

Black's New Testament Commentaries

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST MATTHEW

Floyd V. Filson

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST MARK

Morna D. Hooker

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

C. K. Barrett

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

C. K. Barrett

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

C. K. Barrett

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

James D. G. Dunn

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

F. W. Beare

THE FIRST AND SECOND EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS

Ernest Best

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

Timothy I & II, and Titus

J. N. D. Kelly

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

H. W. Montefiore

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

Sophie Laws

THE EPISTLE OF PETER AND OF JUDE

J. N. D. Kelly

THE JOHANNINE EPISTLES

J. I. L. Houlden

THE REVELATION OF ST JOHN THE DIVINE

G. B. Caird

Companion volume

THE BIRTH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

C. F. D. Moule

A COMMENTARY ON

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

JAMES D. G. DUNN

LIGHTFOOT PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY, UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

A & C BLACK
LONDON

objected to so vehemently was that an element of compulsion on Gentiles to adopt distinctive Jewish laws and customs as a *necessary* part of the gospel, which Paul thought had been ruled out at Jerusalem, was now once again being reasserted in defiance of the spirit of that agreement – and unilaterally, without the sort of discussion which had made the Jerusalem agreement possible.

Although Paul continues to restate his rebuke to Peter (ii.15ff.), his account of the Antioch incident as such is already effectively concluded. It has to be noted that he does *not* say that Peter accepted his rebuke and resumed his former practice. Paul would almost certainly have noted this further victory for his understanding of the gospel, had he been able to win Peter over, just as he obviously took pains to describe his earlier victory in Jerusalem (ii.1-10). The matter was too crucial to the outcome of the similar crisis confronting the Galatian churches for Paul to pass over such a victory in total silence.¹ His silence, in fact, points in quite the other direction: that Peter did not accept or heed his rebuke, and that Paul received no real backing from the rest of the Antioch Christians – apparently Gentiles as well as Jews ('the absent James was a more powerful influence than the present Paul' – Barrett, *Freedom* 13). This presumably means that the Christian Gentiles accepted the terms for table-fellowship which the Jewish believers were implicitly requiring if fellowship was to be resumed, and 'Judaized' accordingly. This in turn must have meant that Antioch ceased, in Paul's eyes, to represent the Gentiles (the agreement of ii.9, as Paul understood it). In consequence, Paul must have concluded that his responsibility towards the Gentiles could now only be executed in independence of Antioch, as is also suggested by the record of Acts where Paul is shown as moving his base further out into the diaspora, first to Corinth, and then to Ephesus (Acts xviii.11; xix.10), with Rom. xv.24 implying that latterly he hoped to use Rome itself as a base for his mission to Spain.

The defeat at Antioch, therefore, in all probability involved a triple breach – with Jerusalem (hence the distancing formula, particularly of ii.6), with Barnabas (cf. Acts xv.36-41), and with Antioch (which, even according to Acts xviii.22, he only visited once more). We need not assume that all these breaches were

equally deep or permanent: Barnabas is subsequently recalled without rancour (1 Cor. ix.6; Col. iv.10); Acts xviii.22 may imply a reconciliation with Antioch (Taylor, *Paul* ch. 7), and Paul himself is regarded highly by Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, sixty or so years later (*Ephesians* xii.2); and Paul's efforts on behalf of 'the poor among the saints at Jerusalem' became an increasingly important concern for him (Rom. xv.26-7; see on ii.10). The other side of the picture, however, is the increasing hostility through this period and beyond towards Paul by conservative Jewish Christians (Acts xxi.21; pseudo-Clementines in Betz 331-3).

8 PAUL'S RESTATEMENT OF HIS CASE ii.15-21

(15) We are Jews by nature and not 'Gentile sinners',¹ (16) knowing² that no human being is justified by works of the law but only through faith in Jesus Christ,³ and we have believed in Christ Jesus,³ in order that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (17) But if in seeking to be justified in Christ we find that we too are 'sinners',¹ is then Christ a servant of sin? Impossible! (18) For if I build again the very things which I demolished, I demonstrate that I myself am a wrong-doer. (19) For I through the law died to the law, in order that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ; (20) and it is no longer I that lives, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith which is in the Son of God⁴ who loved me and gave himself for me. (21) I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ has died to no purpose.

1 As in ii.14, the words in quotation marks were probably deliberate echoes of statements made by the group from James.

2 Most read the clause as an adverbative – 'but we know'. However, the 'but' is not attested by the oldest manuscript (p⁴⁶) as well as others; and had Paul wished to say 'but we know' he would probably have used the indicative (as in Rom. viii.28) rather than the participle which indicates more of a continuity of thought from the main clause (cf. Rom. vi.9; 2 Cor. iv.14). The 'but' was probably introduced because later scribes assumed that the whole of verse 16 stood in contrast to verse 15 (Borse 112).

3 Manuscripts vary between reading 'Jesus Christ' and 'Christ Jesus'; the order evidently was not considered to be very significant.

4 The reading 'faith in God and Christ' is quite strongly attested, but Paul nowhere else speaks thus of God as the object of Christian faith, and the variant can easily be explained as an attempt to correct scribal error (Metzger 593).

1 This view is now common; see e.g. my 'Incident' 173 n.126; R. E. Brown & J. P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (London: Chapman, 1983) 39; Borse 106; P. J. Achtemeier, *The Quest for Unity in the New Testament Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 59. Typical of the older view is Rendall 162 – 'he refrains from recording Peter's humiliating retreat from a false position'.

It is generally accepted that Paul here restates the position he argued for at Antioch in the confrontation with Peter. The thought certainly seems to flow directly on: the readers of the letter could hardly understand the 'we' of ii.15 as other than a reference to Peter and Paul; there seem to be clear echoes of the confrontation in the language used in ii.15b and 17; and ii.18 surely refers back to the sort of conduct denounced by Paul on that occasion. At the same time, if, as seems most likely, Paul failed to carry the day at Antioch, and was now confronted by a situation in Galatia which he saw to be equally as serious, if not more so, it would be natural for him to attempt to restate the argument used on that occasion in the hope that it would prove more effective on this occasion. To that extent Betz 114, 121-2 is justified in seeing in ii.15-21 the equivalent of the *propositio*, whose objective in rhetorical practice, according to Quintilian, was to sum up the position so far, including the points of agreement, and to provide a transition to the main stage of the argument following (the *probatio*); though he over-elaborates his case, particularly in finding verses 19-20 to contain 'four theological theses, to be elaborated upon later'. Whatever the rhetorical precedents, however, a little reflection indicates the importance of the section and its function. For as it now reads, the Antioch incident does not end with any clear success for Paul (indeed his failure is implied; see on ii.14). So, to narrate it *after* the success of the Jerusalem agreement left Paul and his interpretation of the Jerusalem agreement very vulnerable. It was essential, therefore, that he counter that impression. Verses ii.15-21 are the beginning of his attempt to do so, and mark a transition and lead into the letter's main argument (chs. iii-iv). This confirms Bligh's suggestion (see Introduction to ii.11-14) that the whole letter is in effect Paul's attempt to undo the damage of what had happened at Antioch. On the passage see also M. Bachmann, *Sünder oder Übertreter. Studien zur Argumentation in Gal ii. 15ff* (WUNT 59; Tübingen: Mohr, 1992); E. Kok, *The Truth of the Gospel? A Study in Galatians 2.15-21* (Durham University PhD, 1995).

15 Paul begins to answer the question he had asked Peter (ii.14) – **We are Jews by nature** (BAGD, *physis* 1) **and not Gentile sinners**. To be noted at once is the characteristic Jewish language, in which once again the world is seen as divided into two distinct groups – Jews and the rest, Jews and 'the nations' (see on ii.13). More striking still is the description of Gentiles as 'sinners'. For 'sinners' in Jewish thought meant pre-eminently those whose lawless conduct marked them out as outside the

covenant, destined for destruction and so not to be consorted with (e.g. Pss. i.1, 5; xxxvii.34-6; lviii.10; Prov. xii.12-13; xxiv.20; Sir. vii.16; ix.11; xli.5-11). Thus it could be used, as here, as synonymous with 'Gentiles', those who, by definition were lawless (outside the law) and whose conduct therefore was inevitably in breach of the law (Ps. ix.17; Tobit xiii.6; *Jub.* xxiii.23-4 *Pss. Sol.* ii.1-2; Matt. v.47/Luke vi.33) (cf. *TDNT* i.325-6, 328). Still more striking, however, is the fact that the same epithet was often used in intra-Jewish polemic, by one faction, who claimed to be 'righteous', against another faction, whom they regarded as 'sinners', because the latter failed to conform to their (sectarian) definition of 'righteousness' (e.g. 1 Macc. i.34; ii.44, 48; 1 *Enoch* v.4-7; 82.4-5; 1QH ii.8-12; 1QpHab v.4-8; *Pss. Sol.* iv.8; xiii.6-12) – a usage which, of course, makes perfect sense of the criticism of Jesus that he 'ate with sinners' (Mark ii.16) (see further my 'Pharisees' 73-7; *Partings* §6.2).

This language rings oddly on the lips of Paul, until we realize what he was doing. Paul was putting himself in the shoes of a typical Jew who looked out at the rest of the world as outside the realm of God's covenant righteousness and sinful (cf. Eph. ii.12). More to the point, he was using the language of typical Jewish factionalism, which was ready to condemn those Jews who disagreed with the sect's interpretation of what the law required as 'sinners' – outside their sectarian understanding of the covenant, which meant, of course, from the sectarian viewpoint, outside the covenant. In fact, Paul was probably echoing the language used by the 'individuals from James' when they spoke against the Jewish Christians' table-fellowship with the Gentile believers: such table-fellowship with 'Gentile sinners' was unacceptable (see also on ii.14 – 'living like a Gentile and not like a Jew').

Ironically, then, the language used by Paul here is the language of conciliation. In character with the *propositio*, Paul was looking for common ground with his fellow Jewish believers. In reaching out to Peter, he took his stand with him, even in the attitude Peter had acted out in Antioch – 'we are all Jews by nature' – that is, Jews born and bred, not proselytes, far less resident aliens or God-fearers. He looked out with them from that perspective at the rest of humankind, echoing the dismissive attitude of the faithful member of the covenant people towards the non-Jews – 'Gentile sinners'. Burton 119 and Mussner 167 obscure all this by inserting a qualifying conjunction – 'We, though by nature Jews . . .' And Suhl 3099-106 both forces the natural sense of the syntax (where the phrases 'by nature Jews', 'from Gentiles sinners' form the antithesis) and ignores the

historical context completely by attempting to defend the strained paraphrase, 'We, of course, Jews by nature and not stemming from the Gentiles, are nevertheless sinners (as much as them)'.¹

16 Of course, Paul's objective was to turn Peter away from the attitude which had resulted in the breach in Antioch. But in order to win him over, Paul had to start with what they agreed on. So he continues – **knowing that no human being is justified by works of the law but only through faith in Jesus Christ**. Paul appeals to their common knowledge – that is, their common knowledge as 'Jews by nature' who believed in Christ. Just what that common knowledge and experience consisted in is disputed; and since the passage is obviously crucial to Paul's statement of his position ('This is the text on which all that follows in the Epistle is commentary' – Duncan 64-5) we need to examine it with some care.

The verb 'justify' is predominantly Paul's word in the NT (the Pauline corpus contains 27 of the 35 NT occurrences), and Galatians (8) and Romans (15) dominate Paul's usage, with four of Galatians' eight coming in ii.16-17. It is a metaphor drawn from the law court to describe the judge's responsibility to give a fair verdict and to 'justify', that is, acquit the innocent, as in typically Jewish usage (Exod. xxiii.7; Deut. xxv.1; 2 Sam. xv.4; Pss. li.4; lxxxii.3; Isa. v.23; xliii.26; Mic. vi.11). As used here, therefore, it reflects the axiomatic assumption among Jews (cf. Rom. iii.6) that God exercised and would exercise the role of end-time judge in relation to the world, both Jew and Gentile (see e.g. *TDNT* iii.935). The one thus 'justified' or acquitted was thereby found to be 'righteous'; the ground of a favourable judgement was the 'righteousness' of the one judged (all three words come from the same root in both Hebrew and Greek); to be 'justified' was to be formally recognized as 'righteous'. At this point, however, Hebrew and Greek concepts diverged. For whereas in Greek thought 'righteousness' or 'justice' was an ideal norm by which particular claims or duties could be measured, in Hebrew thought 'righteousness' was more a concept of relation. People were 'righteous' when they met the claims which others had on them by virtue of their relationship (see e.g. *TDNT* ii.195-6; *IDB* iv.80-5). For Israel that meant pre-eminently the relationship with Yahweh, that is the covenant he had made with Israel when he chose Israel to be his people: to be righteous was to live within the covenant and within the terms it laid down (the law); to be acquitted, recognized as righteous, was to be counted as one of God's own people who had proved faithful

to the covenant (so most clearly at Qumran – see e.g. Mussner 168-9; and further my *Romans* 40-1 [bibliography 36-7]; *Partings* §§2.2-3).

Thus far Paul had used language familiar to anyone who was 'a Jew by nature'. But he immediately qualifies it in a way which shows that he was speaking as a Jew who was also a believer in Messiah Jesus. For he denies that acceptance or acquittal by God the judge is 'on the basis of works of the law'. This has traditionally been understood as a denial that human beings, even the most religious of individuals, can achieve salvation by their own 'works';² they cannot 'work' their passage to heaven; they cannot earn salvation by their own efforts. Valid as that is as a theological insight of tremendous importance, it is doubtful whether it quite catches Paul's meaning here. Paul was evidently objecting to a current Jewish conviction. But so far as we can tell, the typical and traditional Jewish view of the time was *not* that anyone could earn God's favour. On the contrary, the whole of Israel's religion was founded on the axiom that God had chosen Israel as an act wholly undeserved. Membership of the covenant people already presupposed God's gracious election and sustaining favour; it did not have to be earned (see further particularly Sanders, *Paul*; also my 'New Perspective'). Nor does the phrase itself denote human deeds of meritorious quality. What then was Paul denying? What did he mean by saying that 'works of the law' provide no ground for justification? The point is obviously of central importance to Paul's argument, since he states it no less than three times in this one verse (also iii.2, 5, 10; it is equally central to the summary statement in Rom. iii.20).

The phrase itself ('works of the law') means most naturally 'deeds or actions which the law requires'. It has no immediate parallel in the OT; but in typical Jewish understanding the law had been given as part of God's covenant, to show covenant members how to live within the covenant and to enable them to do so (we need mention only Deuteronomy). So most Jews would, again most naturally, understand the phrase to mean 'the obligations laid upon Israelites by virtue of their membership of

¹ It is taken typically in traditional scholarship to denote (human) 'achievements': e.g. 'deeds of obedience to formal statutes done in a legalistic spirit' (Burton 120); 'meritorious works of the Torah' (Betz 117); 'any and all works as works-of-merit' (Fung 114, citing R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* [London: SCM, 1952-5] i.285); 'merit-amassing observance of Torah' (Longenecker 86); 'social and cultural achievements . . . brought about by law – in principle, by any law' (Georgi, *Theocracy* 38); 'righteousness merited by performing the law (T. R. Schreiner, "'Works of Law" in Paul', *NovT* 33 [1991] 217-44).

Israel' (more or less, in fact, what Sanders meant when he coined the inelegant phrase 'covenantal nomism' to describe this Jewish attitude). However, as we have already noted, second-Temple Judaism was split into various factions, each claiming to have the proper understanding of the law and of its obligations (see on ii.15 - 'sinners'). 'Works of the law', then, would probably reflect this factionalism and the common concern within second-Temple Judaism to draw the lines of demarcation round covenant righteousness as clearly as possible. This is confirmed by what is a close parallel to the phrase within one of the most prominent of these factions - the Essene community at Qumran. In the DSS it was precisely the covenant's 'deeds of the law' which had to be tested in order to check whether his membership of the community could be sustained (1QS v.21, 23; vi.18); the implication of 4QFlor. i.7 is that only at Qumran were 'the works of the law' able properly to be performed; the Qumran document known as 'Some of the Deeds of the Law' (whose contents have only recently been made public) contains a series of distinctive Qumran rulings on disputed points of law (4QMMT). In other words, at Qumran 'works of the law' denoted a sectarian understanding of the law, denoted, indeed, the sect's distinctive understanding and practice of the law - that understanding and practice of the law which marked it out from others, including other Jews (see also on iii.10).

'Works of the law' therefore was probably used initially in a polemical context (as with several other of the phrases used here - see on ii.14 and 15), to denote particularly those obligations of the law which were reckoned especially crucial in the maintenance of covenant righteousness, in the maintenance of an individual Jew's status within the covenant. In principle that meant all that the law required. But in practice the faithfulness of the sectarian was determined by his demonstration of loyalty to the sect's distinctive interpretations of the law on disputed points. So too in second-Temple Judaism at large. 'Works of the law' would mean in principle all that the faithful Israelite had to do as a member of the chosen people, that is, as distinct from 'Gentile sinners'. But in practice there were a number of test cases, several specific laws which in the history of earliest Judaism had brought the issue of covenant loyalty to clear decision, boundary issues where the distinctiveness of Jew from Gentile was most at stake. Two have already been mentioned - circumcision and food laws (see on ii.3 and ii.12). Evidently these two in particular had been 'make or break' issues for Jewish identity and covenant faithfulness since the Maccabean crisis. It should occasion no surprise, then, that it had been just these two

issues which had dominated the immediately preceding context in Gal. ii (circumcision - ii.1-10; food laws - ii.11-14), for these were precisely the test cases of Jewish distinctiveness over against Gentiles which were in danger of splitting the Jesus movement. In thus introducing the phrase immediately after his report of the two encounters Paul could expect his readers to recognize that 'works of the law' summed up the issue posed by these two test cases in particular; that the two encounters had made 'covenantal nomism' an issue, at least in so far as it required a clearly defined boundary to be maintained between Jew and Gentile. The issue expressed in 'works of the law', in other words, was *not* whether membership of the people of God entailed various obligations (Paul had no doubt that it did), but whether it entailed an in effect sectarian interpretation of these obligations, whether it entailed obligations designed to exclude others, whether it entailed that Jew remain distinct from Gentile (similarly Rom. iii.20 - see my *Romans* 153-5, 210, 213; also 'Works' 219-25, 237-41; also 'Once More, Works').

The point here clearly is Paul's denial that 'works of the law' are a basis of God's favourable judgement. But he also claimed that this was part of the common ground between him and Peter ('in this context the doctrine of justification by faith is part of a Jewish-Christian theology' - Betz 115). This was certainly true in the case of one of the two test cases (circumcision); to that extent Paul was able to appeal to the Jerusalem agreement (ii.3-10). But Peter had taken up a different stand on the second test case (food laws) in the Antioch incident (ii.11-14). An appeal to Peter on this issue, then, was likely to be a double-edged weapon. So, what could Paul mean? The answer presumably lies in the final phrase - 'but only through faith in Jesus Christ'. This phrase clearly functions as some sort of qualification of the main sentence. But what sort of qualification? The linking conjunction is exceptive and not adversative; that is, it is not simply equivalent to 'but', but to 'but only' (see my 'New Perspective' 212). Which means that 'works of the law' and 'faith in Jesus Christ' are not necessarily being posed here as mutually exclusive antitheses. In other words, as in the two earlier cases in Galatians where Paul uses the equivalent linking conjunction (i.7, 19), the relation of the qualifying phrase to the preceding clause is ambiguous: does 'the gospel' wholly exclude the 'other gospel' or allow that it might be called 'gospel' in an exceptional way? do 'the other apostles' exclude James or include him? does 'faith in Jesus Christ' exclude 'works of the law' or is it the one exception to the rule that 'no one is justified by works of the law'?

This ambiguity was nicely calculated precisely with a view to gaining Peter's assent. For its ambiguity reflected precisely the ambiguity of Peter's position – Peter who at Jerusalem had agreed that faith in Jesus Christ made circumcision of Gentiles unnecessary, but who now had acted as though Gentiles should be required to observe the Jewish food laws – Peter who thus on the one hand said works of the law were unnecessary (faith in Christ alone was sufficient), but who on the other hand also said that works of the law should still be obligatory for members of the covenant (cf. James ii.17-26). The logic of the Jewish-Christian position, we may say, was that 'faith in Jesus Christ' was an intra-Jewish possibility – a challenge to those already in the covenant people, who took the necessity of 'works of the law' for granted; it was this 'view from inside' which Paul took up in order to question it. At all events, the bottom line is clear: Peter evidently would have affirmed with Paul, as a matter of common Christian conviction, that 'a person is justified by faith in Jesus Christ'; but his actions in Antioch showed that he also believed that 'works of the law' were consistent with such faith. Paul's purpose in ii.16 was precisely to argue that these two beliefs could no longer be held together: the Antioch incident showed what happened when they were; and the danger confronting the Galatians was that they too would be persuaded to act like Peter and qualify their original faith with 'works of the law' (iii.2-5).

The phrase 'faith in Jesus Christ' is clearly an important one: Paul's gospel can be summed up in terms of 'justification by faith' (ii.16; iii.6, 8, 11, 24; v.5; see also on i.23). However, it is now frequently taken in the sense 'the faithfulness of Jesus Christ'; that is, Christ's faithfulness in going the way of the cross, a covenant faithfulness which made good the unfaithfulness of Israel; or indeed Jesus' own faith in God which is now the basis of Christian living and in which Christians now share (particularly Hays, *Faith*, ch. 4; Hooker, *Adam* 165-86; bibliography in Longenecker 87). Most however continue to take it as 'faith in Christ'. The word itself can, of course, mean either 'faith' or 'faithfulness' (BAGD, *pistis*). And the genitive construction in itself is indecisive either way (cf. Mark xi.22 – 'faith of = in God'; Acts iii.16 – 'faith of = in his name'; Col. ii.12 – 'faith of = in the working of God'; 1 Thess. ii.13 – 'faith of = in the truth'; Phil. iii.8 – 'knowledge of Christ Jesus'). But among the chief considerations in favour of the usual view are the following. (1) 'Faith' = 'belief or trust in', as a religious term was familiar in the Hellenistic world (BAGD, *pistis* 2; *TDNT* vi.179-82). This would be the most natural sense to expect a reader to take, whereas 'the faithfulness of Christ' would require

a good deal of unpacking, which Paul never provides. (2) One would expect phrases using the verb to function as equivalent alternatives to phrases using the noun. This is just what we do find here (the next clause) and in iii.6-9, 22 (as still more clearly throughout Rom. iv); whereas we never read in Paul of Christ 'believing'. (3) Both here in Galatians and in Romans the issue addressed by Paul is how someone is 'justified'. His key text is Gen. xv.6 (Gal. iii.6; Rom. iv.3), which he clearly understands to say that Abraham was justified by his faith. Gal. ii.16 is most obviously heard as sounding the first note of that theme. (4) As an antithesis to 'works of the law', 'faith of/in Christ' is most naturally understood as posing alternative human responses to God's initiative of grace (so also in iii.2, 5, 14 and v.5, 6). In short, the phrase is still best taken as expressing faith in Christ, that is, acceptance of the reliability of what was said by and about Christ (acceptance of the gospel message – iii.2, 5) and trust in, reliance upon the Christ of whom the gospel thus spoke (BAGD, *pisteuō* 1 and 2; see further my '*Pistis Christou*' and on ii.20). It is worth noting that Paul says 'through' faith (as in Rom. iii.22, 30; Phil. iii.9): this trust as the medium through which God's acceptance comes to effect. But Paul can equally well say 'from faith' (as in ii.16c); for Paul the difference was largely stylistic (cf. Rom. iii.30).

Paul continues to appeal to the common ground he shared with Peter – **and we** (yes, even we Jews) **in Christ Jesus have believed**. The statement is not tautologous (thus indicating that 'faith in Jesus Christ' should be rendered differently). The repetition is deliberate, for the sake of emphasis: we do not simply know that justification is by faith in Christ as a matter of principle; we have actually so believed; the principle has been tried and proven in our own experience. This, in fact, is where the transition from the shared viewpoint of the preceding clause begins. Paul looks back to his own experience on the Damascus road and recalls Peter to the equivalent experience of a grace reaching out to him which he could only accept and trust himself to; he had 'got to know Cephas' (i.18) well enough to know that Peter would so speak of the commitment of his discipleship (cf. Acts xi.17). The usage ('believing into') is distinctively Christian, though Paul speaks of 'believing into Christ' (= commitment to Christ) in only two other passages (Rom. x.14; Phil. i.29; cf. Col. ii.5).

But in appealing to Peter's earlier experience of belief and commitment Paul was trying to get back behind Peter's subsequent action at Antioch. The point of that initial experience of faith was **in order that we might be justified by faith in**

Christ and not by works of the law. If faith in Christ was sufficient then for discipleship and membership of the Jesus movement, that still remained true, and could not be nullified by disagreement over 'works of the law'. In other words, Paul was trying to move Peter away from the ambiguity of the opening statement (ii.16a), from the ambiguity reflected in his conduct at Antioch, from the ambiguity regarding the acceptability of Gentiles who like him had 'believed in Messiah Jesus'. And that required a resolution to the ambiguity of the opening statement, a resolution of the possible 'both-and' (faith and works) which Peter had practised, into a straight 'either-or' (faith and *not* works) which his earlier experience of faith had indicated (the 'in order that' signifying God's purpose). The fact that according to Acts xi.17 Peter talks of Gentile 'believing' precisely in the same terms as his own may reflect the fact that Paul's appeal included reference to Peter's earlier experience with Cornelius.

As is his wont elsewhere (cf. particularly Rom. i.17), Paul rounds off this crucial statement of his case by citing a scriptural proof text – **because by works of the law shall no flesh be justified.** The echo of Ps. cxliii.2 is clear enough – 'no living person will be justified before you' (it is even clearer in Rom. iii.20). The sentiment was thoroughly Jewish – that no one could claim to be sinless before God, worthy of (final) acquittal by reason of the quality of his life (e.g. Job ix.2; Ps. xiv.1-3; Isa. lix.2ff.; 1 *Enoch* lxxxi.5; 1QH ix.14-15). Paul modified the text slightly by omitting 'before you' (it was implicit anyway). More significant was the change of 'no living person' to 'no flesh'. The phrases were synonymous (cf. again 1 *Enoch* lxxxi.5), with 'flesh' simply underlining the finitude, weakness and corruptibility of all human existence (cf. e.g. Gen. vi.12; Isa. xxxi.3; Sir. xxxi.1; 1QH xv.21; John iii.6; Rom. viii.3, 8; *TDNT* vii.107, 109, 111-12; see also on v.13). But 'flesh' is also the realm where outward and ethnic distinction is most clearly marked, as Jewish concern over circumcision also showed (Rom. ii.28; see on iii.3 and vi.13; also my 'New Perspective' 199-200). Most significant of all was the introduction of the key phrase in ii.16 – 'works of the law'. This was not a merely arbitrary move, such as might nullify the effect of the scriptural allusion, but a particular application of what would be recognized as a more general principle in Jewish thought. If *no one* could claim to be sinless or just before God, that included members of the covenant people. The theological logic was that 'works of the law', covenant faithfulness over against Gentile sinfulness, was no exception, as 'the righteous' too often assumed (the assumption attacked by Paul in Rom. ii – see my *Romans* 81ff). In other words, Paul was once again

endeavouring to expose the ambiguity of Peter's position and to drive him into the either-or of faith and not 'works of the law'.

17 Having gone back to 'first principles' (their common experience of 'believing in Christ Jesus', and the scriptural axiom in Ps. cxliii.2), Paul now moves forward again and applies the theological logic of these first principles to the situation at Antioch – **but if in seeking to be justified in Christ we find that we too are 'sinners' . . .** The verb 'seek' can mean simply 'desire to obtain' (BAGD, *zêteō* 2) and need carry no implication of anxious searching. 'Justification' here is thought of more as a future hope – in the final judgment (cf. v.5). For 'in Christ' see on i.22. But here the phrase encapsulates the core of Paul's gospel: that believers are counted acceptable to God because they are 'in Christ'; he will take up the point in ii.19-20 and develop its significance in iii.13-29, with further echoes in iv.19 and v.4-6, 24 (see also on v.6). The verb 'find' (literally 'we have been found') indicates a result not envisaged by those 'seeking' (BAGD, *heuriskō* 1b). The surprising discovery for Paul (and Peter) was evidently that their eating with Gentiles caused them to be regarded as 'sinners', even by their fellow believers (REB catches the sense nicely – 'we ourselves no less than the Gentiles turn out to be sinners'). Even though they all, Jew and Gentile alike, had 'believed in Christ Jesus in order to be justified by faith in Christ', the James faction still insisted on regarding Gentiles as 'sinners', and those Jews who disregarded or treated lightly the traditional boundary lines by eating with them as equally 'sinners' (see further on ii.15). The echo of ii.15 surely indicates that Paul's thought went back at this point to the Antioch incident, with 'sinner' indicating conduct repugnant to traditionalist Jewish Christians, and not merely justification by faith itself.

But the implication of such an attitude was intolerable: **is then Christ a servant of sin? Impossible!** To regard those accepted by and in Christ as 'sinners' was to make Christ one who waited on and supported sin – 'sin' here in the characteristic Pauline sense of the personified power which exercises a fatal attraction over humankind, turning it in upon itself, forgetful of its creatureliness, and prey to animal appetite and death (as particularly in Rom. v.12-viii.10). The image of Christ as 'servant' will almost certainly be an echo of the context in Antioch, since the word still retained much of its original sense of 'table-waiter' (BAGD, *diakonos*; *TDNT* ii.82). Some allusion to Jesus' own words recalled in Mark x.42-5/Luke xxii.27 is also likely (Paul plays with the same thought in Rom. xv.8). Jesus'

remembered readiness to 'wait upon' his disciples would in turn link in naturally to the memory of his own table-fellowship 'with sinners' (Matt. xi.19/Luke vii.34; Mark ii.16). Who could deny that Jesus would have been ready to 'wait upon' the meal-tables of Jewish and Gentile disciples at Antioch? If such table-fellowship made Jewish believers 'sinners', it also made Christ 'servant of sin', one who was at sin's beck and call. That was the ludicrous corollary which followed inevitably from the attitude of the James people, the *reductio ad absurdum* of Peter's theology. It is not impossible that Paul was here echoing a further comment of the James people: but where they had seen the corollary to require withdrawal from table-fellowship with sinners, Paul's deduction was that continued categorization of Gentile believers as 'sinners' was wholly inappropriate. The strong response, 'may it not be so, of course not', is a feature of Paul's vigorous style (always after a rhetorical question); here also in iii.21 (cf. vi.14), and regularly in Romans (BAGD, *ginomai* I.3a).

18 Lest his logic be unclear, Paul elaborates – for if I build again the very things which I demolished (BAGD, *kataluō* 1.bβ) I demonstrate that I myself am a wrong-doer (not 'prove that I was wrong before' NJB). The metaphor of pulling down and re-erecting a construction would be familiar to Paul's Jewish or Judaizing audience, particularly from its use in Jeremiah (i.10; xii.16-17; xxiv.6; xxxi.4, 28; xxxiii.7). 'The very things' probably include at least a reference to the food laws which were the occasion of division between Jew and Gentile at Antioch (Wilckens, 'Entwicklung' 170 – 'the observances of the law through which the boundaries between Israel and the goyim were established'); so the imagery is probably that of Israel protected as God's own possession and marked off from the other nations by a wall (Isa. v.2, 5; *Aristeas* 139; Eph. ii.14). Paul, evidently, was still harking back to the Antioch incident, but now in first-person terms, since, presumably, the sharpness of the contrast evoked (destruction/reconstruction) was true of him in a way that was not so true of Peter. Paul in effect divides his life into three possible phases: the time when his life was protected by a wall; the time when he tore that construction down; and the possibility of rebuilding it again. The point is that his tearing down was an essential part of the complete turn-around which his encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus road entailed, the destruction of what he had previously regarded so highly (cf. Phil. iii.7); that old 'way of life in Judaism' (see on i.13-14) Paul recognized to be wholly at odds with faith in

Christ and the commission to 'preach him among the Gentiles' (see on i.16). For Paul now to rebuild what he had torn down would be to revert to that old attitude, where such table-fellowship as he enjoyed at Antioch would make him not simply an involuntary 'sinner' like the Gentiles, but a conscious lawbreaker (that 'transgressor' meant 'transgressor of the law' would be self-evident – cf. the use of the word elsewhere in the NT, Rom. ii.25, 27 and James ii. 9, 11). For Paul now to be asked to accept that his whole life as a Christian, in its outreach to Gentiles, was one long act of transgression, which put him beyond the pale of God's acceptance, was an impossible contradiction of what the gospel meant.

19 The contrast between Paul's way of life before his conversion-commissioning and his work among Gentiles since, can be expressed even more sharply, not just in terms of demolition and reconstruction, but in terms of death and life – for I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. This is the first note of a characteristic Pauline theme, which sees the transition of believing in Christ as a dying which results in a different kind of living (cf. particularly Rom. vi.2-8; vii.6; Col. ii.20; iii.3). Whether the 'I' is generalized or not (true of all believers), the sentence is certainly a personal statement of Paul himself. For it was true of him more than anyone else that he 'through the law died to the law'. In the flow of thought running through verse 18 this can hardly be other than a reference once again to the contrast already described in i.13-16 (not to the earlier event described in Rom. vii.8-11, as GNB implies). It was in the full heat of his zeal for the law ('through the law') that he had wielded the sword in order to preserve Israel's distinctive identity and prerogatives (see again on i.14); it was in order to maintain the law as marking out Judaism, at the bidding of the law as he then understood it, that he had embarked on the course which brought him face to face with the risen Christ (see also on ii.21). And that encounter so completely turned upside down his understanding of the law and the covenant promises, that the law ceased from that time to exercise the same hold over him; that which had been his constant stimulus to action now failed to find any response in him; he became dead to what had previously been his primary motivating force. The thought is stark, but is not made easier by taking 'through the law' as a reference to 'the law of faith' (Rom. iii.27); nor is the issue here to be translated simply into ritual versus moral law.

The other side of the event of his conversion-commissioning was that he died to the law 'in order to live for God'. As in 4 *Macc.* vii.19 and xvi.25, the thought is of life beyond death, not just a different version of this life, but a life which has experienced death and over which death has no more say (Rom. vi.10-11). That meant, for Paul, an irreversible change: to return under the law was for him as inconceivable as for one who enjoys life beyond death to return to life before death, life under death. It also meant a highly negative verdict on his previous way of life: not necessarily that it had not been 'to God', but that his encounter with Christ resulted in the possibility of living to God liberated from the constraints of that old life, that is from the mistaken perspectives which his old covenantal nomism had entailed (cf. Rom. xiv.8); the contrast with his previous attitude, that life was coterminous with doing the law (see on iii.12 and 21), is striking. All this was possible, as Paul is about to make clear, because his dying and new life were a sharing in Christ's death and risen life (cf. Rom. vi.8-11; vii.4). By implication, Christ's death was also a dying through the law and to the law in order that the constraints of the law might be lifted (cf. iii.13-14), so that the encounter with and openness to his risen life meant *ipso facto* an openness to the Gentiles which Paul had previously fought against (i.13-16).

Paul was anxious to make it clear that his about-face regarding the law was no mere idiosyncratic decision on his part; on the contrary it was the inevitable working out of Christ's death; it was part and parcel of Jesus' own death. 'I died to the law' means also **I have been crucified with Christ**. Still more prominent in Paul's theology than the thought of conversion as a 'dying' is his thought of it as a 'dying with Christ' (Rom. vi.4-6; 2 Cor. iv.10; Phil. iii.10), part of a much richer sequence of 'together with' vocabulary very characteristic of Paul (*TDNT* vii.786-7). Here particularly striking is the tense used – not aorist (my crucifixion was an event which was over and done some time in the past), but perfect (I have been nailed to the cross with Christ, and am still hanging there with him); so also in Gal. iii.1, vi.14 and Rom. vi.5.¹ Paul evidently thought of his life as a Christian as one in transition between Christ's death and Christ's resurrection (hence the future tense in Rom. vi.5b), as a process of being conformed to that death (Phil. iii.10) (see further my *Jesus* 330-4). But Christ's death was that of an outcast, the body hanging on the tree a defilement (see on iii.13); so that Paul's identification with him in his death left him in

¹ Despite particularly Schlier 99-101, the tense makes an allusion to baptism highly improbable – still immersed! (see further my *Romans* 308, 311-17).

the same position. It was precisely as one who by his identification with the crucified Christ numbered himself with the outcast, that Paul found it inconceivable that he should withdraw from table-fellowship with Gentile believers.

20 There was a completely different focus to his life now – it is **no longer I that lives, but Christ lives in me**. The language is startling, and of course exaggerated (NJB, following KJV and RV, attempts unwisely and unjustifiably to weaken it – 'and yet I am alive; yet it is no longer I . . .'). But the exaggeration was obviously to make a point. And the point was to bring out the very radical nature of the personal transformation effected by Paul's encounter with the risen Christ. The old 'I' was dead, and had been replaced by a new focus of personality. That meant, on the one hand, that Paul was no longer the 'I' of i.13-14 – the 'I' which had found its identity 'in Judaism', as one for whom maintenance of the law in order to preserve Jewish distinctiveness was the very reason for existence. That was why reversion to a table-fellowship which excluded Gentiles as Gentiles was impossible for Paul; it simply would not have been him. On the other hand, the new focus of his personality was not simply a transformed 'I'; it was Christ. It was only Christ whose death had been effective to destroy the division between Jew and Gentile – himself the 'seed' of Abraham, whose death had been that of an outlaw (see on iii.16 and again on iii.13). It was this Christ who was now the focus of Paul's life – the Jewish Messiah who was also for the out-law, the non-Jew. The 'I' which had fought to maintain its identity as a Jew in distinction from Gentile, now saw itself only as a vehicle for the expression of Christ's life. These contextual considerations show that the train of thought is different from that in Rom. vii; but as in Rom. vi-viii, an Adam christology lies in the background (cf. Col. iii.4, 9-10), as also a powerful sense that the new age of God's purpose has dawned (the 'Christ in me' is the risen Christ).

The idea of 'Christ indwelling' the believer (Rom. viii.10; 2 Cor. xiii.5; Col. i.27; Eph. iii.17) is much less common in Paul than its reverse, the believer 'in Christ' (see on i.22 and ii.17). More typical of Paul is the thought of the Spirit indwelling or acting in the believer (Rom. v.5; viii.9, 11, 15-16, 23, 26; etc.; see on iii.2). Experientially, it comes to the same thing: the awareness of a new focus of identity expressed in different goals and new inner dynamic, with Christ as the inspiration and Christ-likeness the paradigm ('mystical' if you like, though many are suspicious of the word's connotations). Theologically, it means that for Christians the Spirit of God is also now to be recognized

as the Spirit of Christ and the personal existence of the post-resurrection Christ cannot be thought of simply as having an individual bodily focus (see further my *Jesus* 318-26; and *Christology* 136-49). Nor should the continuity with verse 19c be forgotten: 'The Christ who lives in me is the crucified Christ' (Ebeling 149).

That the language of verse 20a was overdrawn for effect is shown by the way Paul continues. In more sober terms what he means is that **the life** (literally 'that which' - cf. Rom. vi.10) **I now live in the flesh, I live by faith which is in the Son of God**. 'In the flesh', as in 2 Cor. x.3 and Phil. i.22, 24 (cf. 2 Cor. iv.11), means basically, in the normal human bodily existence in all its weakness and corruptibility (see on ii.16 and v.13). It is important to grasp the fact that Paul did *not* think that conversion removed a believer from the realm of the 'flesh', or that the believer was no longer 'in the flesh', that is, no longer subject to its weakness and animal appetites (Rom. vii.5 and viii.9 must therefore be understood differently; see also on v.17 and my *Romans* 363-4, 428); to misunderstand Paul on this point forces his theology in a dualistic direction and gives his teaching on the process of salvation an unrealistic character (see further my *Jesus* 308-18). But any conscious polemical thrust at this point is probably aimed in a different direction. For more important here is the fact that Paul's references to the 'flesh' often and characteristically include an allusion to ethnic origin (as in Rom. i.3; iv.1; ix.3, 5, 8; xi.14) and particularly to Jewish trust 'in the flesh' (especially Phil. iii.3-4; see further on iii.3 and vi.13). The point then is that Paul does not deny or renounce his continuing Jewishness in order to live as a Christian. His claim is rather that the life he now lives as a Jew born and bred ('by nature' - ii.15; 'in the flesh') he now lives by a different orientation - no longer by reference primarily to the law, but now by his faith in the Son of God. The latter phrase is more cumbersome than usual ('faith which is in . . .') and again makes better sense as 'faith in the Son of God' than 'by the faith/fulness' which is of the Son of God' (cf. Hays, *Faith* 167-9, 250; see further on ii.16). The reversion to 'Son of God', rather than 'Christ' is determined partly by the formula about to be cited, and partly because the 'inclusiveness' of Jesus' sonship is an important part of his argument (see on i.16). It is no longer the relationship of the flesh which is important for Paul (ethnic identity) but relationship with God's Son.

As elsewhere in Paul (Rom. v.10; viii.32), the thought of Jesus as God's Son is tied in to the thought of Jesus' death - **who loved me and gave himself for me** - but here, as in i.4,

expressed in terms of self-sacrifice. The echo of formulaic language (see on i.4) should not be taken to mean that Paul picks up some familiar formula woodenly or merely out of habit. The more familiar formula is here adapted by two modifications. (1) The talk of Jesus' love (cf. Eph. v.2) reflects the familiar Jewish thought of God's love both of Israel as a people (as in Deut. vii.8, 13; 1 Kings x.9; Ps. xlvii.4; Isa. xliii.4; Jer. xxxi.3; Hos. iii.1; *Pss. Sol.* ix.8) and of individuals within Israel (as in Deut. iv.37; 2 Sam. xii.24; Ps. cxlvi.8; Prov. iii.9; Sir. iv.14; *Wisd. Sol.* iv.10; more sectarian in 1QS iii.26 and CD viii.17); and also the idea of the martyr's willingly giving his life for that which he holds most dear (as in 2 Macc. vii.9; viii.21; 4 *Macc.* i.8, 10). However, the main inspiration here will probably have been the recollection of Jesus' own willing self-sacrifice for his own (reflected particularly in Mark x.42-5; John x.11; xv.13). That the love of God and the love of Christ are one and the same for Paul (Christ's loving act the expression of God's love) is clearly implied in Rom. v.7-8 and viii.32-9. (2) The whole phrase is radically personalized - 'loved me and gave himself for me' (contrast i.4). To take the 'me' here as a generalized 'I' retains the sense of an immediate relationship between Christ and the believer; but it loses too much of Paul's own sense of wonder and gratitude so clearly evident. The thought, of course, is not 'only me', but 'even me'. At the same time Lührmann is right to caution that 'the legitimization of his gospel lies for Paul in the content of the preaching not in his own conversion. . . . He reduces his own biography to the gospel and not conversely the gospel to his own experience' (p. 47).

21 Paul had let his thought run on from the protest of verse 17: developing the contrast between his old way of life (reflected in a restricted table-fellowship) and his new life in Christ - destroyed not to be rebuilt, put to death with Christ and living a life differently focused, still in the flesh but determined by faith in God's Son; and foreshadowing themes he would develop in the next two chapters. But now he rounds off this initial restatement of his case - as though conscious that the format of an extended reminiscence of his reply to Peter at Antioch was becoming too strained, and that he must begin to address the challenge of the Galatian situation more directly. So he concludes - **I do not nullify the grace of God**. The verb means 'render ineffective, inoperable' (cf. Mark vii.9; Luke vii.30; 1 Cor. i.19; Gal. iii.15). For 'grace' see on i.3 and 6; here Paul obviously has in mind 'the grace of God' manifested in his calling and in his successful missionary work (i.15; ii.9). It was of the essence of that grace, in

Paul's experience and understanding, that it was to be freely extended to the Gentiles as well. So any retreat back into a Judaism, or Jewish Christianity, which insisted that Jew and Gentile should eat separately was to render invalid the whole gospel – as indeed also Israel's own election (Rom. xi.5-6)! In this case an echo of a charge laid against Paul by the James people is less likely, since 'grace' is so much Paul's own word (in terms of LXX usage 'mercy' would have been the preferred word – 'By so freely accepting Gentiles Paul nullifies the mercy of God, that is, towards Israel').

In concluding the line of argument briefly outlined in these verses Paul can summarize his reasoning in a single sentence: **for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ has died to no purpose.** As implied in ii.16, 'righteousness' draws its significance from the dynamics of relationship, here primarily the covenant relationship between God and his people. God was understood to be 'righteous' when he fulfilled the obligations which he had taken upon himself in entering into covenant with Israel, rescuing Israel and punishing its enemies (e.g. Exod. ix.27; 1 Sam. xii.7; Mic. vi.5), restoring and sustaining Israel despite its sin (e.g. Pss. xxxi.1; xxxv.24; etc.; Isa. xlv.13; li.5). To be recognized as 'righteous' by God was to be recognized as belonging to his people, members of that covenant, within the sphere of his righteousness/saving action (e.g. Pss. v.12; xi.7; xxxiv.15-22; lv.22; Isa. lx.21). In Jewish theology that also and inevitably meant maintaining one's status within the covenant by doing what the law laid down ('covenantal nomism'). 'Through the law' here has no different meaning from ii.19, both having in mind the understanding over-exemplified in Paul's previous life-style (i.14; see on ii.19). Paul now rejected that understanding as it was traditionally implemented: by over stressing human obligation the prior grace of God was being set aside – God's righteousness was being made too much the corollary to human righteousness, rather than vice versa. And in particular, when Israel's righteousness was understood to require discrimination between Jew and Gentile, and God's righteousness was being made to depend on 'works of the law' like circumcision and food laws ('righteousness through the law' is evidently a summary statement of the point denied repeatedly in ii.16), then the grace of God on which the covenant itself had been based was itself rendered null and void. In view of the positive role Paul can still recognize for the law, even in Galatians (v.14), the fact that his talk of 'righteousness through the law' is a summary of 'being justified by works of the law' (ii.16) and has in mind the attitude which came to expression in

Peter's action at Antioch is important: Paul's object here is not the law *per se*, but the law understood as preventing Gentiles' full and free participation in the grace of God as Gentiles.

What demonstrated conclusively to Paul that 'righteousness through the law' was a false summary of God's grace was once again the inevitable corollary regarding Christ. As in ii.17, it was the logic of the Jewish-Christian view as it affected the Christian understanding of Jesus, which reduced that view to absurdity. But why should the claim that 'righteousness is through the law' render the death of Jesus 'in vain' (BAGD, *dōrea* 3)? The key is to remember that Paul was still reflecting on the disastrous theological corollaries of Peter's action in Antioch, and that it was Peter's retreat once again behind the boundary of the law as marking off Jew from Gentile which cut so sharply at Paul's own understanding of his commission and gospel. For Paul the death of Christ had evidently broken through that boundary and abolished the law in its boundary-defining role. What he meant by this he would explain more fully in iii.13-14. But the implication is already there: that Christ's death had been effective precisely because it undermined the assumption that God was only for 'the righteous', only for those who lived by 'works of the law', and had done so by demonstrating that God's Messiah completed his work in the rejection of the cross, 'numbered among the lawless' (Isa. liii.12; see on iii.13). So far as Paul was concerned, to fail to recognize that significance of the cross was to lose all (see also on v.11 and vi.12).

Alternative explanations of Paul's line of thought here do not give enough weight to the consistent 'Jesus for Gentiles' motif, clearly expressed in such closely related passages as i.15-16 and iii.13-14, and implicit in this paragraph from ii.15 on, and tend to forget that the doctrine of 'justification by faith' so powerfully expressed in this passage first appears in Paul's thought as a key element in that motif (as both Galatians and Romans demonstrate).

With this summary affirmation Paul has now completed his opening statement. The thematic claim of i.11-12 has been defended by documenting his contacts with the Jerusalem leadership since his conversion-commissioning. He received the gospel at that time directly from God through 'the revelation of Jesus Christ': his understanding of it as a commission 'to preach him among the Gentiles' was not given him by any competent human authority, including the Jerusalem leadership (i.15-17); he could not have first received it from Cephas when he first got to know him three years later (i.18) or from the other apostles whom he did not even see, but only James (i.19); and when he

did lay his gospel to the Gentiles before the 'pillar apostles' at Jerusalem, fourteen years later, they recognized his commissioning from God, added nothing to his understanding of the gospel, agreed to a division of responsibility as between Jews and Gentiles, and sealed their fellowship with a handshake (ii.1-10). That agreement had come 'unstuck' at Antioch, through Peter's cowardice and hypocrisy (ii.11-14), and Paul had now briefly restated the defence of the position he had maintained on that occasion (ii.14-21) with a view to the similar and pressing crisis among his Galatian congregations. He was now ready to address them directly.

C The main argument – the testimony of experience and of scripture

iii.1-v.12

1 THE APPEAL TO EXPERIENCE: CONTINUE AS YOU BEGAN

iii.1-5

(1) You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you' – you before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly portrayed as crucified? (2) This only I want to learn from you: was it by works of the law that you received the Spirit, or by hearing with faith? (3) Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit are you now made complete with the flesh?² (4) Have you experienced so much in vain? If it is indeed in vain. (5) So I ask again, he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, is it by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

With the background clarified by the recital of the most relevant elements of his *cursus vitae*, Paul could now at last begin to address the Galatian crisis directly, and thus to embark on the main section of his exposition. The implication of the preceding section is that Paul saw the Antioch incident as a first test case of the crucial Jerusalem agreement and the crisis in Galatia as a second test case, in which the issues were the same. Consequently, the stand Paul took there, on the basis of the

¹ Some manuscripts and versions add 'from obeying the truth' – presumably a scribal attempt to fill out the sense by drawing in a phrase from v.7.

² The simple dative here is unusual in Paul and its precise force uncertain. But Paul used it to balance the simple dative of 'Spirit' (more typical of Pauline use), and he was presumably content with the resulting lack of precision of meaning. In such a case it is not the responsibility of exegesis to push the text into a grammatical choice which the author himself refrained from making.

common ground of faith in Jesus Christ and the common gospel of his self-giving on the cross, was equally applicable to the Galatian believers. But much of that implication Paul left his readers to find for themselves. In turning to address the Galatians directly again (for the first time since i.13) Paul immediately plays his other main trump card (the first being the Jerusalem agreement) – viz. their own experience when they first believed. Their own experience of receiving the Spirit simply through faith should have been enough to fix for them the character of the gospel and the life of faith. This is his first point in an argument which uses appeals to experience and personal relationship, exposition of salvation-history, exegesis of scripture and theological logic set out in a sequence in interlocking strips like a well-made page of papyrus (iii.1-iv.31). The emphasis of the opening verses is frequently recalled in what follows (see iii.8, 14, 27; iv.5-7, 29; v.1, 5, 7-8, 16-18, 21-2, 25; vi.8) and establishes 'the central place of the Spirit in Paul's argument throughout his Galatian letter' (Longenecker 101-2). Cosgrove, *Cross* 2, takes iii.1-5 as 'the decisive clue to Paul's view of the "problem at Galatia"'. .

1 The impatience and concern which Paul had expressed so sharply in i.8-9 and in the barbed language of ii.12-14, burst forth again – **You foolish Galatians** (cf. 2 Cor. vi.11; Phil. iv.15). The rebuke was not uncommon in contemporary diatribe, a style to which Paul reverted frequently in both Galatians and Romans (see BAGD, *anoētos* 1); and if he was addressing south Galatian churches it would be all the more cutting, and consequently, in Paul's hope, more effective. For Paul, however, its force was not simply rhetorical: he found the Galatians' failure to recognize the character of the gospel baffling (so again in iii.3); the adjective indicates lack of comprehension, not lack of intelligence. On who the 'Galatians' were, see Introduction §3.

Who has bewitched you? The question may again reflect contemporary rhetoric (Betz 131 – 'Its purpose was to characterize opponents and their sophistic strategies'). It certainly cannot be assumed that the other missionaries in Galatia were actually resorting to magic (as Schlatter 119 seems to believe), though Paul may indeed be suggesting that the Galatian about-face could only be put down to 'demonic power' (see particularly J. H. Neyrey, 'Bewitched in Galatia: Paul and Cultural Anthropology', *CBQ* 50 [1988] 72-100); only that would have been sufficient to explain how those whose experience of the Spirit had been so rich (iii.2-5) could have left it behind (cf. 2 Cor. iv.3-4). The force of the question is partly to reinforce