

GALATIAN PROBLEMS

5. GALATIANS AND CHRISTIAN ORIGINS¹

By F. F. BRUCE, M.A., D.D.

RYLANDS PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM AND EXEGESIS
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

I

AFTER our four previous studies in "Galatian problems", we cannot claim to have reached many agreed solutions. That the trouble-makers whom Paul attacks were judaizers and not gnosticizers is, I think, certain. It is equally certain, in my judgement, that they were Jewish Christians, not Gentiles.² But while I have argued that the letter was sent to South Galatia, not North Galatia, and that it may well be the earliest of Paul's extant writings, I know that the arguments fall far short of demonstration. They may have reassured those who were already disposed to maintain these positions, but they will hardly have persuaded others to change their minds. Perhaps I should be satisfied if the South Galatian hypothesis and the early date, minority positions as they are, continue to be treated with respect as reasonable options.

In a dissertation recently submitted to the University of Manchester³ one of my research students, Dr. J. W. Drane, has developed an interesting argument involving the relation of Galatians to Paul's other "capital" epistles. Briefly, he suggests that the anti-judaizing polemic of Galatians opened the door to a gnostic type of antinomianism, summed up in such a

¹ A lecture delivered in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester on Wednesday, the 15th of November, 1972.

² In his important article, "The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation" (*NTS*, xvii (1970-71), 198 ff.), R. Jewett argues persuasively that the judaizing missions to the church of Antioch and her daughter-churches were stimulated by the pressure, from the late forties onwards, of Palestinian Zealots, who treated as traitors those Jews who maintained social relations with the uncircumcised. Those Zealots were the persecutors whose hostility the judaizers hoped to avoid (Gal. vi. 12). He assigns to the same setting the persecution of the Judaean churches mentioned in I Thess. ii. 14-16.

³ J. W. Drane, *Paul and the Gnostics: Some Aspects of Pauline Teaching and the Infiltration of Gnostic Ideas into the Early Church* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Manchester, 1972).

slogan as "Everything is permissible". Paul found it necessary to counteract this tendency in 1 Corinthians by laying down limits and regulations which some of his converts might have had difficulty in distinguishing from a new legality. In 2 Corinthians and Romans it is possible to recognize a synthesis of the two extremes which find expression in the two earlier letters. It might be thought that Dr. Drane has imposed a Hegelian pattern on the Pauline correspondence, but that is not so; the pattern emerged from his unprejudiced reading of the documents. He did indeed hold already, for what appeared to him (and to me) to be sound reasons, that Galatians was the earliest of the four letters. The thesis-antithesis-synthesis pattern which consequently emerged, on his reading of the evidence, cannot therefore be used as an argument for the early date of Galatians; the early date was presupposed. But when the epistles are read in terms of this pattern, several of their features are seen in a new light. For example, the emphasis on the gospel as "tradition" in 1 Corinthians could be regarded as a corrective to the emphasis on the gospel as "revelation" in Galatians. The rather detailed ethical guidelines and caveats in 1 Corinthians ("Everything is permissible, *but...*")¹ could be regarded as correctives to false inferences drawn from the insistence on freedom from the law in Galatians. Even the exhortations to women in 1 Corinthians about public decorum in dress and utterance² could be regarded as correctives to an ultra-libertarian interpretation of the principle laid down in Galatians iii. 28 that in Christ "there is neither male nor female". Having supervised Dr. Drane's research for three years and having recently taken part in the examination of his thesis, I am hardly in a position to offer an objective assessment of his conclusions, but it will be interesting to see how they are appraised by the world of Pauline scholarship when they are published. But even if they win general approval, the most that could be said about their bearing on the date of the letter is that the early dating is consistent with them. Without discussing the date further, then, we shall consider some of the implications of the letter for Christian origins and the beginning of the gospel.

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 12, x. 23.

² 1 Cor. xi. 2-16, xiv. 33b-36.

II

The letter includes in its opening salutation words which are commonly recognized as drawn from an early Christian confession of faith, which Paul did not formulate although he subscribed to it. The Pauline greeting, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" is followed by a construction with article and participle (equivalent to an adjective clause) in which Christ is described as the one "who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Gal. i. 4 f.). Two pieces of common and primitive Christian belief find expression here: (i) that Christ "gave himself for our sins"—with which we may compare 1 Corinthians xv. 3, "Christ died for our sins", or Romans iv. 25, "who was delivered up for our trespasses"—and (ii) that the purpose of his so doing was our deliverance "from the present evil age". This presents the Christian reinterpretation of the current Jewish doctrine of the two ages, the transition between the present age, the epoch of wickedness (as it is called in the Qumran texts), and the age to come, the age of new life and righteousness, being marked by the Christ-event—historically in his death and resurrection and existentially in the experience of his people when by faith they enter into union with him.¹ To these two items should be added one that appears earlier in the salutation, where "God the Father" is qualified by the participial phrase "who raised him (i.e. Jesus) from the dead" (Gal. i. 1), a phrase recurring throughout the New Testament epistles, as in Romans iv. 24, viii. 11, x. 9; 2 Corinthians iv. 14; 1 Peter i. 21.

Further extracts from the common stock of primitive Christianity appear in Galatians iv. 4, "When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman"—possibly with the further phrase "born under law", but the following words, "to redeem those that were under law, that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal. iv. 5), are characteristically Pauline. Yet when Paul goes on to link this adoption of believers into the family of God with their receiving from God "the Spirit of his

¹ Cf. 2 Cor. v. 17.

Son", he adduces as a demonstration of this their invocation of God as "Abba! Father!" (Gal. iv. 6). From the earliest times, it appears, Greek-speaking Christians took over from the Aramaic-speaking church the word *Abba* which Jesus had used in addressing God or speaking about him (cf. Mark xiv. 36), adding to it the Greek equivalent *ὁ πατήρ* (cf. Rom. viii. 15).¹ Thus Paul weaves his distinctive teaching around a core of primitive usage.

The same is true of the death of Christ, which evidently played a central part in the message first brought to the Galatians, "before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified" (Gal. iii. 1). Paul's elaboration of the doctrine of Christ's passion is seen in his argument in Galatians iii. 10-14 that, by enduring the form of death upon which the divine curse had been pronounced in the law (Deut. xxi. 23), Christ had redeemed his people from the curse which the law pronounced on those who failed to keep it perfectly (Deut. xxvii. 26).² A further Pauline insight into the significance of the cross of Christ appears in Galatians vi. 14 where, playing on a double meaning of the verb *σταυρόω*, he says that it constitutes a fence separating him from the *kosmos*.

Baptism was the common sign of initiation into the Christian fellowship; in addition to its primitive association with repentance, cleansing and the remission of sins, Paul views it as the token of incorporation into Christ: "as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. iii. 27).³ Through membership in Christ, who is Abraham's offspring, they too—even Gentiles—become Abraham's offspring and heirs of the promises made to the patriarch by God (Gal. iii. 29).

The reception of the Spirit in the Galatian churches, as elsewhere in the early apostolic age,⁴ was attended by mighty works (Gal. iii. 5), but Paul elaborates the doctrine of the Spirit

¹ Cf. A. M. Hunter, *Paul and his Predecessors* (London, 2nd edn. 1961), p. 50, where Paul's acquaintance with the Lord's Prayer is suggested; see also J. A. T. Robinson's comments on Christian baptism, adoption and the reception of the Spirit as reflecting "the association at the baptism of Jesus of the gift of the Spirit with the declaration of Sonship" ("The One Baptism as a Category of New Testament Soteriology", *S.J.Th.* vi (1953), 262). ² See p. 268.

³ Cf. Rom. vi. 3ff.

⁴ Cf. Acts ii. 43 *et passim*; Heb. ii. 4.

along lines of his own, contrasting life under the Spirit's leadership with life under law in terms of freedom as opposed to bondage (Gal. v. 1, 18).

Most of the Old Testament *testimonia* quoted in Galatians are characteristically Pauline, and some are peculiar to this letter. We shall be cautious, therefore, in assigning them to the common stock of primitive Christian *testimonia*. Professor Dodd suggests that two of them may be so assigned: (a) the conflation of Genesis xii. 3 and xxii. 18 in Galatians iii. 8, "in you shall all the nations be blessed" (cf. Acts iii. 25 for a different conflation of the same two texts),¹ and (b) the statement of Habakkuk ii. 4, quoted in Galatians iii. 11 (as in Rom. i. 17) in the sense, "he who is righteous (justified) by faith will come to life", which (in the light of its different usage in Heb. x. 38) he thinks may have been a *testimonium* to the coming of Christ even before Galatians was written.² I should mention two more.

In Galatians iii. 13 Paul, as we have seen,³ quotes Deuteronomy xxi. 23 (LXX), "cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" (*κρεμάμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου*) and expounds it along with Deuteronomy xxvii. 26 by means of the rabbinical device of *gezerah shawah*.⁴ But it appears that Deuteronomy xxi. 23 had already been applied to the crucifixion of Christ, if we consider the use of the phrase "hanging him on a tree" (*κρεμάσαντες ἐπὶ ξύλου*) in two speeches in Acts (v. 30, x. 39) which there is no reason to regard as free Lukan compositions, since each is a summary of primitive kerygmatic motifs.⁵ Quite early Jesus' followers came to terms with the fact that their Master died the death on which the law pronounced a curse, although Paul, *more suo*, relates the fact to Jesus' satisfaction and abrogation of the Torah.

Again, the application of Isaiah liv. 1 in Galatians iv. 27, where the "barren one" is interpreted of the Gentile church by contrast

¹ C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London, 1952), pp. 43f.

² *According to the Scriptures*, pp. 50 f.

³ See p. 267.

⁴ *Gezerah shawah* = "equal category". The common term "cursed" in Deut. xxi. 23 and xxvii. 26 provides a basis for interpreting the one text in the light of the other. In this instance the common term appears in the Greek version only; two different words are used in the Hebrew text.

⁵ Cf. Acts xiii. 29; 1 Pet. ii. 24. In the 1970 edition of N.E.B. *ξύλον* is translated "gibbet" in all five of these New Testament passages.

with the married woman, here understood as "the present Jerusalem", might well be regarded as original to Paul.¹ But at least it is taken from one of the most fertile fields of *testimonia*, Isaiah xl-lxvi, which appears to have been given an extensive Christian interpretation at an early date. If Isaiah liv. 1 had already received a Christian interpretation, Paul certainly adapts it to his current argument; I wonder if this text may not have suggested to him his allegorical exegesis of the Genesis story of Hagar and Sarah, with their respective sons, rather than vice versa.

Be that as it may. If we try to summarize the primitive Christian message, proclaimed by Paul and his predecessors alike, as it is presupposed in the letter to the Galatians, the result might be somewhat as follows:

Jesus our Lord, the Son of God, was sent into the world by his Father when the due time came. As befitted Israel's promised Messiah, he was born into the family of Abraham and lived under the Jewish law. He was crucified by his enemies, but in his death he gave himself for his people's sins. God raised him from the dead, to be the Saviour of all who believe in him; he has sent his Spirit into their hearts, enabling them to call God "Father" as Jesus did, to exhibit his love in their lives and to look forward confidently to the realization of their hope.

III

When Paul charges his Galatian converts with turning away so quickly to follow "a different gospel" which could not properly be called a gospel at all, and anathematizes all who preach any other gospel than that which those converts had received from him (Gal. i. 6-9), was there (we may ask) any objective standard by which judgement could be pronounced between his gospel and the "different gospel"? Can we be as sure as he was that his version was genuine and the other spurious? Certainly, with the benefit of hindsight we can agree that, if Christianity was to become a universal faith, a version like Paul's was more likely to achieve this end than that of his opponents; but how did the situation look when the letter to

¹ The attempt by V Burch in J. R. Harris, *Testimonies*, ii (Cambridge, 1920), 32 ff., to ascribe this use of Isa. liv. 1 to a pre-Pauline "testimony" collection, is based on too ready an assumption of the primitiveness of the Cyprianic *Testimonia aduersus Iudaeos*; Cyprian's citation of Isa. liv. 1 in *Testimonia*, i. 20 is much more likely to be dependent on Gal. iv. 27.

the Galatians was written? Was there any general consensus regarding the "authentic" gospel in reference to which other self-styled "gospels" might be exposed as false?

We can appreciate how slender Paul's case for the gospel he preached must have appeared if he was the only one who preached it. Paul was a latecomer to the Christian faith, as every one knew. He had not been a companion of Jesus on earth as the original apostles had been; and when he first made contact with the followers of Jesus it was as a persecutor, not as a champion. What reason was there to accept such a man's interpretation of the message of Jesus in preference to that of others?

Paul finds it necessary to answer this question, and the necessity of doing so places him in a delicate situation. He wants to maintain that the leaders of the Jerusalem church recognize the authenticity of the gospel which he preaches; he wants (perhaps even more) to maintain his personal independence of the authority of the Jerusalem leaders. Accordingly, he asserts his independence of their authority before he (after a fashion) appeals to their authority. "In my early zeal for the ancestral traditions of Judaism", he says (if his words may be summarized), "I devastated¹ the church, until God (who had designated me from birth for my apostolic service) revealed his Son in me so that I might be his herald among the Gentiles."² I embarked on this ministry at once, without consulting either the

¹ This verb (*πορθέω*), occurring in Gal. i. 13, 23, is found once elsewhere in the New Testament—in Acts ix. 21, also with reference to Paul's persecuting activity. It is apparent that the story of this activity, with its sequel in Paul's conversion and début as a preacher of the gospel, was known in Judaea and Galatia alike. O. Linton has argued in an important article that the version of the story which Paul is at pains to correct in Galatians is the version reproduced in the narrative of Acts ("The Third Aspect: A Neglected Point of View", *Studia Theologica* iii (1949), 79 ff.).

² Paul describes his conversion and call in terms reminiscent of Jer. i. 5 ("Before I formed you in the womb . . . I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations") and Isa. xlix. 5 ("Yahweh . . . formed me from the womb to be his servant"). Similar echoes are heard in the accounts of his conversion in Acts ix. 15, xxvi. 16-18. Paul's experience is thus put "on the same plane as the experiences that made the great Old Testament figures connecting links in God's plan of salvation" (J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, E.T. [London, 1959], p. 33). Cf. B. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (London, 1961), p. 223.

Jerusalem apostles or anyone else. Not until three years had elapsed did I go to Jerusalem to visit Cephas; the only other apostle I met was James, the Lord's brother. That was all the contact I had with Jerusalem in my early Christian days; after two weeks there I went off into Syria and Cilicia to preach the faith I had once endeavoured to overthrow. Not until fourteen years had elapsed did I go up to Jerusalem again" (Gal. i. 13-ii. 1 a). This narrative is designed to support his claim that he derived the gospel which he preached from no human intermediary but by the revelation of Jesus Christ granted him at Damascus.

Then comes the account of the conference held in Jerusalem between Paul and Barnabas on the one hand and the Jerusalem leaders on the other (Gal. ii. 1-10). Paul is still careful to maintain his independence—"those men of repute", he says, "added nothing to me"¹ (Gal. ii. 6), whether in relation to the content of the gospel or the authority to preach it; but they acknowledged the genuineness of the gospel which I was already preaching. This acknowledgement on their part is implied in his statement that he "laid before them" the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles (ii. 2). Far from criticizing it or finding it defective, they agreed that, as they themselves had been commissioned to carry the gospel to the Jews, Paul and Barnabas had been commissioned to carry it to the Gentiles.² Two separate constituencies are distinguished, but there is no suggestion that there were two distinct versions of the gospel for the respective constituencies. In the light of Paul's solemn imprecations in Galatians i. 8 f., it is evident that he would have dismissed the possibility of such a thing as preposterous.³ No

¹ Gk. ἐμοὶ ... οὐδὲν προσανέθεντο. N.E.B.: "did not prolong the consultation" (margin: "gave me no further instructions").

² Cf. Acts xiii. 47, where Paul and Barnabas describe their commission in Yahweh's words to his Servant in Isa. xlix. 6. D. W. B. Robinson sees in the "two apostleships" of Gal. ii. 7-9 an agreement to divide the Servant's commission in Isa. xlix. 6, the Jerusalem leaders undertaking "to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel" and Paul and Barnabas carrying the "light to the nations" ("The Circumcision of Titus and Paul's 'Liberty'", *Australian Biblical Review*, xii (1964), 24 ff.).

³ Cf. Rom. iii. 30: "God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised through their faith."

doubt the approach and emphasis would differ: a considerable body of background knowledge could be assumed in Jewish audiences which pagan audiences lacked. Without prejudging the nature of the sermons in Acts, we can see that Luke takes this for granted: Paul's address in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch (Acts xiii. 16-41) presupposes familiarity with a long stretch of sacred history which would have been unintelligible had it been introduced into his Areopagitica at Athens (xvii. 22-31). Again, the circumcision issue did not arise in the mission to Jews, who were circumcised already. It has already been suggested¹ that, when Paul and Barnabas shook hands with the Jerusalem leaders on the demarcation of their respective spheres of activity, too much was taken for granted on both sides, and trouble arose when those unventilated questions came into the open. Paul assumed that Cephas saw eye to eye with him on the status of Gentiles in the church, and indeed his assumption was not unfounded if Cephas, on his first coming to Antioch, practised table-fellowship with Gentiles as Paul assures us he did. All the greater was Paul's sense of disillusionment when Cephas withdrew from this table-fellowship at the instance of one or more² who "came from James" (Gal. ii. 12) and when subsequent attempts were made by people claiming authorization from Jerusalem to intervene in Paul's mission-field. But worse still in his eyes was the urging of circumcision on his Gentile converts as a religious obligation apart from which they could not become genuine children of Abraham and be admitted into the true covenant-community.

Those who urged circumcision on the churches of Galatia no doubt felt quite sincerely that if this practice went by default, even for Gentile believers, the continuity of the history of salvation was interrupted. If the Jerusalem leaders were disposed to waive the circumcision requirement, that simply stamped them

¹ BULLETIN, li (1968-9), 303 ff.

² For the variant *τινα* ("someone") for *τινας* ("some people") see BULLETIN, li (1968-9), 308. The suggestion that *τινα* may be neuter plural ("certain things") and may refer to the terms of the apostolic decree of Acts xv. 28 f. (D. W. B. Robinson, art. cit., 40 f.) is improbable. See also the observations on the passage in R. McL. Wilson, "Gnostics—in Galatia?" *Studia Evangelica*, iv (1968), 360.

as compromisers. As for Paul, who refused to have his Gentile converts circumcised, it was he who was the heretic and they themselves who were orthodox, for they remained faithful to the terms of the unchangeable covenant, which Paul repudiated. One may say, with Otto Kuss, that "faithfulness in matters of factual detail need not amount to faithfulness in regard to the genuine content of the message"; but this simply brings us back to the question of how the genuine content of the message was to be ascertained.¹

That salvation was to be found in Jesus Christ was a proposition to which Paul and his judaizing opponents would equally have subscribed. They might even have agreed that salvation was to be found in him alone. But on what conditions was the salvation found in Christ alone to be secured? This was the crucial question. No doubt Jesus did sit very loose to the traditions of the elders,² but when it was a question of the admission of Gentiles to the fellowship of his disciples, could Paul or anyone else adduce a single utterance of his which suggested that circumcision could be dispensed with? (Indeed, when we consider the important part played by the circumcision question in the development of the early church, we may be impressed by the absence from our gospel tradition of any attempt to find a dominical ruling to which one side or the other could have appealed.) Paul might have appealed to the spirit of Jesus' teaching, or (as he did) to the logical implication of the gospel,³ but people like his opponents would be satisfied with nothing less than verbatim chapter-and-verse authority; and this was not forthcoming.

¹ *Auslegung und Verkündigung*, i (Regensburg, 1963), 30. Kuss adds immediately that it is from the standpoint of faith that the genuine content of the message is to be certainly determined. It is from such a standpoint that his pupil, J. Eckert, says at the end of his monograph *Die urchristliche Verkündigung im Streit zwischen Paulus und seinen Gegnern nach dem Galaterbrief* (Regensburg, 1971): "As highly as the apostle's striving for unity with the Jerusalem church and its 'men of repute' is to be valued, . . . so little must his fight against the 'other gospel' in Galatia—a fight which, in the last analysis, was concerned with the proclamation of the salvation to be found in Jesus Christ alone—lose its exemplary significance" (p. 238).

² Cf. Mark vii. 1-23.

³ Cf. Gal. iii. 2-5, iv. 4-7, etc.

IV

From the perspective of nineteen centuries' distance, despite our ignorance of many elements in the situation that were well-known to the protagonists, we can probably present an objective argument in defence of Paul's claim that the message he preached was the authentic gospel of Christ. It is this: two things on which Paul pre-eminently insisted—that salvation was provided by God's grace and that faith was the means by which men appropriated it—are repeatedly emphasized in the ministry of Jesus, and especially in his parables, regardless of the strata of gospel tradition to which appeal may be made. When we reflect on the complete lack of evidence in Paul's letters that he knew the parables of Jesus, we may wonder how Paul managed to discern so unerringly the heart of his Master's message. We may suspect that this discernment was implicit in the "revelation of Jesus Christ" which, according to him, was the essence of his conversion experience.

The response of faith regularly won the approval of Jesus, sometimes his surprised approval, as when it came from a Gentile,¹ and was a sure means of securing his help and blessing; in face of unbelief, on the other hand, he was inhibited from performing works of mercy and power.² "Faith as a grain of mustard seed"³ was what he desired to see, but too often looked for in vain, even in his own disciples.

As regards the teaching of the parables, the point we are making can be illustrated from two, belonging to two quite distinct lines of tradition—Luke's special material and Matthew's special material.

In the Lukan parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke xv. 11-32), the father might very well have adopted other means for the rehabilitation of his younger son than those described (with approval) by Jesus. When the black sheep of the family came home in disgrace, the father, having a father's heart, might well have consented to give him a second chance. Listening to his

¹ Cf. Matt. viii. 10 // Luke vii. 9.

² Cf. Mark vi. 5 // Matt. xiii. 58.

³ Matt. xvii. 20; Luke xvii. 6.

carefully rehearsed speech, he might have said, "That's all very well, young man; we have heard fine phrases before. If you really mean what you say, you can buckle to and work as you have never worked before, and if you do so, we may let you work your passage. But first you must prove yourself; we can't let by-gones be by-gones as though nothing had happened." Even that would have been generous; it might have done the young man a world of good, and even the elder brother might have been content to let him be put on probation. But for Jesus, and for Paul, divine grace does not operate like that. God does not put repentant sinners on probation to see how they will turn out; he gives them an unrestrained welcome and invests them as his true-born sons. For Jesus, and for Paul, the initiative always rests with the grace of God. He bestows the reconciliation or redemption; men receive it. "Treat me as one of your hired servants", says the prodigal to his father; but the father speaks of him as "this my son". So, says Paul, "through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir" (Gal. iv. 7).

In the Matthaean parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard (Matt. xx. 1-16), the last-hired workmen did not bargain with their employer about their pay. If a denarius was the fair rate for a day's work, those who worked for the last hour only might have expected a small fraction of that, but they accepted his undertaking to give them "whatever is right" and in the event they received a denarius like the others who had worked all day. The grace of God is not to be parcelled out and adjusted to the varieties of individual merit. There was, as T. W. Manson pointed out, a coin worth one-twelfth of a denarius. "It was called a *pondion*. But there is no such thing as a twelfth part of the love of God."¹

This is completely in line with Paul's understanding of the gospel. If law is the basis of men's acceptance with God, then

¹ T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London, 2nd edn. 1949), p. 220. It should not be overlooked that a very different emphasis is found in some other parts of the material peculiar to Matthew, which indeed have lent themselves to a directly anti-Pauline interpretation, such as the criticism in Matt. v. 19 of the man who "relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so" (on this also see T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 25, 154).

the details of personal merit and demerit are of the utmost relevance. But the great blessings of the gospel had come to the Galatian Christians, as they knew very well, not by the works of the law but by the response of faith—the faith which works by love.¹ And when we speak in terms of love, we are on a plane where law is not at home.

A comparison of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith with Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God has been made by Eberhard Jüngel, in his book *Paulus und Jesus*.² It is in the parables of Jesus especially, he insists, that the kingdom of God comes to expression, and the hearers' response to the parables is their response to the kingdom of God. Jesus' parabolic teaching is more than mere teaching; it is a "language-event", a *Sprachereignis*, in the terminology of Jüngel's teacher Ernst Fuchs. That is to say, the parabolic teaching is itself an event confronting the hearer and challenging him to give a positive reply to the demand of the kingdom of God. With Fuchs, Jüngel sees in the parables Jesus' christological testimony to himself, if only in veiled form. During the ministry, Jesus' action and attitude supplied the parables with a living commentary sufficient to convey their meaning to those who responded in faith; later, the church felt it necessary to supply its own verbal commentary. The eschatological note which sounds in the parables is heard in Paul's teaching about justification by faith. "The law was our custodian until Christ came", says Paul, "that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith" (Gal. iii. 24-26). In other words, as he says to the Romans, "Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified" (Rom. x. 4). Jüngel relates "the end (*τέλος*) of the law" to the fact that in Christ the *eschaton* has arrived. In the preaching of Jesus and the teaching of Paul he finds the same relation between eschatology and history, the same emphasis on the end of the law, the same demand for faith. The difference lies in the fact that the *eschaton* which for Jesus lay in the near future was present for Paul.

¹ Gal. iii. 2, 5, v. 6.

² Tübingen, 1962.

It would be more accurate to say that, for Paul, the period through which he was living was not yet the absolute *eschaton* or *telos* (cf. 1 Cor. xv. 24) but its threshold—that period “between the times” during which the presence of the Spirit in the people of Christ confirmed to them their status and heritage as sons of God (Gal. iv. 6): “through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness” (Gal. v. 5). But already, with the coming of Christ and the completion of his redemptive work, the age of law had come to an end for the people of God.

When Paul calls Christ “the end of the law” he is expressing a theological insight. But this insight was based on sound historical fact: many of Paul’s fellow-Pharisees who engaged in debate with Jesus during his ministry must have felt that, on a practical level, his conduct and teaching involved “the end of the law”—not only because of his rejection of their oral traditions but because of the sovereignty with which he treated such elements of the written law as the sabbath institution and food regulations. True, as we have seen, he does not appear to have made any pronouncement on the circumcision question. But when we consider how he related the law as a whole to the basic requirements of love to God and love to one’s neighbour, and insisted on the paramountcy of heart-devotion, “truth in the inward parts”, righteousness, mercy and faith,¹ the conclusion is inescapable that he would not have included circumcision among the weightier matters of the law. If no word of his on the subject has survived (apart from the incidental *ad hominem* argument in the course of a sabbath debate in John vii. 22 f.), it is simply because the issue did not arise in the situation of his ministry. When, later, it did arise in the situation of the Gentile mission, it is difficult to deny that Paul’s position was in keeping with Jesus’ general attitude to the externalities of religion.

Paul, like Jesus, shocked the guardians of Israel’s law by his insistence on treating the law as a means to an end and not as an end in itself, by his refusal to let pious people seek security before God in their own piety, by his breaking down of barriers in the name of the God who “justifies the ungodly” (Rom. iv. 5)

¹ Matt. xxiii. 23; cf. Luke xi. 42.

and by his proclamation of a message of good news for the outsider. In all this Paul saw more clearly than most of his Christian contemporaries into the inwardness of Jesus’ teaching.

V

The autobiographical section of the Letter to the Galatians may provide us with some pointers to developments within the church of Jerusalem, from Paul’s visit to the city three years after his conversion to the time when the letter was written.

At the time of his conversion he knew that Jerusalem was the home of those who were apostles before him, although he did not go up to see them immediately. For Paul, “apostles” comprised a wider group than “the twelve”, but (whatever may be said to the contrary) the apostles included the twelve. When at last he did go up to Jerusalem, he went to visit Cephas—and in this section of our paper it is important to preserve Paul’s nomenclature carefully, for reasons that will appear. That Cephas was an apostle is evident from the statement immediately following: “I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord’s brother” (Gal. i. 19). From this it follows (certainly) that Cephas was an apostle in the Pauline sense of the word (as in every other sense)¹ and (most probably) that James was also an apostle in that sense. (We may compare how, in the summary of the resurrection appearances in 1 Corinthians xv. 5-7, Cephas is linked with the narrower group of “the twelve” and James with the wider group of “all the apostles”.) It appears also from Paul’s account of this visit that Cephas was the more important figure of the two: it was to interview him that Paul went up to Jerusalem; his seeing James also was incidental.

By the time of his second visit (Gal. ii. 1-10) the situation had changed; the church of Jerusalem was now administered by a triumvirate, the “men of repute”, the “pillars”, as they were called. We may wonder if there had not until a short time before been four “pillars”, the fourth being James the son of

¹ Cf. 1 Cor. ix. 5, where Cephas is mentioned by name not because he was distinct from “the other apostles” but because he was outstanding among them (against W. Schmithals, *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church*, E.T. (London, 1971), pp. 80 ff.).

Zebedee, recently executed by Herod Agrippa the elder.¹ If, as C. K. Barrett has suggested, the term "pillars" here implies pillars of the new temple,² four might have seemed a more appropriate number—but this is highly speculative.

One point in Paul's account of this second visit deserves more attention than it often receives: in verses 7 and 8 he speaks not of "Cephas" (as he normally does) but of "Peter". Speaking of the "men of repute", he says that, far from conferring on him anything that was not already his:

they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcision as Peter had been entrusted with it for the circumcision; for the same Lord who had empowered Peter for his apostleship among the circumcised had also empowered me for my apostleship to the Gentiles.

Why this change to "Peter" when "Cephas" has been used in the preceding narrative and is used again in the following narrative? The most probable answer to this question is that suggested by O. Cullmann and E. Dinkler, that the passage containing the name "Peter" is an extract from a more or less official record of the conference,³ the reference to Paul being changed to the first person singular so as to integrate the quotation into the contextual construction. This suggestion is not free from difficulties, but it is more free from them than any counter-suggestion. If we accept it, then Paul repeats the gist of the quotation in his own words in verse 9:

So then, James, Cephas and John, the men of repute as "pillars" among them, recognized the grace that had been bestowed on me, and gave Barnabas and me their right hands as a token of fellowship, agreeing that we [should go] to the Gentiles and they themselves to the circumcision.

We observe that the leader of the twelve has become "Cephas" again, and we note Paul's distinctive use of the word "grace" in

¹ Acts xii. 2.

² C. K. Barrett, "Paul and the 'Pillar' Apostles", in *Studia Paulina in honorem J. de Zwaan* (Haarlem, 1953), pp. 1 ff.

³ O. Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple-Apostle-Martyr*, E.T. (London, 1953), p. 18; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, E.T. vi (Grand Rapids, 1968), s.v. Πέτρος, p. 100, n. 6; E. Dinkler, "Der Brief an die Galater", *Verkündigung und Forschung*, 1953-5, pp. 182 f. J. Munck curiously inclined to the opposite view: "Perhaps we should rather say that vv. 7 f. are Paul's formulation, while v. 9... is a citation of the agreement" (*Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, p. 62, n. 2).

relation to his apostolic ministry.¹ But in Paul's rewording we see something more. On the one hand it is not Paul only, but Paul and Barnabas, whose call to evangelize the Gentiles is acknowledged; and on the other hand it is not "Peter" only, but "James, Cephas and John" who are to discharge an apostleship to Jews. Here mention may be made of the suggestion of Günter Klein, that the quotation in verses 7 and 8 represents the situation at the time of the conference, while Paul's re-wording in verse 9, and indeed some of his language about the "men of repute" earlier in the chapter, reflects the situation as it had developed in the interval between the conference and the writing of the letter.² In the event not Peter in particular, but the triumvirate as a whole, undertook responsibility for directing and discharging the mission to the Jews, and when the names of the triumvirate are listed, it is James's name that comes first. James has been moving towards first place not only since Paul's first Jerusalem visit but even in the much shorter interval that has elapsed since his second visit. Certainly the pre-eminence of James, implied in the order of names in Galatians ii. 9, agrees with the picture of his position in the Jerusalem church given in Acts xv. 13 ff. and xxi. 18 ff., not to mention Cephas's readiness to change his table practice at Antioch at the instance of the deputation which "came from James" (Gal. ii. 12).

Klein links his suggestion with another linguistic problem in Paul's record of the conference.³ In verse 6 Paul begins to say that he received nothing from the men of repute, when he breaks off with a parenthesis which makes him start the statement all over again with a different construction:

But from the men of repute—whatever sort of men they were,⁴ it makes no difference to me; God has no favourites—to me indeed the men of repute added nothing...

The English suffix "ever" attached as a suffix to "what" ("whatever sort of men...") is a particle which normally has temporal force, but when appended to a pronoun it serves simply

¹ Cf. Rom. i. 5; Eph. iii. 8.

² G. Klein, "Galater 2, 6-9 und die Geschichte der Jerusalemer Urgemeinde" *Rekonstruktion und Interpretation* (München, 1969), pp. 107 ff.

³ Op. cit. pp. 99 ff.

⁴ Gk. ὅποιοι ποτε ἦσαν.

to emphasize its indefiniteness. So too the corresponding Greek particle, *ποτε*, has primarily temporal force ("once upon a time" or "formerly"), and could have it here, in which case we should translate: "what sort of men they *once* were makes no difference to me." But it may simply serve to emphasize the preceding pronoun, and this is how it is taken in our best known English versions (cf. RV: "whatsoever they were"). If we allow it the full temporal force, we have to ask what former stage Paul has in mind. Does he refer to their association with the historical Jesus—James as his brother and Cephas and John as members of the twelve? Perhaps he does; the language is so general that this cannot be excluded. Klein, however, thinks that, even if *ποτε* has only emphatic force, the imperfect tense "were" is important; why does Paul not say "whatever sort of people they *are*"? Probably the imperfect tense is not all that difficult to explain: even if Paul does change his construction in mid-sentence, he intends to make a statement relating to the past, with the principal verb in the aorist tense, and thinks of the men of repute as they *were* on that occasion. Klein agrees, but adds that his choice of the imperfect tense shows that he thinks of them as they *were* on that occasion, but as they no longer *are* at the time of writing. He sees confirmation here for his belief that a change had taken place in their relationship one to another since the conference. But this is probably pressing too much temporal significance out of a construction which perhaps has no temporal significance at all.

VI

After the relegation of law to the status of an outmoded order in the main body of the letter, it might strike the reader as something of a paradox towards the end of the letter when Paul speaks of "the law of Christ". "If you are led by the Spirit", he has said, "you are not under law" (Gal. v. 18), but now: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. vi. 2). Yet we have been prepared for this: the law in the form in which Paul served it in his pre-Christian days has been replaced by something better, but the law as interpreted in the teaching and example of Christ is still in force. The difference

for Paul was that the law as he previously knew it was a yoke of bondage, whereas the law of Christ was the way of freedom. "You were called to freedom, my brothers", he writes; "only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants one of another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'" (Gal. v. 13 f.).¹ On the law as summarized in this "one word" from Leviticus xix. 18, together with its twin commandment of love to God in Deuteronomy vi. 5, Jesus said the whole law and the prophets depended (Matt. xxii. 40).² But the nature of law is radically transformed when it is interpreted in terms of love; and it is this transformation which is involved when, in Paul's language, legal bondage gives way to the freedom of the Spirit.

Paul might have heard in the school of Gamaliel something to the effect that the whole law was comprehended in the commandment of love to one's neighbour—we recall how Gamaliel's master, Hillel, summarized it in the injunction, "Do not to another what is hateful to yourself"³—but since he speaks of "the law of Christ" it is a reasonable inference that he knew of the use which Christ had made of Leviticus xix. 18. "Bear one another's burdens" seems to be a generalizing expansion of the particular instance mentioned in Paul's preceding exhortation: "if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness" (Gal. vi. 1). This is strangely reminiscent of a dominical injunction preserved only in Matthew's special material⁴: "If your brother sins,⁵ go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you you have gained your brother" (Matt. xviii. 15).

¹ Cf. Rom. xiii. 9.

² Cf. Mark xii. 29 ff.; Luke x. 27.

³ "That is the whole law; everything else is commentary (*pērūshā*)", Hillel added (TB *Shabbath* 31a; cf. *Aboth de R. Nathan*, ii. 26).

⁴ Cf. C. H. Dodd, "Matthew and Paul", *New Testament Studies* (Manchester, 1953), pp. 58 f. On the general subject see also his *Gospel and Law* (Cambridge, 1951), and "Ἐνωμος Χριστοῦ", in *Studia Paulina in honorem J. de Zwaan*, pp. 96 ff., reprinted in *More New Testament Studies* (Manchester, 1968), pp. 134 ff.

⁵ The added words "against you" (DW^o fam. 13 etc.) are probably an early gloss, restricting the original intention.

It is not so clear in Galatians as it is in some of the other letters of Paul that he fills out the details of "the law of Christ" by drawing on a body of ethical catechesis widely used throughout the churches of his day. It has been pointed out that the recurring triad "faith, hope, love", which seems to have been included in this catechesis, appears in Galatians v. 5 f.: "For through the Spirit, by *faith*, we wait for the *hope* of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through *love*."¹ But the three members of the triad are so independently integrated into the context here that it is doubtful if the triad would be, or was intended to be, recognized as such. We may observe, however, that this passage contains the only reference to the parousia in Galatians (for "the hope of righteousness"² is the hope to which the justification of believers points them forward) and the only reference to the rôle of the Spirit as the guarantee of this hope.³

As for "faith working through love", Paul held that the faith by which men and women are justified before God finds practical expression in lives which exhibit the law of love. The law of love cannot be enforced by penal sanctions; the fruit of the Spirit, as Paul enumerates its ninefold variety—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control⁴—is not produced by legal enactments but simply because it is the nature of a life controlled by the Spirit to produce such fruit. As Paul says, curiously echoing an Aristotelian remark,⁵ "There is no law dealing with such things as these" (Gal. v. 23). "The Spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus", as he calls it elsewhere (Rom. viii. 2), has little more than the term "law" in common with that from which the gospel has liberated him and (he trusts) his Galatian converts.⁶

¹ Cf. A. M. Hunter, *Paul and his Predecessors*, pp. 33 ff.

² Elsewhere called "the hope of salvation" (1 Thess. v. 8) and "the hope of glory" (Col. i. 27).

³ Expounded fully in Rom. viii. 9-25.

⁴ Gal. v. 22 f.

⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, iii. 8. 2, 1284a: men of outstanding excellence are themselves a law, he says; it would be ridiculous to try to legislate for them.

⁶ The law belongs to the former *αἰών*, from which the gospel has delivered believers (Gal. i. 4).

VII

Galatians is the most "Pauline" of all the Pauline letters—so much so, indeed, that those who derive their understanding of Paulinism exclusively, or even mainly, from this letter are apt to present a lopsided construction of the apostle's teaching—to become "more Pauline than Paul",¹ like Marcion in the second century. Against the danger of such a lop-sided construction Paul himself provides the necessary safeguards in other letters. But even in this most Pauline letter the careful student may discern how much of the essential gospel Paul had in common with those who were apostles before him and, above all, how much he had in common with Jesus himself.

¹ Cf. H. Küng, "Der Frühkatholizismus im Neuen Testament als kontroverstheologisches Problem", in *Das Neue Testament als Kanon*, ed. E. Käsemann (Göttingen, 1970), p. 192.