and what the other ‘gospel’ was. His letter is our primary source document for determining the identity and belief of those about whom he was writing. Of course the letter needs to be “mirror read.”⁹⁷ What Paul said the false gospel included, and what his opponents said it included, may have been different. We cannot be sure of that difference. The only evidence we have on which to base our judgments is Paul’s evidence. Therefore, in the absence of any contrary evidence, Paul will be taken at face value as accurate. ‘Accurate’ will be understood to mean that while they may have worded their gospel quite differently, he has captured the essence of their arguments. For example in Galatians 1:7 he said they “want to distort the gospel of Christ”. That can hardly have been their stated aim. Nor is it likely to have even been their unstated aim. Rather, Paul’s analysis of their arguments was that they were quite happy to attempt to make changes to his gospel which distorted it. In mirror reading Paul’s letter it is important to distinguish between when he was teaching and when he was engaging in polemic or apologetic arguments. It is not always easy to distinguish which Paul was using at any one time or even if it was all three at once.⁹⁸ Each tells us something about the situation, but in different ways.

After Galatians itself the book of Acts is to be the secondary source of information used. It will be considered before studies on Judaism are consulted. It would be using a faulty methodology to rely closely on studies on Judaism such as those by Davies and Sanders to determine the nature of Paul’s opponents and their beliefs. Paul was not writing against the specific 1st Century Jews whom Davies and Sanders quote, he was writing against the individuals troubling the churches in Galatia.⁹⁹

In Galatians 2:4-5 Paul recounts an incident involving false brethren at Jerusalem and in Galatians 2:11-21 he recounts an incident which happened in the church at Antioch. These are not just incidental biographical details. He was addressing a specific problem. They were relevant to what was happening in Galatia.¹⁰⁰ They are meant to be parallel

⁹⁷ For an excellent article on the art of ‘mirror reading’ see Barclay’s article ‘Mirror-reading’, pp. 73-93.

⁹⁸ Richard N Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word, Dallas, 1990, p. xcvi.

⁹⁹ Of course, they are very useful as background information on Jewish thought in general. Caution is needed. The works of scholars such as Davies and Sanders may be very relevant to the beliefs of the opponents in the churches of Galatia, or they may not. The problem is it is very difficult to know the relationship between them.

¹⁰⁰ CK Barrett, *Freedom and Obligation: A study of the Epistle to the Galatians*, SPCK, London, 1985, p.18.

situations to that in the churches of Galatia.¹⁰¹ The life details are best understood as not being autobiographical in purpose but as being very deliberate illustrations and proofs of the points which Paul was making against the Judaizers.

The second question looks at the flow of the logic of the letter and places ‘grace’ within that flow. The question requires the place of ‘grace’ within Paul’s answer to the situation to be established. There is general consensus among Pauline scholars that ‘grace’ is the dominant concept in Paul’s writings.¹⁰² Although the question anticipates ‘grace’ will play a central part in Paul’s answer to situation, it does not presume this place. The second question examines whether or not it can be established that ‘grace’ is the lens through which Paul’s thought should be analyzed. Boers says that we all have a macro-structure which determines how we choose words and put together phrases, sentences and paragraphs.¹⁰³ He calls this a grid into which we shape the sentences to form the whole of our message. The purpose of this question is to ask, “Is ‘grace’ that grid?”

The ‘New Perspective’ views on justification by faith in Paul’s works have arisen from investigations of first century Judaism and the law.¹⁰⁴ Even many of the modern scholars who do not share the conclusions of the ‘New Perspective’ movement still approach the issue of the place of justification by faith from the angle of the law. Although research from this angle has revealed many important insights, there is always

¹⁰¹ Longenecker (*Galatians*, p.73-75) has a good section on how they can be understood to be parallel while not being equal. Regarding the Antioch incident, Betz ('Spirit, Freedom and Law', p.367) says, "this dilemma is identical with the issue the Galatians themselves have to decide: πῶς τὰ ἔθνη ἀναγκάζεις ιουδαϊκέιν;

¹⁰² John Koenig, ‘Occasions of grace in Paul, Luke and first century Judaism’, *ATR* 64, 1982, p.564; Darrell J Doughty, ‘The priority of χάρις’, *NTS*, 19, 1972-1973, pp. 179-80; Esser ('Grace, spiritual gifts' in *New Testament Theology Vol. 2*, Ed Colin Brown, Paternoster, Exeter, 1976 (Ger. Ed. 1971), p.119) says, “*charis* is the essence of God’s decisive saving act in Jesus Christ, which took place in his sacrificial death, and also of its consequences in the present and the future.” Conzelmann ('χάρις κτλ' *TDNT*. Vol. IX, Eds Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1974, p.393) says, “in Paul χάρις is a central concept that most clearly expresses his understanding of the salvation event.” Luter ('Grace' in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, Ed Gerald F Hawthorne & Ralph P Martin, Intervarsity, Leicester, 1993, p.373) quotes Conzelmann in agreement with him. Casarella ('Grace', in *Dictionary of the Latter New Testament & its Developments*, Ed. Ralph P Martin and Peter H Davids, Intervarsity, Leicester, 1997, p.433) says, “there is a sense in which the entire NT and much early Christian writing is about the grace of God in Christ and its outworking in the believer.

¹⁰³ Boers, *The Justification of the Gentiles*, p. 35; quoting van Dijk.

¹⁰⁴ Although the works of Dunn and Wright do not focus on the *Torah* as much as that of Sanders, Sanders’ work was the catalyst for their work and they share his law lens even though they don’t always agree with what they see through that lens.

a danger of a bias being imposed when one topic is viewed through the lens of another. Viewing the place of justification in Paul's thought through the lens of the law is a flawed approach because its starting point is not Paul's starting point.¹⁰⁵ If it can be shown that in the passages examined to reach these conclusions Paul was primarily presenting Jesus Christ as the expression of God's saving grace to humankind, then his reflections on the law, although essential to the discussion, are secondary in comparison to the grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Viewing Paul's thought through the law, which was for him a secondary consideration, distorts the way justification is seen.¹⁰⁶ Paul's thought needs to be examined through what was for him the framework of his thought.

It is time for the place of justification by faith in Paul's thought to be viewed from a fresh angle in the hope of finding new insights. This thesis will examine Paul's thought in the letter to the Galatians by looking firstly at the place of grace within the thought of the letter.

Within Galatians, every occurrence of the word 'grace' will be examined to determine the part grace played in Paul's thought as he answered the situation in the churches of Galatia. Uses of both the noun *χάρις* and the verb *χαρίζομαι* will be examined.¹⁰⁷ Although the areas of meaning of these two words do not exactly correlate, the differences will not effect the outcome of the investigation into the part grace played in the thought of Paul. Occurrences of the word shall be given weighting as primary evidence. Where the concept of grace occurs but not the word, it may be considered but will be weighted as secondary evidence and be considered as far more subjective evidence. As Boers points out, the meaning of a text is not the sum meaning of the

¹⁰⁵ There is some justification for viewing the problem of the centre of Paul's through the lens of the law. W Grundmann ('Gesetz, Rechtfertigung und Mystik bei Paulus', *ZNW* 32, 1933, pp. 52-65, esp 61-65; Quoted in Roland Y K Fung, 'The Status of justification', pp.4-11) sees the law as the *Einheitspunkt* for the eschatological- mystical doctrine of redemption and the juridical doctrine of justification.

¹⁰⁶ Even though they also question the place of justification in the thought of Paul, the questions and conclusions of scholars such as Wrede and Schweitzer are much more creditable because their research is based on the primary focus of Paul.

¹⁰⁷ One occurrence of the word shall not be examined:

Galatians 3:19 Τί οὖν ὁ νόμος; τῶν παραβάσεων *χάριν* προσετέθη, ἔχοις οὐ ἔλθη τὸ σπέρμα ὃ ἐπήγγελται, διαταγέτις δι' ἀγγέλων ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου.

"Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made."

Although this is a use of the word *χάρις*, the prepositional use of the accusative *χάριν* does not carry the theological concept of grace. This makes its appearance in this verse irrelevant to the discussion of the thesis, and therefore, it will not be discussed.

words and phrases, but the effect of the way they are structured.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, although this thesis will still stick to where the terms occur, it shall not just note where the words occur; but will put the emphasis where the structure of the letter places it.

The third question gets to the heart of the thesis. Having established the primacy of grace within the framework of Paul's thought, and therefore its suitability as the lens through which to examine the focus of Paul's thought, the thesis will investigate the place of justification by faith within the thought of Paul. If justification by faith is a, or the, central expression of Paul's concept of grace, then it follows that justification by faith is at least a focus, if not the focus, of Paul's thought. This thesis aims to arrive at a conclusion about the place of justification in the thought of Paul by viewing it through the lens which it will show is the lens of primary significance in Paul's thought: the lens of grace.¹⁰⁹

The examination will start with the individual parts that make the whole. It will examine each instance of Paul's use of grace within its immediate literary context. The significance of justification by faith within each occurrence of concept of grace will be analyzed. This will give the building blocks needed to arrive at the final analysis. The whole picture of the many uses will then be considered, taking into account the place each use plays in the flow of the logic and in answering the *Sitz im Leben*. This will show us the part justification by faith plays within the concept of grace in Paul's letter.

The final analysis will not be a simple matter of noting the percentage of times that 'justification by faith' features where the word 'grace' occurs. Individual uses of the word 'grace' will also be weighted according to the part they play in the overall flow of the logic of the letter. For example, some uses of 'grace' are integral to the flow of the logic, other uses, such as in the greetings, are far less so and may prove to have little

¹⁰⁸ Boers, *The Justification of the Gentiles*, p.17

¹⁰⁹ The relationship between justification and grace is an important issue – but it needs to be pursued in a way that keeps Paul's dominant thought as the focus of the examination. The normal way in which the relationship between grace and justification has been discussed has been to examine the part grace plays in justification. Conceptually this is a necessary approach to understand justification. It is also to some extent warranted by verses such as Romans 3:24. However, this creates a justification-centred discussion. This approach cannot be used when examining the part justification plays in Paul's thought. For it would only find the presupposition of the approach; that justification is the centre of the discussion. By turning the examination around and making it grace centred, the aim is to expose the place of justification.

bearing on the investigation of the thesis. Also because each of Paul's letters are answering specific real life situations, the function any particular use of the word 'grace' plays in answering the *Sitz im Leben* of the letter will also be taken into account.

Within chapters three and four attention will be paid to the rhetorical structure of the letter to the Galatians. In any work of literature not all verses carry the same weight. Those in key structural places (such as introductions, conclusions, summaries, transitions etc) carry more weight. The form and content of a piece of literature are inseparable. The greater the skill of the author, the more the structure reflects the significance of the parts. As we come to Paul's letter to the Galatians, we must remember that where we find the term 'grace' within the structure of the letter, reflects its significance with the thought of Paul. Close attention needs to be paid to where we find the concepts of grace and justification placed within the rhetorical structure of the letter.

Many people have attempted a structural analysis of Paul's letter to the Galatians, with varying degrees of credibility. The work of Betz in this area has been widely recognized by most scholars.¹¹⁰ He has analyzed the letter according to the accepted format of the apologetic letter genre of Paul's day, and has shown how, while Paul's message is original, he uses the rhetorical apologetic structure as the vessel to carry his message.¹¹¹ However, Betz goes too far when he says, "Nowhere in it is there any indication of a separation of form and content."¹¹² Longenecker and others have shown that the apologetic structure begins to break down part way through chapter 3, and cases can be built for other rhetorical influences on the letter, particularly in the later chapters.¹¹³ Despite this, Betz' analysis of Paul's letter in this way is still most illuminating and certainly captures the spirit of Paul's line of reasoning. This thesis will adhere closely to the structural work of Betz for the first two chapters of Galatians, and then to a lesser degree for chapters 3-6.

¹¹⁰ While most commentaries published after Betz' work have acknowledged their debt to his structural analysis, even those who did not find his work convincing could not avoid mentioning it.

¹¹¹ Robert M Grant ('Hellenistic elements in Galatians', *ATR* 34, 1952, pp.223-226) says that it has long been acknowledged that Paul knew something of rhetoric.

¹¹² Betz, 'Spirit, Freedom and Law', p.356. In the latter part of the letter in particular, the apologetic structural analysis begins to fall down (Wayne A Meeks, 'Review of Galatians: A commentary on Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia, by Hans Dieter Betz', *JBL* 100, 1981, p.305).

¹¹³ Longenecker (*Galatians*, pp.cx-cxii) quotes many other critiques of Betz' work.

The apology letter genre starts with the salutation or epistolary prescript (Gal. 1:1-5). It then moves to the *exordium* (Gal. 1:6-11), where the author gets the attention of his recipients by stating the reason for the letter and making some discrediting remarks against the opposition.¹¹⁴ The letter then moves to the *narratio* (Gal. 1:12-2:14) where it states the facts relevant to the issue at hand.¹¹⁵ After that comes the *propositio* (Gal. 2:15-2:21) where the author “sums up the *narratio*’s material content” and “sets up the arguments to be discussed to be discussed latter in the *probatio*.¹¹⁶ The *propositio* contains two parts. Firstly, a statement of the agreed points, then a statement of the points of contention. The final part of the *propositio* is a statement refuting the charge made. The *probatio* (Gal 3:1-4:31) then gives the proofs or arguments, which are to establish the points propounded in the *propositio*. This is followed by the *exhortatio* (Gal 5:1-6:10) where the arguments of the *probatio* are summed up and recipients are challenged to action in accord with the conclusions reached.¹¹⁷ At the end comes the epistolary postscript (Gal. 6:11-18).

In conclusion, in chapter two where the situation in the churches of Galatia will be examined, attention will be paid to the rhetorical structure, which is significant for determining whether Paul is teaching, or engaging in polemical or apologetical arguments. In chapters three and four of the thesis when the occurrences of the term grace and justification by faith will be examined, close attention will be paid to where each verse falls in the rhetorical structure and an importance for Paul’s thought will be assigned to it accordingly. Because of the structural importance of Galatians 2:21, and because it is the conclusion of the main proposition of the letter, the thesis will examine the whole *propositio* 2:15-21 and spend significant time on that.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Betz, ‘Spirit, Freedom and Law’, p.360.

¹¹⁵ Hester (‘The rhetorical structure of Galatians 1:11-2:14’, *JBL* 103/2, 1984, pp.223-233) questions the details of Betz’ analysis of the *narratio*. Although Hester’s case seems sound it does not impinge on the *propositio* or *probatio*, nor does it question the significance of the *narratio* or the place of Galatians 1:15 and 2:9 within the *narratio*. Therefore, it need not be discussed here.

¹¹⁶ Betz (*Galatians*, p.114) says that Galatians 2:16-21 states the whole thesis of the letter “in a nutshell.” Cf. Motyer, ‘Righteousness by faith’, p.47.

¹¹⁷ Betz calls this section the “*paraenesis*” in his landmark article on the structure of Galatians (1975) but later calls it the “*exhortatio*” in his commentary (1979).

¹¹⁸ Betz, *Galatians*, pp.113-114.

The conclusion will then draw together the results of the investigation into the situation which Paul was addressing, the place of grace as the framework of Paul's thought (or the lens through which he looked), and the place of justification in Paul's thought.

The implications of these conclusions will then be discussed in relation to the various theories raised in the literature review. In particular, alternate theories of the centre of Paul's thought will be addressed. However, this will not be a serious critique of each theory but a discussion of the light that this investigation into Galatians has shed on the theories. Taking this approach means that there are several things this thesis will not be doing. This thesis will not be interacting with the Reformation scholars, new perspective scholars or any other modern scholars in the body of the thesis, for the thesis must establish the thought of Paul from the text itself. The interaction with these scholars that does take place will be left for the conclusion. The debate on the law will also be avoided unless it is directly relevant.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Whether scholars such as Räisänen, who believes Paul was wrong about Judaism, are correct or not does not concern this thesis (Heikki Räisänen, 'Legalism and salvation by the law: Paul's portrayal of the Jewish religion as a historical and theological problem', in *Die Paulinische Literatur und Theologie*, Ed S. Pedersen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Gottingen, 1980, pp.78-82. See also Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*; Westerholm, *Israel's Law*; Kruse, *Paul, the Law, and Justification*). For the place of grace and justification by faith in Paul's thought will be the same whether Paul was right or wrong. The findings of studies on Judaism are relevant as background information to enlighten us about the religious milieu in which Paul wrote. However, they can never be used to determine what Paul or his adversaries may have believed or thought (Westerholm, *Israel's Law*, p.150). Such conclusions must be drawn primarily from an exegesis of the biblical text. The danger is that one will go astray by assuming that Paul, accurately or inaccurately, was depicting contemporary Jewish soteriology. He was making no such efforts (Stephen Westerholm, 'Law, grace and the "soteriology" of Judaism', in *Law in Religious Communities in the Roman Period: The debate over Torah and Nomos in post-biblical Judaism and early Christianity*, Ed. Peter Richardson and Stephen Westerholm, Wilfrid Laurier, Waterloo (Ont, Can.), 1991b, pp.71-72). He was writing a Christian theological evaluation of the errors of the particular group of Judaizers in the churches of Galatia, for whose beliefs the text of Galatians is our primary source.

CHAPTER 2: THE SITUATION IN GALATIA

Chapter two asks the question; “What is the life situation that the letter is addressing?” The letter states that it was from the Apostle Paul (Gal. 1:1, Gal. 6:11-17). It contains numerous autobiographical incidents and remarks. There is no valid reason to doubt its authenticity. The historical details line up well with other writings of Paul and with the writings of Luke that concern Paul. The parts that are hard to reconcile are not directly contradictory. These difficult to reconcile details do not cast any doubt over the authenticity. If anything they are evidence that there has been no effort to fabricate a believable forgery. No question of pseudonymity hangs over the letter.¹

The Galatians were converted to faith in Christ through Paul when he preached the gospel to them during a visit enforced by illness (Gal 4:13). They received both Paul and the gospel gladly (Gal. 4:14-15).² Whatever the origin of the Jewish influence within the churches in Galatia was, there is no evidence to suggest any of the Galatians had been Jews before their conversion. In Galatians 5:2 Paul wrote to them, “if you receive circumcision”. In 6:12-13 he wrote of those who “try to compel you to be circumcised” and said of them, “they desire to have you circumcised”. They were uncircumcised Gentiles, who had been converted out of a life of Paganism.³ Paul said of them, “you did not know God” and, “you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods” (Gal. 4:8). This does not rule out there being some Jews within the congregation, for it was Paul’s habit that wherever he stopped he went to the Synagogue and preached the gospel there first. But if there were any Jews, they would have to be a minority for Paul to make the type of comments he made in 4:8 and 5:2.

¹ The radical Dutch critics at the end of the nineteenth century questioned Paul’s authorship, but their views did not last long or gain much support outside of their own group. Not even the Tübingen critics challenged the authorship of this epistle. In recent times it is rarely even a disputed topic (Dunn, *Galatians*, p.1; Morris, *Galatians: Paul’s Charter of Christian Freedom*, Intervarsity, Leicester, 1996,, p.14).

² The term ‘the Galatians’ of course refers to those Galatians in the churches of Galatia, not all Galatians.

³ Lightfoot (*St Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, Hendrickson, Lynn(Mass.), 1981(1865)) outlines the known pre-existing religions in some detail.

When Paul used *Nomos* (νόμος) he was usually referring to the *Torah* (תּוֹרָה).⁴ It has been asserted that Paul's meaning of *Nomos* is a Greek distortion of the Hebrew understanding of *Torah* to restrict it to a mere legal code.⁵ Stephen Westerholm⁶ gives a good summary of the seminal arguments first proposed for this by Solomon Schechter in his *Aspects of Rabbinical Theology*.⁷ Dodd proposes that Paul's understanding of *Torah/Nomos* was not that of Rabbinic Judaism, but that of Hellenistic Judaism fostered by the LXX (This idea was developed further by Schoeps).⁸ Davies on the other hand, insists that Paul had a balanced "comprehensive" view of the *Torah*, understanding *Torah* as an all inclusive term which included prophecy, wisdom and the general will of God.⁹ He also maintains that Paul, like the Jews, saw no tension between the Law and grace. Such tensions he claims are a distortion of Paul. However, none of these claims hold up under investigation. Paul's use of *Nomos*, at times for a legal code, at other times for general instruction, prophecy or wisdom, was fully consistent with the Old Testament use of *Torah*. The differences between Paul's view of the *Torah* and that of Rabbinic Judaism were not due to the influence of Hellenistic Judaism, or a Greek meaning of *Nomos*. His view of *Nomos* was equally divergent from Hellenistic Judaism.¹⁰ While Rabbinic Judaism and Hellenistic Judaism did have their differences, in terms of their relationship to Paul's view of the *Torah* these differences have been greatly exaggerated. The reason his views of the *Torah* differed from both Rabbinic Judaism and Hellenistic Judaism are found in his Christian soteriology.¹¹ The only times he was not referring to the *Torah* were the few times where it is clear he was couching his language in generic terms to apply his comments to other legal systems beyond the *Torah* and a couple of times when he used *Torah* language to compare the guiding of Christ and the Spirit with the *Torah* (e.g. Romans 8:2 speaks of "the law of the Spirit of life" and Galatians 6:2 speaks of the

⁴ W Gutbrod & H Kleinknecht, 'νόμος κτλ', in *TDNT*. Vol. IV, Eds Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1967, p.1069.

⁵ CH Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1935, p.34.

⁶ Stephen Westerholm 'Torah, nomos and law', in *Law in Religious Communities in the Roman Period: The debate over Torah and Nomos in post-biblical Judaism and early Christianity*, Ed. Peter Richardson and Stephen Westerholm, Wilfrid Laurier, Waterloo (Ont, Can.), 1991a, p.45-46.

⁷ Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinical Theology*, Schocken Books, New York, 1961 (1909).

⁸ H J Schoeps, *Paul*, Westminster, Philadelphia, 1961.

⁹ W D Davies, 'Paul and the law: Reflections on pitfalls in interpretation', in *Jewish and Pauline Studies*. SPCK, London, 1984, pp.92-95.

¹⁰ Westerholm, 'Torah, nomos and law', p.53.

¹¹ Westerholm, 'Torah, nomos and law', p.52.

“law of Christ”).¹² As for the tension between *Torah* and grace, this thesis shall demonstrate that Paul did indeed hold such tensions. But the origin of such views for Paul again lay not in a divergence from the scriptures of the Old Testament but in fulfilment of the Old Testament scriptures in Christian soteriology.

The frequent and widespread references to the *Torah* infer that the Galatians were familiar with the Old Testament, but do not necessarily imply the existence of Jews in the congregation. The letter was written to the whole congregation, not just a Jewish section of the congregation, if such a section existed! The high level of literary and rhetorical style also suggests Paul was writing with an educated readership in mind.¹³ Such a readership, whether Jewish or Gentile, if they had spent any time in association with a synagogue, would have been familiar with the LXX, which was widely read by both diaspora Jews and God fearing Gentiles. From the accounts of Paul’s ministry in Acts (Acts 17:11, 17:17; 19:8-10 *et al.*) it is clear that Paul’s method of operation wherever he established churches was to concentrate on teaching the scriptures and to appoint pastors and teachers. Any Pauline congregation after being Christians a few years could be assumed to have had a working knowledge of the LXX, especially if it had started with some literate Gentile God fearers from the synagogue to help that knowledge along. Paul’s comments about their eager reception of the message may also imply an enthusiastic study of the Old Testament (cf. Acts 17:11). The best explanation of the many Old Testament references in the letter is that Paul was interacting with the Agitators (who were probably Jewish) to show the Gentile Galatians that faith in Christ is the true fulfillment of the Old Testament message.¹⁴

Paul’s first visit to Galatia was a forced stop over due to illness (Gal.4:13). The Galatians received and cared for the Apostle gladly (Gal 4:14), and accepted his message of the gospel. Paul summarized the prominent core of that message to them as “Christ Jesus crucified” (Gal. 3:1). Although it is not explicitly stated, the assumption from Galatians 4:15 is that their love and generosity to Paul was a reflection of a heartfelt enthusiastic acceptance of the gospel. Galatians 4:13 probably makes reference to a second visit. The

¹² Joseph Fitzmeyer, ‘Saint Paul and the law’, *The Jurist* 27, 1967, pp.19-20.

¹³ Betz, *Galatians*, p. 2.

¹⁴ They were probably Jewish but we cannot be certain.

phrase τὸ πρότερον most likely means “the first time”, or “earlier”¹⁵ implying that he also visited at least a second time, if not more. This is the most natural way to interpret these words. However, it is possible that it could mean “originally”, making no allusion to any other visits.¹⁶ Apart from this uncertain reference, Galatians itself mentions no details of any other visit than the first one.

Those who hold to the theory that ‘Galatia’ refers to the ethnic region in the north of Asia Minor¹⁷ usually insist on two visits and want to line them up with Acts 16:6 and Acts 18:23. Those who hold to the theory that ‘Galatia’ refers to the Roman province in the South of Asia Minor are more inclined to acknowledge there is some degree of uncertainty as to the number of visits Paul made and how to line up the accounts of Paul’s visits in Galatians with the accounts in Acts. This thesis favours the South Galatian theory and prefers to see the first visit lining up with Acts 13:13ff and Acts 16:6 and Acts 18:23 as return visits occurring after the writing of the letter. Although this leaves the problem of when this possible second visit occurred unsolved, it is preferable to take the most likely reading of the text of Galatians and retain some unsolved problems between the Galatians account and the Acts account, rather than to attempt a neat harmonization based on less favourable readings of the Galatians text.¹⁸

The real question is, what difference does it make for understanding Paul’s letter to the Galatians? If the North Galatian Theory is to be accepted then some weight (though not much) can be placed on the references to the Gauls’ fickle character, but nothing is known about the events in the churches of Galatia other than from the letter to the Galatians itself. If the South Galatian theory is to be accepted then the Galatians account fits in neatly with the Acts account. This is extremely significant for an understanding of Galatians because

¹⁵ Wilhelm Michaelis, ‘πρῶτος κτλ’, in *TDNT* Vol. VI, Eds Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1968, p.868.

¹⁶ There is also the question of whether this would then mean “when Paul originally preached the gospel to them” implying that he later preached it again? Or whether it could mean “when he preached it to them originally”, meaning when he preached the gospel to them, being the first time they originally heard the gospel, with no mention of any other visits or preaching of the gospel.

¹⁷ Both the North and South Galatian theories are dealt with in some detail below.

¹⁸ This thesis follows the work of Marshall (*Luke – Historian and Theologian*, Paternoster, Guernsey, 1988 (3rd.)) in accepting Acts as reliable history. Therefore, it cannot follow some scholars in resolving the problems by dismissing Acts as unreliable.

Acts 13-14 provides numerous details about the Jew's activities in the South of Galatia and about what certain Jews were doing and teaching there.

There is considerable potential for confusion between the Roman province of Galatia of Paul's time and the older well known dependent kingdom and ethno-geographical district of Galatia. Before 25 B.C. a smaller Roman dependent kingdom of Galatia existed in the heart of Asia Minor. It was surrounded by Pontus and Bithynia in the north, Phrygia to the south west, Cappadocia to the south east and Lycaonia to the south.¹⁹ The name was derived from the racial group called Gallo-Grecians which inhabited and controlled the region. They were Celts who had taken over the area in the third century B.C. after a failed invasion of Macedonia and Thessaly. Centuries later they remained politically and socially distinct from those around them.²⁰ If this is the region to which Paul referred then we know very little about Paul's contact with these people other than what is mentioned in his letter to them and a few scant passing references in Acts (Acts 16:6 and Acts 18:23).

The Roman Province of Galatia had come into existence in 25 B.C. when the Romans re-organized their administration of Asia Minor.²¹ This new Roman province of Galatia was much more extensive than the old dependent kingdom had been and included the regions (and previous provinces and dependant kingdoms) of Galatia, Pontus, Pisidia and Lycaonia. If Paul is referring to this Roman province of his day then the book of Acts provides us with considerable background detail to Paul's contact with the Galatians. To avoid this confusion, this thesis will follow most scholars in using the term 'the province' to refer to the Roman province of Paul's time and in referring to the earlier dependant kingdom and ethno-geographical region as 'the region'. The view that Paul was writing to the churches in the south in the Roman province of Paul's time is called the 'South Galatian Theory.' The view that he was writing to churches in the region of the old kingdom in the north is referred to as the 'North Galatian Theory.'

¹⁹ See Muir's *Atlas of Ancient and Classical History*, Ed. R F Treharne & Harrold Fullard, George Philip and son, London, 1963, pp. 10 and 16. Here the Roman provinces for the two periods, before and after 25 BC, are illustrated.

²⁰ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.lxii; Bruce, *Galatians*, pp.3-5; Burton, *Galatians*, pp.xvii-xx.

²¹ For an excellent overview of the history of the Galatian Kingdom at the hands of the Romans see Longenecker, *Galatians*, pp. lxii-lxiii or Bruce, *Galatians*, pp. 3-5.

The letter itself implies that all the churches of Galatia were founded at the same time. So, in the light of the distances involved and the accounts of his journeys in the book of Acts, it is extremely unlikely Paul was referring to churches in both the north and the south. The discussions about to whom Paul was writing lean heavily on a reconciliation of Galatians and Acts. In particular, did Paul use the term ‘Galatians’ in a regional sense as Luke did (The North Galatian theory takes this view), or in a provincial sense (The South Galatian Theory takes this view)? Is the possible reference in Galatians to previous visits to Galatia best accounted for by Acts 16:6 and Acts 18:23 (the North Galatian Theory takes this view) or by Acts 13-14 (the South Galatian theory takes this view)?

Some pieces of the evidence presented are more significant than others. For example, Paul’s own words to the Galatians are more significant than passing references that Luke makes in Acts. There is a need to distinguish between evidence which establishes a fact beyond reasonable doubt, evidence which strongly suggests a fact and evidence which merely suggests a strong possibility. The strength of each piece of evidence needs to be weighed.

The main problem with the North Galatian theory is that every reference in Acts to Paul going to the Galatian region occurs after the Council of Jerusalem.²² If so, why didn’t he mention the outcome of the Council in his letter? To maintain the North Galatian theory requires either totally unmentioned visits to the region prior to the Council or else it

²² The flowing arguments have been presented in favour of the North Galatian Theory. Many of these are refuted by the proponents of the South Galatian Theory. However, they are presented here as the proponents of the North Galatian Theory present them. Firstly, Paul alluded to two visits to Galatia (Gal. 4:13). Acts says Paul visited Galatia twice (Acts 16:6 and 18:23). Secondly, writers of the day popularly used the term in the ethnographical sense rather than the formal official sense (c.f Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p.19; Donald Guthrie, *Galatians*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1973, p.17). Thirdly, in the narrative of Acts Mysia, Phrygia and Psidia are all regional words without political significance and Galatia occurs in the narrative alongside them (Acts 14:24; 16:6-8; 18:23). Fourthly, Luke’s description of Paul’s visit to this region speaks of “the region of Phrygia and Galatia” (Acts 16:6). Fifthly, in Acts 16:6, having gone through the south Galatian regions they were then hindered from going into Asia. They must have gone north. Sixthly, the character of those to whom Paul was writing matches the character of the Gauls mentioned in non-biblical writings. Seventhly, if those in the south had only become Galatians in 25 B.C, they would not have thought of themselves as Galatians. Eighthly, Paul’s letter to the Galatians gives the impression that Jewish teaching was new to the church after Paul left. Yet the accounts in Acts have Jews hassling the churches of south Galatia from the start. Ninthly, the early Church understood Galatia to be the northern racial region. Lastly, some scholars consider Galatians to be similar to the letters known to have been written during Paul’s third missionary; similar to Romans in content and similar to Corinthians in tone. This would be further evidence for equating Paul’s two trips to Galatia with Acts 16:6 and 18:23.

requires Paul going to great lengths to choose not to mention something that would add a lot of weight to his letter. There is also a problem with reading the founding of Churches in the north into Acts 16:6. The obvious flow and logic of the passage (Acts 15:39-16:10) is that the Holy Spirit was forbidding any evangelistic stops in order to hurry them on to Macedonia.²³ An extended stop in North Galatia is out of place in Acts 16:6. The case for the North Galatian theory sounds good at first hearing, but whenever the evidence is compared closely with the text of Galatians itself it generally falls down. Many of the points proposed in favour of the North Galatian theory (see footnotes) are based on primary references to Acts or non-biblical historical sources. Even those points do not always exhibit an accurate handling of the sources.

The following arguments favour the South Galatian theory:²⁴

There is no concrete evidence that Paul ever made a trip to the ethnic region of Galatia. Verses that may suggest it can be understood other ways. The reference to the visit to Galatia in Acts 18:23 is so scant that it gives no evidence as to where he went.

Even though Luke did describe places by ethnical regions, that doesn't prove how Paul used the term Galatia. Paul can be shown to have used provincial terms consistently through all of his letters.

Inscriptions and non-biblical writers (e.g. Ptolemy, Tacitus and Pliny) mostly use Galatia for the province.²⁵

If Paul was writing to the churches mentioned in Acts 13-14, then what other collective term was there available to describe all the towns of South Galatia in which those churches were.

The term τὴν Φρυγίαν καὶ Γαλατικὴν χώραν in Acts 16:6 uses only one article. It is referring to one region not two. The region is a Phrygic-Galatic region.²⁶ Paul thought it necessary to use the term "Phrygic" to distinguish which part of Galatia he was referring to.

²³ J Bligh, *Galatians*, St Paul, London, 1969, p.5.

²⁴ Some of the weaker arguments have been omitted.

²⁵ Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1953, p.24.

The Jewish flavour of the arguments assumes a familiarity with the Old Testament among Paul's readers. From the book of Acts we know that the towns of South Galatia had Jewish synagogues and we know the problems Paul had with the Jews in those towns in the south of the province of Galatia, in the regions of Lycaonia and Pisidia, while at the same time we know nothing of any Jewish interaction with the ethnic Galatians of the north, apart from the possible references in the letter to the Galatians itself.

When one considers the amount of detail that Acts gives us about the establishment of churches in the towns in the south of the province and about their interactions with the Jews, it would be strange for Paul to have founded churches in the north, have them experience the troubles mentioned in the letter, and that they not be referred to somewhere in the book of Acts.

When the flow of Paul's travel in Acts 16 is considered, the Northern Galatian theory would make it a very circuitous journey. The Southern Galatian theory would make it a direct journey.

In Galatians 2:1-6, where Paul was recounting his trip to Jerusalem, he mentioned that he did not submit to the false brethren "that the gospel might remain with you". Taking this "you" as the Galatians (which is the natural way to take it), it suggests that Paul had already been to Galatia, knew them and had preached the gospel before this trip to Jerusalem where he resisted the false brethren for the sake of the Galatians.

There are two chronological references that strongly favour an early visit and therefore the South Galatians theory. Paul referred to Barnabas three times (Gal. 2:1,9,13). The inference is that the Galatians knew Barnabas. Acts tells us that he and Paul parted company in Acts 15:39. This would mean he was not with Paul in Acts 16:6 or Acts 18:23. Also, Timothy is not mentioned at all and was probably unknown to them. Yet he was Paul's right hand man

²⁶ Guthrie, *Galatians*, p.20.

throughout this latter ministry. The fact that Timothy only joined Paul in Acts 16:1 suggests an early date for the letter in favour of the South Galatian Theory.

Lastly, it was Paul's policy to travel the major roads and evangelize the cities along them.

In conclusion, while it is not possible to give an irrefutable answer as to whether the North Galatian theory or the South Galatian theory is the correct one, the evidence certainly weighs in favour of the South Galatian theory. The most convincing evidence in favour of the South Galatian theory is the evidence for a provincial usage of the term 'Galatia' by Paul, the biographical references, and some other timing factors that strongly favour a pre-Council of Jerusalem date (also cf. the date theory). The logic of the theory and the plausibility of the movements hang together very well with the book of Acts. A far more logical and less forced reconciliation with Acts has Paul visiting the South of the province earlier in Acts 13-14 and revisiting the same towns in Acts 16:6 and 18:23 probably after the letter was written. While the evidence favours the South Galatian theory, some important questions remain for which there are no conclusive answers if the theory is accepted.

The problem with the North Galatian theory is that none of the key points around which it revolves can be shown conclusively. At the same time, it must be acknowledged there are not enough facts to be certain that Paul did not visit the Northern region and plant churches there. In the light of this, the way forward with the most integrity is to accept the South Galatian theory without being dogmatic.

Much scholarly ink has been used discussing the date of the epistle. Some of these arguments spend too much time considering the meanings of passing comments within the letters and trying to line these comments up with the book of Acts.²⁷ These discussions are very interesting. However, in terms of understanding the events and meaning of Galatians, there is really only one dating issue that is needful of being solved. That is the issue of the

²⁷ For example, Gal 1:6 says, "so quickly deserting Him who called you." Quickly after what? How quickly? Or Gal. 4:13 says, "I preached the gospel to you the first time". Should that be translated as "the first time" or as "previously"? Does that imply two visits or just one? Dunn (*Galatians*, p.40) says it could mean so quickly after Paul had left, or simply refer to the speed of the defection.

chronological relationship of the letter to the Galatians to Paul's missionary journeys and the Council of Jerusalem.

In the process of determining the dating, priority must be given to evidence from the Galatians account over evidence from Acts.²⁸ Internally there are enough historical details within Galatians to give a good interpretive setting for the theology. Anchoring the events within Acts would make the dating even clearer. Most scholars have little trouble equating Paul's first trip to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18-20) with Acts 9:26-30. The real problem where they are divided is whether to equate Galatians 2:1-10 with Acts 11:30 or Acts 15:1-29. The first alternative suggests a date for the letter before the Council of Jerusalem. The second necessitates a date after the Council. This is a significant issue for understanding the letter. Did the Galatian situation arise, and was the letter written, before or after the church had reached an official policy on the issue of the Gentiles and the *Torah*? However, the importance of this should not be overstated. For the general message of the letter and the theological issues involved are clear regardless of this dating. For whenever Paul's meeting with the other Apostles occurred, the conclusions of the meeting in regard to justification by faith and the Gentiles and the *Torah* were generally the same as those of the Council.

If the North Galatian theory were to be accepted, then that necessitates that the letter was written after the Council of Jerusalem and indeed even after the events of Acts 18:23. This would make it a late letter, written at a time when the issue of Jew-Gentile relationships within the church, and Gentile requirements in regard to the *Torah*, had been considered some years prior. The conclusions and resolutions of the Council would have been common knowledge and a long way toward being implemented as accepted orthodox practice. In this context, what was happening in the churches of Galatia was inexcusable and unquestionably unorthodox. That makes Paul's letter an argument against an old problem already resolved and agreed on by the wider church.

If the South Galatian theory is accepted, then the issue of the dating still remains an open question. The problem is, how to line up the accounts of Acts with Galatians? If the visit to Jerusalem mentioned in Galatians 2 can be equated with the Council of Jerusalem in Acts

²⁸ C.f. p.17, fn. 94. This does not diminish the intrinsic value and reliability of either document.

15, then the situation Paul is addressing is similar to that of the North Galatian theory. On the other hand, if the events of Galatians 2 are to be equated with Paul's visit to Jerusalem in Acts 11:30 then the letter to the Galatians would be dated before the Council of Jerusalem and would be dealing with an issue which was, despite the private agreement of Paul and the main Apostles, as yet officially and publicly unresolved by the wider church. This makes Paul's letter a cutting edge document. Paul was not following orthodox doctrines but playing a significant part in shaping them. This thesis favours the view that the trip to Jerusalem in Galatians 2:1-10 is to be equated with the trip in Acts 11:30. Paul was not upholding widely accepted orthodox doctrines, he was helping shape them.

The evidence supporting equating Galatians 2:1-10 with Acts 11:30 shall be evaluated first, then the evidence supporting equating Gal 2:1-10 with the trip in Acts 15. There are a number of significant points of evidence supporting the view that Galatians 2 refers to Paul's visit to Jerusalem in Acts 11:30. Firstly, it enables πάλιν in Galatians 2:1 to be taken logically as referring to Paul's 'next' visit.²⁹ This leaves no unmentioned visits to Jerusalem to account for, which is a problem with the Acts 15 theory.³⁰ Secondly, the letter to the Galatians implies that the Galatians knew Barnabas. Yet Barnabas and Paul parted company soon after the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:35). Thirdly, although Peter was in an indefensible position whenever Galatians 2 is dated, the hypocrisy of Peter and Barnabas is more understandable after Acts 11 than after the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15). Fourthly, the timing of Acts 11 is a more suitable time in Paul's life and ministry for this to take place. It makes sense that this visit to Jerusalem and obtaining the agreement of the Apostles regarding Paul's mission should happen just before the first missionary journey. It makes no sense for Paul to get the other Apostles to confirm his gospel *after* his first major missionary journey as the Acts 15 theory has happening (nor does it make sense for God to reveal to him to confirm it *after* the first major missionary journey). Fifthly, there are striking resemblances between the incidents in the churches of Galatia and the incidents in Acts 15:1f, both could easily have happened before the Council. Lastly, the dating of the letter by its theology is far too subjective to provide any conclusive

²⁹ Guthrie (*Galatians*, p.75) is aware that taking πάλιν as "next" is pushing the translation limits of the word too far (BADG, pp. 752-753), for even he translates πάλιν as "again" rather than "next" when he translates Gal. 2:1 (*Galatians*, p.75). He is referring to the logical implications of the meaning of the word in the flow of the passage, not how it should be translated.

³⁰ Guthrie, *Galatians*, p. 32.

evidence,³¹ except to agree with Betz that Galatians appears to be at an early stage of Paul's conflict with the Judaizers not in an advanced stage.³²

There is no solid textural evidence, which is beyond dispute, to equate the Galatians 2 Jerusalem visit with the Acts 11 visit.³³ Acts 11:30 is simply too brief for any certainty to exist. However, a logical consideration of the chronology of Paul's ministry and the development of the Gentile church, makes Acts 11:30 stand out as a very likely time for this visit to have happened.³⁴

The main evidence supporting the view that Galatians 2 refers to Paul's visit to Jerusalem in Acts 15 is the points of similarity between the two accounts.³⁵ They were both trips to Jerusalem. Barnabas accompanied Paul in both. Both were meetings to discuss the question of Gentiles and the Jewish law. Both have Paul contending with Judaizers who required Gentiles to be circumcised. Peter and James are specifically named among the leading Apostles in both accounts. The same conclusion about the Gentiles and the *Torah* was reached in both accounts. These points of similarity lead the reader to naturally equate the two accounts.

However, there are also significant differences between the Acts 15 account and the Galatians 2 account. Firstly, Galatians 2:1 suggests that this trip was Paul's second trip to Jerusalem. When the book of Acts is consulted, the Acts 11 visit was Paul's second trip to Jerusalem. Acts 15 was his third trip. Secondly, if the Galatians 2 account is to be equated with Acts 15, then the omission of the famine visit of Acts 11 from the Galatians 2 account

³¹ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.lxxxiv.

³² Betz (*Galatians*, 12) says that Romans appears to be at a more advanced stage of Paul's conflict. He knew their arguments well and anticipated them.

³³ The following objections have been raised against the Acts 11 theory:

1. Acts 11:30 states explicitly that the collection was sent to the elders, not the elders and the Apostles, while Acts 15:6 specifically mentions the Apostles.
2. The Apostles are not mentioned in the Acts 11 account.
3. The persecution at the time would have made it hard for Paul to meet the Apostles. (Acts 12:1ff).
4. Titus is mention in Galatians 2 but not in Acts 11:30.

³⁴ According to the North Galatian Theory the Apostle's first visit was during his second missionary journey (probably 51 or 52 AD). The second visit was during his third missionary journey (probably 54 AD). If the South Galatian Theory is correct, then Paul's first visit was on his first missionary Journey. His second was either Acts 16:6 or 14:21. Acts 14:21 (before the Council of Jerusalem) is the favoured reference.

³⁵ Some secondary and less convincing evidence exists.

is difficult to understand.³⁶ Galatians 2 gives the impression of a private meeting with the Apostles, while Acts 15 is clearly describing a public meeting. If it was a public meeting, why did Paul not make good use of this to strengthen his case? Thirdly, closely related to the above problem is the different role of Paul in the two meetings. Fourthly, the detail with which most scholars have problems in attempting to reconcile Galatians 2 and Acts 15 is Paul's failure to mention to the Galatians the resolutions of the Council of Jerusalem. Fifthly, Galatians 2:1-2 says, "I went up again to Jerusalem ... because of a revelation", while Acts 15:2 says the brethren (understood) at Antioch determined that they should go. Sixthly, equating Galatians 2 with Acts 15 shows an inconsistency in Paul's argument.³⁷ Paul was recounting the meeting to show the harmony and unity between the Apostles, but equating it with Acts 15 makes the decisions of the Council appear to have only been superficially accepted by all, because if the Antioch incident happened after the Council, then Peter and those from James went against the decisions.³⁸ Lastly, there is a difficulty in squaring the request from the Apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 15:29) and Paul's words of response in Galatians 2:10 with Acts 15. The only ethical request arising in Galatians 2 is to remember the poor. This is out of place with Acts 15 and sits far better with the famine visit in acts 11:30.

The Acts 15 theory has some good points to commend it. On the surface it looks like the best explanation. Yet it is hard to agree with Ridderbos when he says there are no insurmountable obstacles to identifying Galatians 2 with the Council of Jerusalem.³⁹ There are too many differences to accept the theory. Some of these are explainable, others have explanations which are possible but not plausible, and others simply remain irreconcilable differences. Despite showing that it is possible, it does not necessarily follow that it is probable.

³⁶ It is hard to accept that Paul made an oath to God about the reliability of his words, then totally omitted a significant trip to Jerusalem, an omission which his opponent would have used to great advantage.

³⁷ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.lxxx.

³⁸ Some have argued that ongoing tensions did indeed exist after the Council. However, if they did, would Paul have been so foolish as to recounted post Council clashes as evidence of harmony among the Apostles?

³⁹ Ridderbos, *Galatians*, p.34.

The probability still lies with the Acts 11 theory. The most favourable time of writing remains some time just before the Council of Jerusalem.⁴⁰ While little solid evidence exists, the weight of reason lies with Acts 11:30. Whether the Acts 11 or the Acts 15 theories are accepted, both are dealing with the same issue. Acts 15 was probably the public resolution of an ongoing problem which first came to the Apostles attention in Acts 11. Therefore, Acts 15 is still helpful in giving us a good indication of the type of people these trouble makers may have been, believers who still belonged to the sect of the Pharisees, and gives us a clearer view of the type of beliefs they may have been promoting. Most significantly, it means that Galatians was a cutting edge document making a contribution towards solving a publicly unresolved issue in the early church.

After Paul's visit and the Galatians' acceptance of Christ, others came among the Galatians (Gal 1:8) preaching a "different gospel" (Gal.1:6). These other people preaching this "different Gospel" are never called by name but are referred to as "some who are disturbing you" (Gal 1:7), "the one who is disturbing you" (Gal 5:10) and "those who are troubling you" (Gal.5:12).

Paul never addressed these Agitators directly.⁴¹ Our primary evidence for who they were and the content of their teaching comes from what can be pieced together from Paul's words against them in the letter to the Galatians itself. The difficulty lies in trying to 'mirror read' from Paul's words in Galatians who the Agitators were and what they were teaching.⁴² Cross-referencing to Acts provides some enlightening possibilities for interpretation. However, it must be remembered that, in the light of the uncertainty regarding the North and South Galatians theories and dating issues, a healthy skepticism must be maintained about the relevance of the Acts accounts for interpreting Galatians.

From Paul's letter to the Galatians the following can be concluded about the identity of these Agitators who were disturbing the Galatians (Gal. 1:7). They probably professed to be Christian brothers, for their message was called a 'gospel.' They were accused of being

⁴⁰ For a long list of scholars who hold this view see Bruce, *Galatians*, p.55, footnote 56.

⁴¹ Many scholars (probably for the sake of more stylistic English) seem to take the name by which to call these people from the term οἱ ἀναστάτωντες in Galatians 5:12 and call them 'Agitators' rather than 'Disturbers' or 'Troublers.'

⁴² Barclay's article, 'Mirror reading' is an excellent treatment of the difficulties involved.

ashamed of the cross, and an allusion is made in Galatians 2:4-5 to false brethren.⁴³ They were outsiders, not Galatian Christians, for Paul always spoke of the Agitators in the third person, while referring to the Galatians as “you” (Gal. 1:7-9; 3:1; 4:17; 5:7, 12; 6:12-13).⁴⁴ Paul spoke of his opponents as if they are a homogeneous group. At times Paul referred to an individual troubling the Galatians (Gal. 1: 9, 3:1, 5:7, 5:10), at other times to a group (Gal. 1:7, 4:17, 5:12, 6:12).⁴⁵ The obvious answer is that there was probably a group with a key leader or leaders.⁴⁶ Paul doesn’t seem to have known the Agitators by name, or perhaps he preferred not to name them.⁴⁷ He referred to the Agitators as “some” (Gal. 1:7), “they” (Gal. 4:17), “the one who” (Gal. 5:10) and “those who” (Gal. 5:12; 6:12-13). He asked “who has bewitched you?” (Gal. 3:1) and “who hindered you?” (Gal. 5: 7). Galatians 6:13 calls the Agitators “those who are circumcised”. This combined with Paul’s polemical arguments focusing upon Abraham (Gal. 3:6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 16, 18, Gal. 4:22) and the *νόμος* (Gal. 2:16-3x, 19, 21; Gal. 3:2, 5, 10-2x, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 21-3x, 23, 24; Gal. 4:4, 5; Gal. 5:3, 4, 14, 18, 23; Gal. 6:2, 13) strongly suggests the Agitators had a Jewish background.⁴⁸ The many references to Jerusalem throughout the letter (Gal. 1:17, 18; Gal 2:1; Gal. 4:25, 26) and the particular way Paul included them in his arguments suggest that the Agitators were probably from Jerusalem, or, at least, had close contact with Jerusalem or were claiming backing from Jerusalem. Whether they had any real backing from Jerusalem or not is unknowable.⁴⁹

⁴³ Assuming these allusions are directly relevant to the situation in Galatia.

⁴⁴ Munck’s (*Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, SCM, London, 1959 (Ger. Ed. 1954), p.89) use of Gal. 6:13 to suggest they were Gentiles is stretched. His theory also falls down in saying they were insiders. The letter clearly implies they were outsiders.

⁴⁵ Admittedly Gal. 1:9, Gal. 3:1 and maybe even Gal. 5:7 are most likely in the singular for rhetorical stylistic reasons. However, Gal. 5:10 needs to be taken as referring to an individual.

⁴⁶ Lütgart (*Gesetz und Geist: eine Untersuchung zur Vorgeschichte des Galaterbriefes* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1919) quoted in Bruce, *Galatians*, p.23) and Ropes (*The Singular Problem of the Epistle to the Galatians*: Harvard Theological Studies 14, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1929, p.26-27) proposed a two front theory. They proposed that Paul was opposing both Jewish legalists and pneumatic radicals. It is now generally agreed that the evidence supports the theory that Paul was addressing only one group (Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. xcix).

⁴⁷ Cole, *Galatians*, Tyndale, London, 1965, p.75.

⁴⁸ Schmithals ('The heretics in Galatia', in *Paul and the Gnostics*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1972 (Ger. Ed. 1956), p.13-64) proposed a Gnostic setting. He assumes Paul was misinformed. This reads too much into the text and essentially ignores a major portion of the letter. There are no signs of Gnostic traits (Betz, *Galatians*, p.7).

⁴⁹ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.xcv. For example, the allegory in Gal. 4:21-31 is against “the Jerusalem below” and concludes with “cast out the bondwoman and her son.” Also, the way the reference to the false brethren at Jerusalem was included (Gal. 2:4-5) and the way those from James were included in the Antioch incident and were even called “the circumcision” (Gal. 2:12) both suggest they are not just incidental asides but have significant relevance to what was happening in Galatia.

It is tempting to link the Agitators to those mentioned in Acts 15:1-5 and Galatians 2:4 and conclude that these Jews from Jerusalem were the Agitators mentioned in Galatians, or at least were of the same stock. However, although Paul wanted to make the connection between what was happening in the churches of Galatia and what happened in Jerusalem in Galatians 2:4, the connection is one of similar beliefs and practice, not necessarily a connection of individuals concerned.⁵⁰ In favour of making this link with those in Acts 15 is the fact that Acts 15 tells us they got as far as Antioch.⁵¹ However logical, convenient and strongly suggested this connection may seem, there is no solid proof for it.⁵² The most that can be said for certain is that, while they claimed to be Christian, they were not members of the local congregation and they were similar to the people Paul encountered in Jerusalem. While it is most likely that the Agitators came from Jerusalem and possibly even had personal contact with the Apostles, their teaching was their own. The Jerusalem Apostles did not support it.⁵³ Galatians 1:11-2:10 makes this clear. Just as there is nothing in Acts 15 to suggest any concession to the Pharisaic Christians took place at that time, it also gives no evidence that the Church or the Apostles in Jerusalem would have backed the necessity of circumcision or the observance of feasts or any other Mosaic requirements.

⁵⁰ When Paul recounted the incident at Antioch, he was not making any insinuation that Peter was involved in what was happening in Galatia, only that similar beliefs and practices were involved.

⁵¹ Jesus also mentioned the Pharisees being willing to cross land and sea to make a single proselyte (Matt. 23:15).

⁵² Duncan (*The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1934, p.xxxvii) raises the question of whether there really is any proof that people came from Jerusalem. He proposes that the trouble rose in Galatia itself. However, his theory does not square with Paul's many references to the Agitators as outsiders.

⁵³ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.xciv. Whether or not they claimed authority from Jerusalem is not clear. Because they attacked Paul's authority doesn't mean they claimed it themselves. Ropes (*The Singular Problem*, p.45) is right that all that would be needed would be Gentile Christians coming under the influence of the local synagogue to warrant Paul's letter. Morris (*Galatians*, p.24) proposes the Agitators were Gentile converts who having read the Old Testament scriptures for themselves saw the emphasis on the *Torah* and circumcision. Morris also says the emphasis on flesh suggests that the new converts were having problems with sin in the Christian life and were looking to the *Torah* as a way of keeping sin in check. He quotes Betz (*Galatians*, p.9) in support. However, neither Ropes' and Morris' theories line up with the Agitators claiming to be Christians but being outsiders.

The most reliable insight into the Agitators is in Galatians 6:12-13, where Paul spoke about them directly, instead of indirectly while addressing their teaching.⁵⁴ Galatians 6:12 says they were trying to get the Galatians to submit to circumcision “that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ”. Galatians 6:13 says they “desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh”. Whoever these Agitators were, they were “afraid” of the opinion of the Jews and were trying to impress them. Paul’s comment in Galatians 6:13 that the Agitators “do not even keep the law themselves”, was probably not suggesting that they were dishonest or immoral.⁵⁵ Rather it was more likely a reference to an inconsistency between their claimed faith and their actions, similar to the hypocrisy of which Paul accused Peter, Barnabas and the rest of the Jews, in Galatians 2:11-14. The difference between the Agitators and Peter and his companions at Antioch being that the Agitators while claiming the same faith, in fact, had a different ‘gospel’ (Gal 1:6-7). However, the Agitators probably considered themselves genuine Christians and would have rejected the claim that they were distorting the gospel through their insistence on *Torah observance*, just as the false brethren at Jerusalem would have done (Gal. 2:4). The impact of Paul’s letter is lost if we see the Agitators as ignorant Jewish bigots. They had claimed Christ as the Messiah. However, Paul saw them differently than they saw themselves. He saw them as people believing another gospel, who were ashamed of the cross and if the reference to the false brethren in Galatians 2:4 is meant to be relevant to them, either directly or by way of comparison, he saw them as false brethren too.⁵⁶

It is clear these agitators were not from Galatia. They claimed to be Christian, claimed to preach a gospel, had a Jewish background and some connection with Jerusalem. While they were of the type of the false brethren referred to in Galatians 2:4 and Acts 15:1-5, they may or may not have had any connection with them. Beyond that there can be no certainty.

⁵⁴ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.xcv. Betz (*Galatians*, pp.6-7) challenges the reliability of these verses because he thinks Paul was exaggerating. However, even if Paul was using some rhetorical exaggeration to make a point, there is no reason to doubt the general substance of his comments.

⁵⁵ Betz, *Galatians*, p.7.

⁵⁶ Jewett ('The Agitators and the Galatians congregation', *NTS* 17, 1971, pp.198-212) proposes a zealot background. Jewish Christians in Judea were under pressure from Zealots who were promoting the circumcision of Gentile Christians so that they would not appear to be mixing with lawless Gentiles. Jewett's theory is logical and plausible. However, the evidence within Galatians itself that this actually was the case is not tangible enough to allow to it to drive or even influence the exegesis. In fact one major problem with Jewett's theory is that, however they saw themselves, Paul considered these Agitators to be false brethren, rather than brethren who were under pressure.

As Paul addressed the Agitators' 'gospel' he also spent some time defending their attacks on him personally and on his apostolic authority. These two parts to their trouble making need to be considered together. Their 'gospel' is the main issue, but their attacks on Paul were an integral part of their strategy for having their 'gospel' accepted, for the credibility of Paul's gospel was built on the foundation of his credentials as an Apostle; an eyewitness of and official spokesman for the risen Lord Jesus.⁵⁷

By 'mirror reading' Paul's letter, the Agitators' attacks on Paul can be reconstructed as follows. In Galatians 1:1 Paul began by asserting his apostolic authority and its divine origin. The obvious conclusion is that Paul's apostolic authority was under question in some way that required it's divine origin to be emphatically stated. Either the Agitators claimed that Paul acted on his own authority, or perhaps under the Apostles in Jerusalem, or perhaps they were making the distinction between an Apostle of the Lord and an Apostle of other men, claiming that Paul was only an Apostle from the church in Antioch.⁵⁸ After all, he was indeed an Apostle from the Antioch church (Acts 13:1ff⁵⁹) as well as from the Lord.

In 1:8 Paul warned the Galatians not to accept another gospel even if it comes from an "angel from heaven". It is most likely that Paul was simply using a rhetorical way of saying, "no matter who gives another gospel don't accept them".⁶⁰ However, it is also possible that Paul was using sarcasm about the Agitators claiming to speak from a higher authority than he possessed.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Betz (*Galatians*, p.39) believes that the real issue Paul was defending is found in Galatians 2:17. He says, "Formally, the charge against Paul is contained in Gal. 2:17." It appears that by "formally" he is referring to this being the verbalized charge the Agitators laid against him. He comes to that conclusion from both its position in the apologetic structure of the letter and the fact that it is the only place in the letter we can have a degree of certainty that the Agitators were being quoted. He appears to have a good case for taking this as the formal charge. But the issue the letter was addressing was not the formal charge against Paul. It was primarily addressing Paul's formal charge against the Agitators, which is encapsulated in the question in Galatians 2:14. This is the key to the letter and to this passage, not Galatians 2:17. Paul was not defending himself. He was defending the gospel; his own defence was a secondary matter to him.

⁵⁸ There is also a possibility that they were claiming to be an apostolic delegation from certain men in Jerusalem and Paul was stating his own divine Apostolic authority in comparison.

⁵⁹ This does not contradict the Galatians account, and in fact sheds light on the argument of the letter.

⁶⁰ Arguing from the greater to the lesser was a common form of Jewish logic.

⁶¹ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.xcv.

Paul's rhetorical questions and his comments in Galatians 1:10 suggest that the Agitators claimed Paul was a men pleaser. Galatians 2:6 is possibly worded the way it is as a defense against that accusation. By the time Paul was starting to conclude his letter, he was pointing out that it is not he but the Agitators who were the men pleasers (Gal 6:12-13).

In Galatians 1:11-12 Paul explained the origin of his gospel message. Positively that it was a direct revelation from Jesus Christ and negatively it was not from men. Why did he do this in this emphatic way unless the divine origin of his gospel was being called into question?

In Galatians 1:15 Paul made it clear that his calling was from God. In referring to being set apart by God while still in the womb, Paul was comparing his calling as an Apostle to the calling of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5). Why did Paul go to such detail unless his divine Apostolic authority was being called into question? From the way Paul defended the divine authority of his mission it seems that the Agitators' attacks tried to attribute Paul's mission and gospel to human motivations and origins. The allusion to Jeremiah was probably also intended to imply that the opposition which Paul and his message faced from the Jews was like that which Jeremiah faced. In both of the above verses, as Paul explained that his message and authority were from God, he did so within the context of passages which constantly mention the church and the Apostles in Jerusalem (Chapter 2 also continues with the same orientation).

Galatians 2:4-5 seems at first glance to be an incidental aside. It could easily be left out without disturbing the flow of the passage. However, in the context of the whole letter and the central place which arguments against the *Torah*, and in particular circumcision, play in the letter, it becomes apparent that these two verses were deliberately and strategically placed. Paul saw this historical event as in some way relevant to what was happening in the churches of Galatia. One cannot be dogmatic about how - there is a range of possible scenarios. These Agitators could indeed be the same judaizing false brethren of Galatians 2:4-5 or they may have been 'apostles' sent by this faction. The Agitators may have been local but had contact with, and been being encouraged by, these false brethren. Or it may

simply be that Paul found the resemblance in their teachings striking and the comparison by insinuation was worth making in this instance.

In Galatians 2:1-21 Paul explained what his relationship to the Jerusalem Apostles was. Having established the direct divine authority and origin of his apostleship and gospel message, the question is, why did he need to give an account of his relationship to the Jerusalem Apostles? Was it because the attacks upon his apostleship and his gospel in some way gave, or were based on, a misleading account of the relationship? It seems that his apostleship was being compared to their's in such a way that cast doubt on his apostleship and gospel. To simply claim his divine appointment was not good enough. There were several matters of fact that the Agitators would have been sure to point out. There is a need to appreciate how easy Paul's gospel would have been to criticize. Paul was not one of the original 12 Apostles appointed by Jesus; he was a late comer. He had been an opponent of the gospel. He had not heard Jesus' teaching first hand. He had spent very little time with the Jerusalem Apostles. His mission had been authorized from Antioch, not from Jerusalem.⁶² There had been a dispute at Antioch about the *Torah* between Paul, on the one side, and Peter, Barnabas and other Jews who came from James the head of the church in Jerusalem, on the other side. Maybe even some of the other Apostles had doubts about his credentials at first.⁶³ It would not have been hard for the Agitators to build a picture of Paul as standing alone in opposition to the Apostles from Jerusalem and preaching a different gospel to their gospel. So Paul spent Galatians 2:1-10 showing that while his apostolic authority and gospel message were independent of the Jerusalem Apostles, they were all united under God in both mission and gospel message, and they recognized and approved of each other's missions and gospel. His explanation placed himself, as Apostle to the Gentiles, on an equal footing not just with the Apostles in general but also with Peter, James and the other 'pillars'.⁶⁴ The conclusion is that they were claiming either that Paul

⁶² If this thesis' understanding of the Jerusalem visit in Galatians 2 is correct, then Paul's mission probably was authorized from Jerusalem as well. But since when have those wishing to attack Christ's messengers ever let the facts get in the way of good story.

⁶³ Duncan, *Galatians*, p.6.

⁶⁴ In Galatians 2:9, Paul mentioned James before the other Apostles. This may be because they were meeting in Jerusalem and James was head of the church there, or possibly because he led the discussions at the meeting. In addition, it is likely that he was mentioned first because those troubling the Galatians were from or at least had strong links with, or were claiming strong links with, Jerusalem and possibly with James himself.

was under the authority of Jerusalem, or that Paul had no authority from Jerusalem, and therefore had no authority at all, whereas their authority was from the Jerusalem Apostles. Therefore, Paul did not have authority to contradict their message.

Galatians 4:16-20 (esp. 4:16) is also worded in such a way that it could easily have been a defence against an attack. It is hard to deduce what the attack might have been, further than that it seems to have been some reference either to him being their enemy or not telling the truth.

When Paul asked in Galatians 5:11 “if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted?” the obvious conclusion is that some were accusing him of still preaching circumcision. In the light of what he was preaching, this would make him appear hypocritical and inconsistent.

When all of these details are put together a picture of the Agitators’ attack on Paul begins to emerge.⁶⁵ The whole of Chapter 1:11- 2:21 is one long historical defence from Paul of the direct divine origin of his apostleship and gospel message. Paul’s details of his personal experiences were normally very brief. When he used detail it suggests he had an important purpose. Paul’s recounting his former status in Judaism and his conversion (Gal. 1:13-16), his lengthy explanation of his apostolic authority direct from Christ (Gal. 1:15-17) and the backing and full recognition he received from the Apostles in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1-10) all imply that his credentials were under attack. It could also imply that those preaching this other gospel and attacking his credentials were claiming authority from Jerusalem. This seems especially likely when one considers his mention of those from Jerusalem in his account of his encounter with Peter (Gal. 2:12) and the mention of the existence of false brethren in Jerusalem when he was there (Gal. 2:4-5).

If the Galatians could be convinced Paul was not one of the official Apostles like the 12 from Jerusalem, then the credibility of his message would be severely undermined. In fact, if the Galatians could be convinced Paul did not have the backing of the Apostles from

⁶⁵ Howard (quoted in Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.xciv) says, “While Paul was hostile to the Judaizers, there is no indication that they were hostile to him”. One wonders how he could ever reach such a conclusion in the light of the verses considered above.

Jerusalem but that the Agitators did, then their message was half way toward being accepted over his. This would especially be the case if they could also convince the Galatians that Paul was just a man pleaser who preached circumcision himself when it suited him.

While there are many verses to consider in working out what the Agitators' 'gospel' was, the key to understanding the evidence is Paul's opening remarks in Galatians 1:6ff and his question to Peter in Galatians 2:14. Galatians 1:6 sets the scene for the letter (*exordium* 1:6-11 and *narratio* 1:12-2:14).⁶⁶ In Galatians 1:6 Paul called the Agitator's 'gospel' "a different gospel". Then in Galatians 1:7 he explained it was so different that it was not the gospel at all. (He later went on to talk about his gospel and the Jerusalem Apostles' gospel, and how they had some minor differences but were really the one gospel in essence.) The fact that Paul at first called it a gospel, then said it is not really the gospel, suggests that the Agitators were falsely calling their message "the gospel." They probably claimed to be Christian and presented their teaching as the Christian truth.⁶⁷ Paul's aim was to make sure the Galatians were not fooled by this.

It is hard to tell from Galatians itself whether the Agitators actually directly opposed Paul's gospel outright or whether their attacks were more subtle; making out that their 'gospel' was more complete and Paul's was inadequate.⁶⁸ Paul's recounting in Galatians 2:6 that the Jerusalem Apostles "added nothing to me" implies that the Agitators were saying that

⁶⁶ Betz ('The literary composition', pp.353-379, esp. p.367) shows that structurally Gal.2:14 is meant to be the key issue and (p.359) Gal.1:6 is the reason the letter was written.

⁶⁷ Ridderbos, *Galatians*, p.15.

⁶⁸ In Galatians 4:16-17, Paul asked, "Have I therefore become your enemy?" and he spoke of the Agitator's "wish to shut you out." This may speak of open opposition to him or he may have been referring to the logical end result of following the Agitators' gospel. Longenecker (*Galatians*, p.xcv) believes they were probably not claiming to oppose Paul, but that they said they were just completing his message. Longenecker (*Galatians*, p.xcvii) suggests that Paul was interacting with a Jewish attitude to truth which is found in the Talmud; that truth comes in an elemental form and a developed form. The suggestion is that the Agitators were claiming that Paul's gospel was the elemental form, while their 'gospel' with its Mosaic requirements was the developed form. In other words, their 'gospel' was the full mature 'gospel.' While it is most likely that the Agitators' 'gospel' somehow included the concept that Paul's gospel was elemental and their 'gospel' was developed, the connections being implied cannot be made with certainty. The Talmud was not alone in such concepts. Betz (*Galatians*, p.39), on the other hand, believes that Galatians 2:17 contains a formal charge against Paul's gospel. Care is needed to know when Paul was answering specific spoken criticism, when he was answering the general thrust of criticisms against him, and when he was anticipating objections to his arguments. It is difficult to say into which of these categories Galatians 2:17 falls. The latter is most likely.

Paul's gospel was insufficient. Ultimately the Agitators were attacking Paul's gospel whether directly or subtly.

In Galatians 2:4 Paul recounted the incident in Jerusalem where false brethren tried to bring the Christians into bondage. Paul recounted this incident so that by allusion he could infer that the Agitators' 'gospel' was a 'gospel' of bondage.⁶⁹ In the same way, Galatians 2:14 tells of an incident where "the truth of the gospel" (Gal. 2:14) was in danger in Antioch, in order to make a point about the truth of the gospel being in danger from the same errors in the churches of Galatia.⁷⁰ Structurally, Galatians 2:11-14 both concludes the *narratio* and introduces the *propositio* (Gal. 2:15-21). By running the climax of the *narratio* at Antioch into the *propositio*, he made his answer to Peter at Antioch run into the key proposition he wished to contend with the Galatians. Paul was implying that the issue at Antioch with Peter was directly relevant to the issue in Galatia.⁷¹ Peter was seen as the representative of Jewish Christianity. When he ate with Gentiles, it implied that those who believed in Jesus were no longer under obligation to keep the *Torah*. When he withdrew from table fellowship with the Gentile believers, it implied that they were still under obligation to observe the *Torah*.⁷²

Paul asked Peter the question, "If you being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews"? This conditional sentence assumes that the protasis is true. The accusation that Peter's actions were compelling the Gentiles to live like Jews may at first seem unwarranted, but Paul was right. If the leading figure in the church refused full fellowship with them, they were forced into a position

⁶⁹ Dunn (*Galatians*, p.4) believes the incident in Antioch was relevant to the situation in the churches of Galatia.

⁷⁰ Although he uses these two stories from Jerusalem and Antioch in the same way, it does not imply they were the same people. In fact it could be inferred from Galatians that they were not. The people in 2:4-5 were called false brethren. While those in 2:11ff. were called "certain men from James."

⁷¹ Dunn ('The incident at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-18)', *JSNT* 18, 1983, p.25) says the key phrases are; "If you ... compel the Gentiles to Judaize? (2:14); and "we who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners" (2:15). Betz claims that Peter's dilemma is the same as that of the Galatians. Structurally 2:14 is meant to be the key to the issue (Betz, 'The literary composition', p.367). Betz sees Peter's behaviour and position in the Antioch incident as behind, and motivating, the situation in Galatia (Betz, *Galatians*, p.107).

⁷² Betz (*Galatians*, p.107) says that fellowship was not the issue; attitude to the *Torah* was. However, Betz has oversimplified the issue. The two are inter-related; one leads to the other. Barrett (*Freedom and Obligation*, p.18) suggests that Peter and Barnabas were adopting a compromise under James' instructions for the separation to occur. However, the way the historical allusion is worded suggests that Peter was acting out of fear and Barnabas was being unknowingly led astray. There is simply no evidence of any premeditated plan for separation on Peter's or Barnabas' part.

where Peter was in effect saying to them, “Unless you conform to the Jewish way of life we cannot have social relations with you”.⁷³ This ‘compelling’ in Galatians 2:14 was meant to be seen as an action in the same vein as the false brothers trying to compel the circumcision of Titus in Galatians 2:4-5; and indeed the whole point of including these two events in the *narratio* was so that they would be seen as a parallel to the actions of the Agitators in Galatia (Gal 6:13).⁷⁴

The phrase οὐκ ὄρθοποδοῦσιν προς τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου is probably better translated “they were not acting in an upright way consistent with the truth of the gospel” rather than “they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel”.⁷⁵ The issue was a life style issue. Living under the *Torah* like Jews was not consistent with the gospel. Barrett says that Peter was unsuccessfully trying to combine two irreconcilable principles; the Jewish obedience to God’s *Torah* and justification by faith.⁷⁶ The question is whether Peter actually was trying to combine the two or whether this combination was a logical consequence that he did not intend. The latter is the most likely.⁷⁷ Compelling the Gentiles to live as Jews probably would have been the last thing Peter was trying to do. This is best understood as a situation where Peter was well meaning with good intentions but misguided. The inference by parallel was that the Galatians were well meaning but misguided in following the Agitators. When challenged by Paul, Peter may even have denied compelling anyone to do anything. Yet that was exactly what those from Jerusalem had come to do, and Peter by his acts of compromise was giving credence to them.⁷⁸ This probably also paralleled the Galatian situation where the Galatians had no intention of nullifying the grace of God by seeking righteousness through the *Torah*, but were in effect doing so. Paul did not give the outcome of the situation. The implication of placing this story directly after Galatians 2:1-10 is that, whether Peter accepted it or not,

⁷³ Bruce, *Galatians*, p.133. Allan (*Galatians*, p.43) says that it put them in a position where they either could become Jews or exist as a church socially outside the true church which was approved by the Apostles; in effect it made them second rate members of the church.

⁷⁴ Betz, *Galatians*, p.112.

⁷⁵ Kilpatrick (quoted in Bruce, *Galatians*, p.13) gives examples of ὄρθοπεδεῖν meaning “not on the right road” and suggests that is the best way to take it in this context. In other words, Peter was on a road leading away from the truth of the gospel

⁷⁶ Barrett, *Freedom and Obligation*, p.19.

⁷⁷ This is especially so if Jewett and those who follow him are right in attributing Peter’s motive to a desire to avert persecution.

⁷⁸ Cole, *Galatians*, p.77.

Paul was right and Peter was wrong.⁷⁹ For the point Paul was making, the outcome at Antioch was irrelevant. The Agitators were compelling the Gentiles in Galatia to live like Jews and for doing so they stood condemned before God.⁸⁰

In Antioch, the heart of the error was that the Jews were “compelling the Gentiles to live like Jews”(Gal 2:14). Paul rebuked this error by reminding them of the doctrine of justification by faith, not by works of the *Torah* (Gal. 2:16). In Galatians 2:21, which within the apologetic rhetorical structure is the summary refutation of the charges made, Paul used the phrase “if righteousness comes by the law.” If this was not a significant quote of his opponents, than at the very least it was a summary of the content of their message that would have been recognized as such by the Galatians.⁸¹ Mirror reading Galatians 2:21 also raises the possibility that the Agitators’ charge against Paul stated that, in neglecting the *Torah*, Paul’s gospel was neglecting the grace of God.⁸² However, this is not certain. Paul may have introduced the concept of grace, which he believed they had overlooked, in order to say that if he followed their ‘gospel’ he would negate the grace of God. The inference of Galatians 2:14, together with the refutation in Galatians 2:21, is that the false ‘gospel’ in the churches of Galatia compelled the Gentiles to live like Jews and Paul saw this as inconsistent with justification by faith and the grace of God.⁸³

⁷⁹ In the light of Peter’s earlier participation in the Jerusalem meeting and his later words at the Jerusalem Council, it is most likely that he accepted Paul’s rebuke. However, Longenecker (*Galatians*, p.79) (and others he quotes) does not think that the outcome was favourable.

⁸⁰ The strong “but” (ἀλλά) at the beginning of Galatians 2:14 contrasts the actions of Peter with those of Paul. The imperfect verbs in 2:12 describing the habitual actions of Peter lead up to the aorist verbs in 2:14 describing the definitive acts of Paul. Although Paul put this forward as a question, his judgment that Peter “stood condemned” (Gal.2:11) implied that the answer was that they had no right to compel the Gentiles to live like Jews. Wilckens (‘ὑποκρίνομαι κτλ’, in *TDNT Vol. VIII*, Eds Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1972, p.568) says this should be understood as condemned before God. Longenecker (*Galatians*, p.72) also quotes many useful examples to substantiate this meaning.

⁸¹ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. 95.

⁸² Care is needed not to read the works of Sanders into this verse.

⁸³ Sanders (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, p.543) claims that “Paul is in agreement with Palestinian Judaism ...salvation is by grace but judgment is according to works; works are the condition of remaining ‘in’ but they do not earn salvation.” Sanders makes the claim that Jews didn’t believe in meritorious saving works. Yet Silva has shown at least some did (Moises Silva, ‘The law and Christianity: Dunn’s new synthesis’, *WTJ* 53, 1991, pp.348-350). The scriptures themselves show that at least some did (Mark 7:8-9, Luke 18:9, John 9:41). If Paul and the Jews basically agreed as Sanders claims, then why did he persecute the Christians in his pre-Christian days? In Galatians 1:13 Paul referred to his life as a Pharisee as his life “in Judaism.” The pharisaic ideal was righteousness consisting in blameless observance of all the commands and prohibitions of the *Torah* (*Philippians* 3:2-6) (Wintle, *Justification in Pauline thought*, p.52). Westerholm (‘Law, grace and the “soteriology” of Judaism’, p.69), writes, “That Jews pursue a righteousness based on law and requiring human deeds is thus Paul’s Christian perception of what their conduct amounts to, in the light of the gospel: it is not an attempt to

Galatians 3:1ff is also a key section for it introduces the main ‘theological argument’ (*probatio* 3:1- 4:31) underlying Paul’s proposition, which answers the situation addressed within the letter. In Galatians 3:2-3 having called the Galatians “foolish”, Paul took up the issue of how they were to ‘perfect’ or complete the Christian life.⁸⁴ He asked them whether they received “the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?” The obvious answer was by faith. The inference was that the Agitators’ ‘gospel’ was one of ‘works of the law.’ Paul then asked them, “Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” The implication is that the Agitator’s ‘gospel’ involved ‘perfection’ or completion by *Torah* observation. It is clear that this false ‘gospel’ was not just an entry point ‘gospel’. It involved both the entry point to Christianity and the Christian lifestyle.

After Paul had introduced the concept of the contrast between faith and works of the law (Gal 3:2) and between the Spirit and the flesh (Gal 3:3) which he would develop over the next four chapters,⁸⁵ he then returned to the contrast between faith and works of the law (Gal.3:5) to develop that first. The key motif by which Paul developed the contrast between faith and works of the *Torah* was the theme of being sons of Abraham. Paul began in Galatians 3:6-9 using God’s dealings with Abraham on the basis of faith as the proof that the Lord has always and still deals with his people on that basis not on the basis of *Torah*. He then moved to Galatians 3:15-18 where he used the promise to Abraham, and its ongoing validity, as proof that the *Torah* was never meant to supercede the promise. After a digression on what the real purpose of the *Torah* was (Gal 3:19-25), Paul returned to writing about Abraham as the basis for explaining who the true children of Abraham are. As Chapter 4 begins it appears on the surface that Abraham has been dropped as the loci of the considerations about faith, blessing and the *Torah*. However, through the discussion on heirs and slaves Paul was actually making an implied allusion to Isaac and Eliezer of Damascus. Then when the climax of Chapter 4 is reached the topic of legitimate and

portray, accurately and objectively, the self understanding of contemporary Jews.” Although this comment applies to the Jewish beliefs in general, the same applies to Paul’s comments on the Agitators in Galatia. Even if Sanders is right, then the tones in which Paul wrote show that he was not writing to the Jews whose writings Sanders studied. He was writing to individuals who were in Galatia.

⁸⁴ Gerhard Delling, ‘ἐπιτελέω’, in *TDNT* Vol. VIII, Eds Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1972, pp.61-62.

⁸⁵ Faith and *Torah* are contrast in Gal.3-4. The Spirit and flesh are contrast in Gal. 5-6.

illegitimate children of Abraham takes centre stage and an illusion to Isaac and Ishmael becomes the focal illustration of the point. Why did Paul make his whole ‘theological section’ on faith and the *Torah* in the life of the believer revolve around Abraham, how he received the blessing, and who his children are? It could be simply because the rite of circumcision was handed down from Abraham (Deut. 17:11). But that does not explain the sustained focus upon him throughout the section. The most likely explanation is because the Agitator’s ‘gospel’ focused on Abraham and the Abrahamic covenant, in particular on the blessings that are promised to the children of Abraham.⁸⁶

In Galatians 4:9 Paul asked the Galatians why they were turning back to enslavement to weak and worthless things. Reference back to Galatians 4:3-5 tells us that Paul was referring to enslavement to the *Torah*. The Agitators’ ‘gospel’ put them under a yoke of slavery to the *Torah*. In Galatians 4:10 Paul commented that the Galatians “observe days and months and seasons and years.” This was a reference to the keeping of religious days. Paul was not simply making a factual statement, he was mentioning this as an example of the Galatians again becoming enslaved. This was a practice brought on by the Agitators’ ‘gospel.’ In Galatians 4:21 Paul speaking to the Galatians, or at least some of them, called them “you who want to be under the law.” In the context he meant, “you who want to be under the *Torah* as the Agitators’ ‘gospel’ is requiring you to be.”

Just as Galatians 1:6ff and Galatians 3:1ff were key passages within the letter, so Galatians 5:1ff is also a key passage, for it introduces the exhortation section (*exhortatio* 5:1-6:10) of Paul’s response to the Galatian situation. Galatians 5:2 and 6:12-15 considered together confirm that the Agitators’ ‘gospel’ required circumcision. The noun circumcision is used 7 times in the letter, the verb 6 times. It was a significant feature of their ‘gospel.’ Paul’s emphasis throughout his “lifestyle section” (Chapter 5-6) on the need of the Spirit, not the *Torah*, to keep the flesh in check (Gal. 5:16, 5:18, 5:23-25, 6:2, 6:8) suggests that the

⁸⁶ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.xcvii. Allan (*Galatians*, p.20) writes, “One may say the point discussed in the epistle is nothing but this: What makes a man a son of Abraham?” Dunn (*Galatians*, p.16) says, “the talk is all of sharing in Abraham’s blessing.” For Dunn the issue at stake is that of “sonship of Abraham and the share in his promises and inheritance.” Sonship was only for the descendants of Abraham, others were to become proselytes through the required act of circumcision. This recalls Jesus encounter with the Jews in John 8, where the Jews insisted “Abraham is our father”.

Agitators ‘gospel’ may have included the idea that the *Torah* was needed to check the sinful nature.⁸⁷

Although it is clear that the Agitators were insisting on an adherence to the *Torah*, it is not clear whether or not they were insisting on a full adherence to the whole *Torah*. The three key aspects of Jewish practice were circumcision, Sabbath keeping and observance of the food laws. The Agitators were certainly pushing for circumcision. The days they were observing would probably have included Sabbath keeping as its core. If Paul’s recounting of the Antioch incident has direct bearing and allusion to what was happening in Galatia, then it is also probable that food laws were also being promoted by the Agitators. However, there is no evidence of any further Jewish requirements being insisted on by them.⁸⁸ In Galatians 5:3 Paul warned the Galatians that if they received circumcision they were obliged to keep the whole *Torah*. Why did he need to do this again if they already knew this and understood it? It seems like the agitators may have been only pushing key aspects of the *Torah*. If the Agitators were somehow connected with or similar to the false brethren in Galatians 2:4, then they were integrated, at least humanly speaking, into the Christian community. It is unlikely that they would have insisted on full *Torah* keeping. Their mission was more to keep Christianity Jewish.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Longenecker (*Galatians*, p.xcix) sees the threat of libertinism as present and being answered in Galatians 5:13-6:10. However, this is an unjustified conclusion. A far better explanation is that Paul was answering accusations from Judaizers that only the *Torah* can protect against libertinism and keep them pure. He was answering that the Spirit is meant to do that job, not the *Torah*; the Spirit empowering a life of faith looking forward to righteousness (Gal 5:4-5). Jewett (‘The Agitators’, p.209) saw the congregations as being capable of being swayed either way, by “the propaganda of the agitators … [or by] the lures of libertinism.” But he himself shows a better understanding of Paul’s arguments when he says, “In the Anti-libertinistic section (v.13-vi.10) there are answers to questions raised by the nomistic influx.” Paul’s anti-libertinistic exhortations, if you want to call them that, are more likely to be answers to the Judaizers concerns than addressing a libertine problem.

Betz (*Galatians*, p.8) on the other hand believes that the problem facing the Galatians is this “how can the “pneumatic” (ὁ πνευματικός) live with “trespasses” in his daily life?” He believes the Agitators’ answer was to live under the *Torah* and thus become sons and daughters of Abraham. This ties in with his emphasis on the purpose of the letter as a “magical” cursing and blessing document (*Galatians*, p. 5). He believes that in Galatians a “defense of the Spirit coincides with the proclamation of the gospel of freedom” (*Galatians*, p.25). As his strategy of defence he has chosen to defend the gift of the Spirit to the Galatians (*Galatians*, p.28).

⁸⁸ Dunn (*Galatians*, p.192) is probably right to focus on the three badges of national identity.

⁸⁹ Or if Jewett (‘The Agitators’ p.206) is right their aim was to keep up that appearance to avoid persecution.

When all of the above evidence is considered these verses enable us to draw some conclusions about the Agitators' 'gospel'. It involved submission to the law. These Agitators had accepted that Jesus was the Messiah, the fulfillment of the Jewish hope, but insisted that Christianity had to remain within the sphere of Judaism. Gentiles were to become proselytes. The need of the Galatians to keep the *Torah* was the prime concern of the Agitators' 'gospel'.

It is usually claimed that the Agitator's 'gospel' was requiring either the gospel plus circumcision for salvation,⁹⁰ or the gospel plus works of the *Torah* for salvation.⁹¹ While this may be the ultimate logical conclusion of their gospel, there is no solid proof in Galatians itself that this is how their gospel was presented. In fact, the apologetic rhetorical structure of Galatians suggest that in Galatians 2:15-16 Paul was stating the concept of justification by faith rather than justification by works of the *Torah* as an agreed common ground for Paul and his opponents. The point of contention appears in Galatians 2:17-20, which is concerned with lifestyle and the place of the *Torah* in the life of the believer. When this is understood, it becomes clear that the view that the false 'gospel' was presented as a gospel of faith plus circumcision/works of the *Torah* for salvation stops far short of understanding or explaining their 'gospel'. Their 'gospel' in its presentation in Galatia was not primarily about salvation at all.⁹² In fact the words "salvation" or "save" are never mentioned in Galatians.⁹³ Rather their 'gospel' was concerned with how

⁹⁰ e.g. Ridderbos, *Galatians*, pp.15 & 187; Bruce, *Galatians*, p.31; Fredric L.Godet, 'The conflict between the law and the gospel in Galatia', in *Studies in Paul's Epistles*, Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1984 (1889), p.57; Rendall F, 'The epistle to the Galatians', in *The Expositor's Greek Testament vol. iii*, ed. W. Robert Nicol, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1967, p.140.

⁹¹ e.g. Cole, *Galatians*, p.23; Guthrie, *Galatians*, p.12; Bring, *Galatians*, p.6; Morris, *Galatians*, p.38; Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, Intervarsity, Leicester, 1968, p.12; Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1977 (1867), p.68; Duncan (*Galatians*, p.xv) avoids mentioning salvation specifically. He says there were two vital questions; the validity of his apostleship; and the terms on which sinful man can win acceptance with God. He (*Galatians* p.xxxiv) mentions some who propose there was also a Gentile libertine party.

⁹² Perhaps that is why Lightfoot (*Galatians*, p.30) is unclear about the issue of Galatians other than to say that they had laid the Judaic observances over the simplicity of the gospel. Commenting on Galatians 1:6 he (*Galatians*, p.75) states that Paul was making the distinction that the true gospel is of grace not of works. Bring (*Galatians*, p.6) also shows some understanding that it was not just a salvation issue when he says, "the matter concerned the interpretation of the gospel and its relation to the scriptures of the old covenant." Earlier he (*Galatians*, p.4) had said that the 'Judaizers' wanted to combine a Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament with faith in Jesus.'

⁹³ Salvation is often mentioned in Romans. While the two letters are similar in many ways, they are also very different in other ways. This is one of those differences. A careful noting of this difference is essential not to read Romans into Galatians.

Christians should live.⁹⁴ The rhetorical structure places Galatians 2:17 as the formal charge against Paul. It was a charge not of misplaced faith, but of his gospel leading to the believer sinning *like a Gentile*. The evidence of Galatians is that a central focus of the Agitators' 'gospel' was on the place of the *Torah* and circumcision in the completion or perfection of the Christian life (Gal. 3:3, 5:1-3 & 13-16).⁹⁵ When Paul then came to the exhortation section (Gal. 5:1-6:10), he had not changed tack to addressing libertine tendencies as some have suggested, but rather he was continuing to answer the accusation against him which is mirrored in Galatians 2:17; the accusation that his gospel would lead people to being Gentile sinners.

This central focus of the Agitators' 'gospel' is missed altogether when Acts 15:1 is allowed to dominate the exegesis.⁹⁶ There is too much dependence on Acts 15:1 (and Romans?) in most exegeses of Galatians.⁹⁷ The assumption is that because those who came to Antioch from Judea insisted that circumcision was necessary for salvation, then that was the main issue in Galatia too. There is no denying that the Agitators' 'gospel' appears to have been compatible with that of the men from Judea. Circumcision played a major part in both situations, but there is no evidence that the Agitators made the direct link between circumcision and salvation in the way those in Acts 15:1f did. It is a mistake to let Acts interpret Galatians. Of course, ultimately that is to where the Agitators' 'gospel' logically led. However, Paul in his polemic arguments in Galatians never implied that the Agitators linked *Torah* observance with justification by works of the *Torah*. This thesis will show that that was the point of Paul's letter to the Galatians; to point out the link between *Torah* observance and justification by works which was inherent but unstated within the

⁹⁴ Longenecker (*Galatians*, p.xcv) claims that the Agitators' 'gospel' stressed not just the importance of the Mosaic law for finding God's favour as an entry point to the covenant, it also stressed the importance of the *Torah* for living a lifestyle under God's favour. Donaldson ('Zealot and convert' p.670) says that the Jews were more concerned about what their followers did than what they believed. Paul, on the other hand, refused to let the two be separated. However, he made sure faith came first.

⁹⁵ Jewett ('The Agitators', p.207) understands this when he says that the Agitators offered the Galatians the promise of perfection.

⁹⁶ Various commentators speak of the necessity of circumcision to the Agitators; but a necessity for what? They often assume from Acts 15:1 that a necessity for salvation is implied. While Paul's analysis is that ultimately this was a gospel/salvation issue, that is not how the problem presented itself in Galatia. They presented circumcision as necessary for becoming sons of Abraham through *Torah* righteousness. For them it was more a lifestyle and community issue than a salvation issue.

⁹⁷ See, for example, Stott, *Galatians*, pp.50-51; Guthrie, *Galatians*, p.84.

Agitators' 'gospel'. In particular his concern was to show the incompatibility between the Agitators' 'gospel' of *Torah* observance and justification by faith.

Paul's response to the Agitators' 'gospel' involved numerous references to Abraham, an allegory regarding who are the true descendants of Abraham, references to the promise to Abraham and references to the blessing to Abraham's descendants. The heart of the heresy which Paul takes up was, "how do Christians receive the blessings of God promised to the children of Abraham?" From the evidence examined, the Agitators' 'gospel' went something like this: "In order to be true children of Abraham, in order to receive the blessings of God promised to the children of Abraham, you need to be circumcised and submit to the law of Moses".⁹⁸

In conclusion, the situation which Paul addressed was this. He had once lived his life to achieve a righteousness before God through obedience to the *Torah* (Phil. 3:6). But then the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him and called him to preach Christ crucified (Gal. 1:15-16; Acts 9:1-22; 26:9-21). After preaching Christ for 14 years Paul met with the other Apostles in Jerusalem in order that he might obtain official agreement and harmony between himself and the other Apostles regarding his calling from God and the gospel he was preaching to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:1-10; Acts 11:27-30). He then embarked upon his first major missionary journey which included a time in the Roman province of Galatia (Acts 13-14). During this time the Galatians accepted both Paul and the gospel with joy (Gal. 4:12-15).

Something then went badly wrong to turn them away from both him and his gospel (Gal. 4:16-20; Gal. 1:6-7). Some 'Agitators' came to Galatia attacking Paul's credentials (Gal 1:10; Gal. 5:11) and preaching a different 'gospel' to the one Paul had preached (Gal 1:6-7). These men troubled the Galatians by challenging Paul's credibility as an Apostle and by teaching the necessity of observing the *Torah* in order to complete the gospel which Paul preached.⁹⁹ This other 'gospel' was strongly based around being children of Abraham and

⁹⁸ Allan (*Galatians*, p.20) is close to the mark when he says, "One may say the point discussed in the epistle is nothing but this: What makes a man a son of Abraham?"

⁹⁹ In the Judaizers view, Paul had suppressed circumcision and the *Torah* to get a better hearing and thus corrupted the message of salvation (Bornkamm, 'The revelation of Christ to Paul', p.95).

the need to be under the Mosaic law. Their emphasis was upon how Christians should live under the *Torah* to be righteous before God. The Galatians were believing the Agitators' accusations against Paul, were at least beginning to follow the Agitators in some Old Testament observances and were considering submitting to circumcision. The Galatians were in danger of abandoning the gospel which Paul had preached to them. The fact that this letter is to "churches" (plural) suggests that the problem was in all the churches of Galatia.

Either on a second visit or by correspondence no longer extant, Paul warned the Galatians not to accept any other gospel (Gal. 1:9). However, it appears there was a danger of his warnings not being heeded (Gal 1:6; 3:1; 4:11; 4:20). The present tense use of μετατίθημι in Galatians 1:6 implies that this defection was in progress but not necessarily complete.¹⁰⁰ It appears that they were keeping some Jewish observances such as religious days, weeks etc (Gal. 4:10), but had not yet taken the step of submitting themselves to circumcision (Gal. 4:21; 5:2-3), which was a recognized symbol of submitting under the *Torah*. Paul wrote, amazed that they were being "bewitched" and considering submitting to circumcision, and that they could not see the incompatibility between the gospel of Jesus Christ he had preach to them and this different 'gospel' of justification by works of the *Torah*. His view was that if the Galatians submitted to the 'gospel' of the Agitators, they would be relying on the *Torah* for righteousness instead of relying on Christ. They would have severed themselves from Christ and fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4). This was a very real danger. The Agitators were persuasive (Gal. 3:1). They were zealous to win the Galatians over, to alienate them from Paul (Gal. 4:17). Although the Galatians had not yet submitted to circumcision, the Agitators had already had some success among them (Gal. 5:7-8).

Paul's use of the phrases "some who are disturbing you" (Gal. 1:7) and "those who are troubling you" (Gal. 5:12) suggest that there was confusion and turmoil over this whole situation. The Galatians may have been in two minds about who to follow, or following the Agitators, but with some serious concerns, or perhaps the congregations were split over the issue, but the majority were compelling some who were holding strong. It is impossible to say. However, it is clear all was not peaceful and harmonious.

¹⁰⁰ Burton, *Galatians*, p.18.

Paul's comments about them now thinking he was their enemy (Gal. 4:16) may refer to a cold response from them on a second visit, or more likely it refers to news he had received by correspondence, or otherwise, about them shifting their allegiance to the false teachers and rejecting him, at least to some extent. Also implied in Paul's comments was the understanding that by abandoning his gospel they were abandoning Paul himself.

Paul saw this as no little matter he was addressing. What was happening in the churches of Galatia was in microcosm what was happening, or about to happen, across the known world. As the gospel spread to the Gentiles, the church was forced to rethink the whole relationship between faith and the *Torah* given to the nation of Israel through Moses. Galatians is a case study of that revolution in progress. The separation of Christianity from Judaism was a long and painful struggle.¹⁰¹ To describe the situation as a polemical struggle with Jews is quite an inadequate description. A proper understanding of the situation to see it as the struggle of the church to recognize the identity and place of Gentile believers before God. They had sprung from the Jewish church and treasured the Jewish scriptures. What bearing did the *Torah* have on how they were to relate to their new Lord and how did they apply those Old Testament scriptures to their life?

It is significant that Galatians lines up with Acts 14-16 in two important areas. Although there are some historical questions unanswered, the issues of the interaction between Paul and the Apostles in Jerusalem and the issues raised between Paul and the Jews in that area are consistent. The calling of, and the conclusions of, the Council of Jerusalem are consistent with Paul's letter to the Galatians and both show the Apostles in Jerusalem and Paul in agreement. Both show agreement as to what the agreed Gospel was and was not. Both show that the issue being faced was the problem of Galatians 2:14, "How is it that you then force Gentiles to follow

customs?"¹⁰² Acts 15 was the account of the Jerusalem Council's answer to the situation with the wider church. The letter to the Galatians was Paul's response to this situation as it was manifest specifically in Galatia. It was his answer to the 'gospel' of the Agitators. As

¹⁰¹ Betz, *Galatians*, p.28.

¹⁰² Stendahl ('the Introspective Conscience', p.206) writes, "it is clear that Paul's problem is how to explain why there is no reason to impose the Law on the Gentiles."

the Apostle of Jesus Christ he showed them the scriptural answer to how to receive the blessing of God promised to the children of Abraham.

However, there is a need to peel away the layers to get to the core issue. The presenting problem was that raised in Galatians 2:14 of whether Gentiles should be required to Judaize. The promise of the Judaizers in presenting their ‘gospel’ was to complete Paul’s gospel by delivering to the Galatians the blessing of sons of Abraham by making them true sons of Abraham through *Torah* righteousness.¹⁰³ But the core issue for Paul was that the Galatians in submitting to *Torah* righteousness, in any way at all, were abandoning the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁴ The situation in Galatia needs to be understood as **both** an issue of the gospel and an issue of the *Torah* and lifestyle righteousness. A failure to grasp this leads to viewing the situation through the wrong paradigm.

Understanding Paul’s answer to the situation in Galatia also requires reading Galatians through a correct paradigm; the paradigm of the framework of Paul’s thought. His thought consisted of both the focus of his answer and the framework within which he thought and framed that answer. The next chapter of this thesis will investigate the framework of Paul’s thinking.

¹⁰³ Motyer ('Righteousness by faith', p.45), citing Galatians 3:12, which quotes Leviticus 18:5, thinks that Paul’s opponents made a lot of the promise in the Old Testament of life through the *Torah*. Donaldson ('Zealot and convert', p.679) puts it better when he writes, 'The soteriological question for [Paul] was not "How can a sinful individual find salvation?", but, "How does one belong to the true community of salvation?"'

¹⁰⁴ Dunn (*Galatians*, p.116) says that Paul’s juxtaposition of the Jerusalem agreement and the Antioch confrontation was stark for effect; he was showing the Galatians that he had remained consistent with the gospel while those from Jerusalem had not.