

# The Apostle's Hand

## Galatians in the Canonical Process

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### 1. A handmade canon?

"I have written to you in my own hand!" (Gal 6,11) – this autograph is the beginning of the final passage of Galatians<sup>1</sup> where St. Paul summarizes his letter. Normally he seems to dictate the text of a letter to a scribe who had to write it in well readable handwriting, like Tertius, the real writer of Romans (Rom 16,22). This was usual in ancient times.<sup>2</sup> Rich people could engage a professional; poor people needed the help of a friend; Paul had the opportunity to work together with a brother in faith. An Apostolic letter, spoken loudly by its author in order to be written, and sent to its audience in order to be read out loudly in the community of believers (cf. 1Thess 5,27), is a living medium of the vivid word of God.<sup>3</sup>

But there are some markers within the text as well which underline the written form of the letter and the personal handwriting of the Apostle. In Second Corinthians Paul remembers the image he has: "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2Cor 10,10). Sometimes he needed to be absent in order to be present through a letter; in every case he uses the possibility to communicate the Gospel through space and time by a piece of paper and some written words, full of Spirit. The notices of his handwriting belong to the communication network which brings the Apostle in contact with the local Churches. It is an indicator of authenticity, but also a sign of personal presence both in the process of writing and in the process of reading. In his letter to Philemon Paul, as writer in prison, notes: "I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand" (Phlm 19). Trying to convince Philemon to set his slave Onesimus free, the Apostle gives his signature under a bond in order to guarantee for the money

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dieter Sänger, Galaterbrief, in: Friedrich-Wilhelm Horn (ed.), *Paulus Handbuch*, Tübingen: Mohr 2013, 194-203.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Stanley Kent Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco Roman Antiquity* (Library of Early Christianity 5), Philadelphia 1986; Stanley E. Porter – Sean A. Adams (ed.), *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* (Pauline Studies 6), Leiden: Brill 2004, esp. Jeffrey A. D. Weima, Sincerely Paul: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings, p. 307-345.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Christina Hoegen-Rohls, *Zwischen Augenblickskorrespondenz und Ewigkeitstexten. Eine Einführung in die paulinische Epistolographie* (BThSt 135), Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener 2013.

Philemon could claim from his slave or for his slave.<sup>4</sup> In First Corinthians Paul subscribes: “Greetings from me, Paul, with my own hand” (1Cor 16,21; cf. Col 4,18; 2Thess 3,17). According to 2Thess 3,15 – authentic or imitated – a handwritten “mark (σημείον)” belongs to every letter of Paul and indicates his personal style: “So I write” (οὕτως γράφω).<sup>5</sup>

The letter to the Galatians needs specific attention. The Greek tense of verse 11 is aorist. Paul anticipates the reading of his letter; and he writes connected with the position of the Galatians who should know in the moment of listening what their Apostle has done for them when he has written to them. Paul wants the listeners to recognize what they are able to examine now when the letter is read in their assembly: “See what large letters I make” (Gal 6,11). In the eyes of James D.G. Dunn Paul “wrote in large letters to emphasize the importance of what he was about to write”<sup>6</sup>. Moreover it is his personal identification as their Apostle, like a finger print. In his commentary Alfredo Marcello Buscemi OFM notes: “Paolo con immediatezza richiama l’attenzione dei Galati a ciò che sta dicendo in queste righe qua rappresentano il suo chirografo.”<sup>7</sup> Gal 6,11 marks the beginning of the *postscriptum* which is a meta-text, focusing the reader’s attention to the central message of the Apostle. St. Augustine, familiar with the rhetoric of his time, makes the point: “redit ad illud, unde tota causa agitur”.<sup>8</sup>

Some sentences later Paul writes: “And as many as will follow this rule – peace be on them and mercy as also on the Israel of God” (Gal 6,16). “Rule”, although used in the most English Bibles, is perhaps not the very best translation of “canon”; it is more than “norm” or “standard”<sup>9</sup>. In its proper sense “canon” is the orientation line tightened by a gardener to lay out her bed or by a bricklayer to construct a wall along a road. A good German translation is “Richtschnur”, in English perhaps: guideline. A canon is like a

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Thomas J. Kraus, Eine vertragsrechtliche Verpflichtung on Phlm 19. Duktus und juristischer Hintergrund, in: Johannes Frühwald-König et al. (ed.), *Steht nicht geschrieben ...? Studien zur Bibel und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte*. FS Georg Schmuttermayr, Regensburg: Pustet 2001, p. 187-206, esp. p. 190-194.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Joram Luttenberger, *Prophetenmantel oder Bücherfutteral? Die persönlichen Notizen in den Pastoralbriefen im Licht antiker Epistolographie und literarischer Pseudepigraphie* (Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 40), Leipzig: EVA 2012, p. 117-127 (handwritten signs and marks).

<sup>6</sup> *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Black’s New Testament Commentary IX), London: A & C Black 1993, p. 335.

<sup>7</sup> *Lettera ai Galati. Commentario esegetico* (Studia Biblicum Franciscanum. Analecta 63), Jerusalem: Franciscan 2004, p. 612.

<sup>8</sup> *Exp. Gal.* 62,1 (CSEL 84,137).

<sup>9</sup> So James D.G. Dunn, *Gal*, p. 343.

compass: It allows finding the right way, but it is not the way itself, certainly not the aim. But as a compass – or as a GPS – it works.

What may serve the believers as guide according to Galatians? A first answer gives verse 15: “Therefore neither circumcision is anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation”. This sentence gives the pragmatic solution of the Galatian conflict with radical ecclesial consequences and is a deep rooted maxim of grace theology which opens the future of faith and mission. In a wider sense the “canon” refers to the whole letter insofar as it witnesses the “truth of the Gospel” which criterion is the freedom of faith (Gal 2,4f.). In the eyes of the Apostle and his followers the doctrine of justification (Gal 2,16) which finds its first expression in Galatians<sup>10</sup> has a canonical function for the Church in which Paul is called to work as Apostle by God himself (Gal 1,16). He remembers the conflict of Antioch (Gal 2,11-14) in order to demonstrate that the mutual recognition of apostolicity which was the result of the Apostolic Council (Gal 2,1-10) needs this theological clarification in favor of the unity of the Church (Gal 2,15-21).<sup>11</sup>

Insofar the conclusion of Galatians is a proof text in order to reflect the relation between the human factor and the divine approach in proclaiming the Gospel and teaching the truth. Very often a contradiction is seen as far as humanity belongs to contingency but truth to eternity. Nevertheless Paul sees a connection. Is this an illusion? Or an indicator that the canonization of Galatians is a – providential or fatal – misunderstanding?

This question requires an answer. On the one side the Apostle’s letter leads to one of the starting points of the canonical process<sup>12</sup> which helps the

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. *The Biblical Foundations of the Doctrine of Justification*. An Ecumenical Follow-Up to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, presented by a task force of biblical Scholars and systematic theologians from the Lutheran World Federation, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and the World Methodist Council, New York: Paulist 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Th. Söding, *Apostel gegen Apostel. Ein Unfall im antiochenischen Großstadtverkehr* (Gal 2,11-14), in: Reinhard von Bendemann – Markus Tiwald (ed.), *Das frühe Christentum und die Stadt* (BWANT 198), Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2012, 92-113; id., *Das Apostelkonzil als Paradebeispiel kirchlicher Konfliktlösung. Anspruch, Wirklichkeit und Wirkung*, in: Joachim Wiemeyer (ed.), *Dialogprozesse in der katholischen Kirche. Begründungen – Voraussetzungen – Formen*, Paderborn: Schoeningh 2012, 25-34.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1986; Lee Martin MacDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Bible Canon*, Nashville: Abingdon 2008 (<sup>1</sup>1988); id., *Formation of the Bible. The Story of the Church’s Canon*, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson 2012; Hermann von Lips, *Der neutestamentliche Kanon. Seine Geschichte und Bedeutung* (Zürcher Grundrisse zur Bibel), Zürich: Zürcher 2004; Christine Helmer – Christof Landmesser (eds.), *One Scripture or Many? Canon from Biblical, Theological and Philosophical Perspectives*, Oxford: OUP 2008 (<sup>1</sup>2004); Gabriella Aragione et al. (ed.), *Le canon du Nouveau Testament. Regards nouveaux sur*

Church to find her way of faith, identifying and interpreting the decisive witnesses from the apostolic times. This process is a history of reception in which the theological aspiration of the letter is affirmed and combined with other formative documents, in first line the Bible of Israel and the Gospels (which were yet unknown to Paul). The letter to the Galatians was a corner stone of the canonization from its first beginnings.<sup>13</sup> On the other side this letter is an original testimony of Paul's theology which is strongly linked with his biography and his participation in the apostolic community of the Early Church. This testimony is an authentic expression of Christian theology because it reflects the revelation in history which is centered in Jesus Christ, founded in Israel and ongoing in the Church. The letter to the Galatians was a fixed star in the formation of the "orthodox" theology of the Church Fathers.<sup>14</sup>

From a Pauline point of view there is a strong impact between both the humanity and the divinity of the Gospel. In the line of this communication theology, a theology of love, the human emergence and the divine right of the canon do belong together. It would be an anachronistic approach to project this structure on the Pauline epistles themselves. But it may be interesting to have a look on how Paul connects humanity and divinity. Galatians is not the only one but a good paradigm.

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*l'histoire de sa formation* (le monde de la Bible 54), Genève: Labor et fides 2005; Craig E. Evans – Emmanuel Tov (eds.), *Exploring the Origins of the Bible. Canon Formation in History, Literary and Theological Perspective* (Arcadia Studies in Bible and Theology), Grand Rapids: Baker 2008, esp. STANLEY E. PORTER, Paul and the process of canonization, p. 173-202; Craig A. Evans – H. Daniel Zacharias (eds.), *Jewish and Christian Scripture as Artifact and Canon* (Library of Second Temple Studies 70; Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 13), London: T & T Clark 2009, Tomas Bokedal, *The Formation and Significance of the Christian Biblical Canon. A Study in Text, Ritual and Interpretation*, London: Bloomsbury 2013 (with the central thesis that the canon belongs to an ecclesial practice of proclamation and prayer, not alone as text but in relation to the Lord [p. 8] b. Of special interest is Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *The Pauline Canon* (Pauline Studies), Leiden: Brill 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. the overview of David Trobisch, *Die Entstehung der Paulusbriefsammlung. Studien zu den Anfängen christlicher Publizistik* (NTOA/StANT 10), Freiburg/Schw.: Universitätsverlag – Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1989; id., *Die Paulusbriefe und die Anfänge der christlichen Publizistik* (KT 135), Gütersloh: Kaiser 1994; id. *Die Endredaktion des Neuen Testaments. Eine Untersuchung zur Entstehung der christlichen Bibel* (NTOA 31), Freiburg/Schw.: Universitätsverlag 1996 (english translation: *The First Edition of the New Testament*, Oxford: OUP 2000). His special thesis of a free production and a Roman collection of the Pauline epistles (*Paul's Letter Collection. Tracing the Origins*, Minneapolis: Fortress 2001 [1994]) need critical discussion.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Martin Meiser, *Galater* (Novum Testamentum Patristicum 9), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2007.

## 2. The Humanity of the Gospel

“From now on, let no one make trouble for me, for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body” (Gal 6,17) – this is the continuation of the canon sentence in the *postscriptum* of Galatians. The *stigmata lesu* Paul mentions are identity markers for the Apostle. They are signs of honor and shame.<sup>15</sup> For Greeks and Romans branding marks are tattoos of shame insofar as they identify a criminal (Xenoph., *hist. Graec.* V 3,24) or a war prisoner (Plut., *Pericl.* 26 [I 166 d]); but in Eastern tradition tattoos are used as signs of honor as well insofar as they mark a member of a religious association with special relations to a deity which the man belongs to (Pseud Luc., *Syr Dea* 4,8; 3Makk 3,29f.; Plut., *adulat.* 12 [II 56 e]; cf. Rev 13,6f.; 14,9ff.; 16,2; 19,20; 20,4). Paul argues with the dialectical ambiguity of such a mark giving an interpretation in the sign of the cross (vg. Gal 6,12.14). The Crucified died as damned sinner who is a blessing because he has given his life “for us” who are doomed sinners and become blessed children of God (cf. Gal 3,13f.).<sup>16</sup> So the cross, a character of curse, is a sign of freedom. Paul mentioning the body marks he has gotten from Jesus, identifies himself as a sinner who is justified, a slave who is freed, and an aggressor who became an Apostle. The context makes sure that Paul in this passage does not refer to what every Christian faithful is characterized by<sup>17</sup>; rather Paul is presenting himself as Apostle of Jesus Christ, responsible for the Galatian communities. A parallel is 2Cor 4,11, where Paul describes his apostolic service: “For we who are alive are constantly being given up to death on account of Jesus in order that also the life of Jesus might be manifested in our mortal flesh”<sup>18</sup>. The catalogs of hardship Paul lists in the Corinthian correspondence (1Cor 4,11ff.; 2Cor 4,8ff.; 6,4-9; 11,23-29) and mentions shortly in Galatians (Gal 4,13f.) give an outlook of the conformity with Jesus

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Helmut Mödritzer, *Stigma und Charisma im Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt. Zur Soziologie des Urchristentums* (NTOA 28), Freiburg/Schw.: Universitätsverlag – Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1994.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Gerd Theißen, Das Kreuz als Sühne und Ärgernis. Zwei Deutungen des Todes Jesu, in: Dieter Sänger – Ulrich Mell (eds.), *Paulus und Johannes. Exegetische Studien zur paulinischen Theologie und Literatur* (WUNT 198), Tübingen: Mohr 2006, 427-455

<sup>17</sup> It was the proposal of Erich Dinkler (Jesu Wort vom Kreuztragen [1954], in: id., *Signum Crucis. Aufsätze zum neuen Testament und zur christlichen Archäologie*, Tübingen: Mohr 1967, 77-98, here p. 93) to interpret the sentence as referring to a rite of baptism, the marking by a Greek Chi (X). Franz-Josef Dölger (*Sphragis. Eine altchristliche Taufbezeichnung in ihren Beziehungen zur profanen und jüdischen Kultur des Altertums* [Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums 5, 3/4], Paderborn: Schoeningh 1911, 51) considers if Paul the name of Jesus was branded – in parallel to Jes 44,5. An argument against this interpretation is not only the context but also the plural.

<sup>18</sup> Translation by Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians* (AncB 32 A), Garden City: Doubleday 1984, p. 252.

which characterizes the Apostle. Heinrich Schlier comments: “Er ist ein Sklave Christi, dem die Leiden seines Herrn durch Nöte und Verfolgung leiblich eingebrannt sind.”<sup>19</sup> Of course it is not only an Apostle who suffers for the sake of Jesus; to be persecuted is an experience of many faithful who are invited to imitate the Apostle (Gal 4,12); and of course the experience of daily dying is not only a truth of Christian life but a dimension of the *condition humaine*. Seneca formulated: “*cotidie morimur; cotidie enim demitur aliqua pars vitae*” (*epist. mor.* 24,20). But these parallels do not blur but profile the apostolic identity; they help to see the humanity of faith and the communion of the Apostle with the Church members as well as the specific presence of God’s grace in the life of the faithful and in the work of the Apostle. It is an Christological humanity, a real *imitatio Christi* which motivates Paul to write a letter which such a notice to the Galatians.

The confession of Paul that he is bodily marked by Jesus is a very personal reclaiming of his apostolic authority. But it fits to the Gospel. Its humanity is theologically essential. Three dimensions should be mentioned very briefly: the conversion and vocation of Paul; his faith experience; and his language of understanding.

### 2.1 The conversion and vocation of Paul

The opponents in Galatia seem to attack the authenticity of Paul’s apostleship.<sup>20</sup> So Paul is challenged to reflect his apostolic service.<sup>21</sup> He answers in openness and deepness, full of self-critique and self-awareness (Gal 1,13-16). He describes his call to apostleship as conversion and as vocation. His conversion is a vocation insofar God made him an Apostle sent out to bring the Good News to the Gentiles; and his vocation is a conversion – not insofar as a Jew became a Christian but insofar as a persecutor became a persecuted missionary, a denier of Jesus Christ a denied confessor of faith and a religious warrior a fought messenger of peace.<sup>22</sup>

The central phrase is of highest personal intensity: “<sup>15</sup>But when it pleased the one who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me through his grace, <sup>16</sup>to reveal his Son in me so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, ...” (Gal 1,15f.). The revelation of God Paul remarks was not “to” him

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<sup>19</sup> *Der Brief an die Galater* (KEK VII), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht <sup>12</sup>1963 (1949), p. 211.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. John C. Hurd, Reflections concerning Paul’s „Opponents“ in Galatia, in: Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *Paul and his Opponents* (Pauline Studies 2), Leiden: Brill 2005, p. 129-148.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Robert Vorholt, *Der Dienst der Versöhnung. Studien zur Apostolatstheologie bei Paulus* (WMANT 118), Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener 2008, p. 166-180 (Galatians).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Th. Söding, Paulus von Tarsus – seine Berufung und Bekehrung, in: Norbert Kleyboldt (ed.), *Paulus. Identität und Universalität des Evangeliums*, Münster: Dialog 2009, 12-43.

(as the New Revised Standard Version translates) but “in” him (as the King James Bible and others give the phrase). It is Paul himself who is not only the address but the place of revelation, and who is not only an object of information but a subject of receiving. God reveals his Son in a way that Jesus Christ fills the heart of Paul. He is “in Christ” like Jesus Christ in “in” him. To be “in Christ” and to recognize Jesus “in me” is not a privilege of Paul but a reality of every believer.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless the revelation by which God calls him as Apostle is for Paul on the same level as the vocation and mission of all the other Apostles, beginning with Cephas and the Twelve (1Cor 15,4-9). He is the “last” and the “least” of the Apostles (1Cor 15,8.9) because he “persecuted the Church of God” (1Cor 15,9) while the other Apostles has been started to proclaim the Gospel since years. From this reason Erik Peterson has described him as “Apostel der Ausnahme”.<sup>24</sup> Therefore the personality of Paul is of extreme importance in order to understand his mission and theology. He can describe the revelation as appearance of Christ (1Kor 15,5.8) and as vision of him (1Kor 9,1). In both perspectives it is he, just he himself, who is involved, called, and converted.

Underlining this humanity of apostleship Paul in Gal 1,15 refers indirectly to the vocation of prophets when he speaks about his prenatal election. One reference is Jer 1,5, another is Jes 49,15. In both cases a man becomes a prophet of Gentiles; in both cases the call of God is not a spontaneous but a planned action geared to his salvation will; in both cases the election before conception makes the whole person a creature and a minister of God in favor of his word; in both cases, Jeremiah as well as the servant of God, the elected prophet will suffer in his mission. These all are dimensions of Paul’s ministry as well. He is called as prophet of the New Covenant (vg. 2Cor 3); he is created as instrument of salvation (cf. Act 9,15); he is sent as human witness for the word of God (Rom 10,5-15). In Ancient times both Origen as well as Jerome argue that Gal 1,15 demonstrates the co-existence and coherence of predestination and free will insofar he wants to go the way God guides him<sup>25</sup> and decides to leave the wrong track of persecuting the Church stopped and invited by God<sup>26</sup>.

To mark this point: The call to be an Apostle and to work as Apostle makes Paul not passive but active. He is asked by God to invest his whole person in proclaiming the Gospel. Therefore from the self-dictated and self-written

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Udo Schnelle, *Paulus. Leben und Denken*, Berlin: de Gruyter <sup>2</sup>2014, p. 519f.

<sup>24</sup> *Der erste Brief an die Korinther und Paulus-Studien*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Weidemann (Ausgewählte Schriften 7), Würzburg: Echter 2006, p. 3-22.

<sup>25</sup> *Comm. in Rom. 1,3*, in: Origenes, *Commentarii in Epistulam ad Romanos. Römerbriefkommentar VI* (Fragmente). Griechisch – deutsch, hg. v. Theresia Heither OSB (Fontes Christiani 2/6), Freiburg i.Br.: Herder 1999, p. 42f.

<sup>26</sup> Hieronymus, *in Gal.* (CCL 77 A, 28).

letters to the Pastoral Epistles Paul is not only the promoter but also the paradigm of the Gospel which proclaims Jesus Christ who justifies the sinner by faith.<sup>27</sup> It is his dramatic biography which was formatted by God's grace; and it is his personal charisma which enables him to organize a world-wide mission. So from the prospective of apostolicity the humanity of the Gospel is essential because God in his grace creates new persons who are able and willing to work together with him, doing his will in proclaiming the Gospel and founding the Church.

## 2.2 *The faith experience of Paul*

The letter to the Galatians is a milestone in the history of subjectivity. Exploring the justification thesis Paul reflects his own faith experience. He cogitates over his conversion; but in this context he highlights in particular not his call as Apostle but his recognition of Jesus Christ: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2,19f.). The subjectivity Paul reflects is intersubjectivity in a proper sense. It is the „You“ of God recognized in the voice of Christ which allows Paul to discover his "I"; and it is the "We" of the Church (Gal 2,15f.) in which Paul finds himself as a new creature (cf. Gal 6,15). He is one who is loved by Jesus Christ; and as brother of Christ he is a member of his ecclesial body together with all the other members (cf. Gal 3,26ff.). So the experience of the "I" is an experience of faith in the Church. It is the justifying faith in which the sinner dies and arises. He is condemned by the law and saved by Jesus Christ. This is a liberation which frees a human person. The faith unites the believer with Jesus Christ and through him with God. Therefore it is correct that Marie-Joseph Lagrange comments: "La vie nouvelle en Dieu est une vie divine"<sup>28</sup>. Arguing in favour of the justification by faith Paul needs an *argumentum ad hominem* because of two reasons: First he has to invest his own insights and experiences into the struggles about the best way of the Church to go the way of faith in freedom; second he has to demonstrate the anthropological dimensions of justification especially at the interface between soteriology and ethics.

Therefore Gal 2,19f. has two aspects. On the one side it is a short self-biography of Paul the Apostle and Paul the believer (cf. Gal 6,14). He has gained a new identity by his faith. And this faith includes a new point of view on

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Samuel Vollenweider, „Archetyp der Vollkommenheit“. Die Lebenswende des Paulus nach der patristischen Lektüre von Phil 3 (Augustin und Johannes Chrysostomos), in: Tobias Nicklas – Andreas Merkt – Joseph Verheyden (eds.). *Ancient Perspectives on Paulus* (NTOA/StUNT 102), Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2013, p. 11-29.

<sup>28</sup> *Saint Paul Épître aux Galates* (Études Bibliques), Paris: Gabalda 1942, 52.



the world and a new position to work in it. In his own eyes his former life as sinner and persecutor was a life of alienation although he thought to be on the ideal way of life (cf. Phil 3,3-9); his death and resurrection in the midst of his life leads him to be the one who God has expected him to be.

On the other side Paul presents himself as “prototypical example” of every faithful, as Hans Dieter Betz has characterized his self-characterization.<sup>29</sup> There is a close parallel in the letter to the Romans where Paul is describing baptism as dying and living with Jesus Christ (Rom 6,3f.). One step back in Rom 7 there is an echo in the “I” of the one who discovers himself as sinner – at the moment where he can pray: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom 7,24). It is the same structure of salvation regarding to the power of sin and to the grace of God. So the Galatians are invited to discover themselves anew in their identity as believers. Looking to Paul they are able to recognize: it is their obedience to the word of God which fills their freedom with love; and it is their freedom which makes their lives an expression of faith.

So the humanity of the Gospel is not only a topic but an experience shared by the Apostle and the believers in the Church. The letter is written to remind the believers which identity they were gifted with and how they were called to make it the truth of their lives.

### *2.3 The language of Paul*

Galatians is a typical letter of Paul: full of emotion and reflection, full of theology and spirituality, full of mission and ethos. Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf, a classical Greek scholar, has noted: “Endlich, endlich redet wieder einmal einer auf griechisch von einer frischen, inneren Lebenserfahrung; das ist sein Glaube; in ihm ist er seiner Hoffnung gewiß, und seine heiße Liebe umspannt die Menschheit: ihr das Heil zu bringen, wirft er freudig sein Leben hin; frisches Leben der Seele aber sprießt überall hervor, wohin ihn sein Fuß trägt. Als einen Ersatz seiner persönlichen Wirkung schreibt er seine Briefe. Dieser Briefstil ist Paulus, niemand als Paulus.”<sup>30</sup>

Galatians is a letter of polemic<sup>31</sup>; it is a polemic against the opponents of the Apostle who Paul wishes to exclude from the Church (Gal 1,6-9); it is a polemic against the “false brothers” who Paul rejects in the Apostolic Council

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<sup>29</sup> *Galatians* (Hermeneia Series), Philadelphia: Fortress 1979, 121.

<sup>30</sup> Die griechische Literatur des Altertums, in: id. et al., *Die griechische und lateinische Literatur und Sprache* (Die Kultur der Gegenwart I/8), Berlin – Leipzig: Teubner 1905 (repr. 1995), p. 1-236; here p. 157f.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Dieter Sänger, Literarische Strategien der Polemik im Galaterbrief, in: Oda Wischmeyer – Lorenzo Scornaienchi (eds.), *Polemik in der frühchristlichen Literatur* (BZNW 170), Berlin: de Gruyter 2011, p. 155-181.

(Gal 2,1-10)<sup>32</sup>; and it is a polemic against the Galatians who Paul wants to guide back into the community with him and the whole Church. The polemic articulates the passion of Paul. He is arguing so sharply because he is both deeply convinced of the truth of the Gospel and highly interested in the life of the Galatians. The polemic reflects how important the problem is; it makes clear that various alternatives are on the floor; and it underlines how necessary the decision is to go on just in the direction of the new beginning.

Hence in Galatians there is polemic with arguments, and there is polemic with a smile. There is polemical argumentation because Paul deals with the Holy Scripture, the creed, and the faith experiences of the readership – which all are matters of controversy and orientation. His epistle is an elaborated framework of reflections which makes the letter a pillar of New Testament theology.<sup>33</sup> Argumentation fits to faith because it is not only trust and conviction but perception and recognition as well. Otherwise faith would be only *pietas*, traditional religion, but not a matter of “to know God or rather to be known by God” (Gal 4,9).

Very often Paul deals directly with the ideas, persecutions and intentions of the Galatians. Here his polemic often is combined with irony. Humor and severity come together in order to show the readers how bad the alternative of the newcomers is and how good their future prospects will be if they follow their true Apostle. It is of feigned indignation when Paul states: “I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted” (Gal 4,11). It is a played despair when he asks: “Where is your blessing”? (Gal 4,15). It is a paradox fear when he requires: “Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?” (Gal 4,16). Clemens Alexandrinus notes that Paul uses a pedagogical instrument of the education by the *logos* because he tries to support the Galatians in a deeper understanding of faith<sup>34</sup>. Paul reclaims the contrast to their earlier conduct: Their Apostle was ill when he was among them in order to found the Church in Galatia (Gal 4,13); perhaps it was the “thorn in the flesh” Paul mentions in his Corinthian correspondence (2Cor 12,7) which became a persecution; but thanks God he was not refused by the Galatians (Gal 4,14), just the opposite: “you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me” (Gal 4,15). This past has the promise of a better future because it is characterized by the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 3,1-4) who is present in all

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<sup>32</sup> It is the opinion of Ian J. Elmer (Pillars, Hypocrites and False Brothers. Paul’s Polemic against Jerusalem, *op. cit.*, p. 131-153) that Paul argues against Jerusalem, esp. against James. But Paul represents himself as respected partner of James, Paul and John. The conflict of Antioch he discusses as problem of weakness and hypocrisy not as a fundamental contradiction.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Ulrich Wilckens, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* I/3, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener 2005, p. 131-164

<sup>34</sup> *Paed.* 1,831 (GCS 12, 138).

time. If the Galatians will not deny their own identity they will renew their love to their Apostle so that he can see that God has sent him to Galatia not vainly. The human dimensions of the interchange illustrates an image Paul paints: “My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you ...” (Gal 4,19)<sup>35</sup>. Here Christian formation is remembered, and the rebirth of faith is imagined. Paul presents himself as mother of the believers who became members of the Church because of his mission and took part in his own life.

The key sentence of Paul’s communication strategy is the first sentence of the passage: “Become as I am, for I also have become as you are” (Gal 4,12). It is an imperative of imitation which grounds in the participation Paul took in the life of the Galatians. This is his apostolic ethos which is characterized by his master Jesus Christ: “I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some” (1Cor 9,22). The solidarity of the Apostle is the very best argument against the suspense of Galatians that Paul could not be a true Apostle and that his proclamation would only be half the story.

To summarize this aspect: The humanity of the Gospel is the spirit of the letter. To save the Galatians, that is: to show the community members why and how Jesus Christ is their savior, is the very intent of the letter. The language of polemic and understanding expels the truth of the Gospel. This truth is God’s salvation will, proclaimed by the Apostle and received by human beings through faith in a way that a new identity – the true identity – is found in the obedience to the word of God. The possibility to believe in God depends on the proclamation of the Gospel by a preacher who is sent by God, guided by Jesus Christ and inspired by the Holy Spirit in order to give the good message a human voice, a human face and a human history. It is a hermeneutical theology Paul expresses in his letter, a part of his pastoral service for the communities although they are in trouble with him.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.-The Divinity of the Gospel

“May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal 6,14) – this wish of Paul which is a hidden prayer leads the readership from the personal

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Jan Lambrecht, *Like a Mother in the Pain of Childbirth Again. A Study of Galatians 4:12-20*, in: J.D.D. Dunn et al., *La foi agissant par l’amour (Galates 4,12 – 6,16)* (SMB 13), Rome: Benedictina 1996, p. 13-31. He compares the passage with 1Cor 4,14ff. Another parallel is 1Thess 2,5-11.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Richard B. Hays, *Apokalyptic Poiēsis in Galatians. Paternity, Passion and Participation*, in: Mark W. Elliott et al. (eds.), *Galatians and Christian Theology. Justification, the Gospel, and Ethics in Paul’s Letter*, Grand Rapids: Baker 2014, p. 200-219.

testimony to the divine reality. Boasting is the self-confident expression of the personal identity. Paul criticizes a human boasting which depends should construct personal honour because of own efforts, in particular religious works (cf. Rom 2,23; 3,27; Phil 3,4). But this critique does not destroy human self-consciousness. Just the opposite: It inspires a radical new identity construction which is worthy to be expressed. The human self-conception of Paul is a total self-determination by the grace of God whose real sign is the cross (cf. Gal 2,19ff.). For Paul it is only the *kyrios* who enables a boasting which is real and true because he is the one and only who overcomes the death of sin and lives in the love of God (cf. 1Cor 1,29ff.).<sup>37</sup>

The same aspects which enlighten the humanity reflect the divinity of the Gospel. The vocation of the Apostle is an election by God (Gal 1,1); the faith of the Apostle and of all believers is a gift of God (Gal 3,23ff.); the language of polemic and understanding is the expression of God's inspiration. The intersection of both the humanity and the divinity of the Gospel is Jesus Christ, "the Lord who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father" (Gal 1,3f.).<sup>38</sup> Therefore Christology is the key to understand the divinity of the Gospel in its relation to the God's humanity and the eternal word of God in its relation to the letter of Paul. Once more three dimension should be mentioned, now from the other side of the communication forum: the revelation of Jesus Christ which has created the vocation and conversion of Paul; the formation of Jesus Christ which has characterized the faith experience of Paul; and the proclamation of Jesus Christ which has formed the language of Paul.

### 3.1 *The revelation of Jesus Christ*

Defending the authenticity of his apostleship Paul demonstrates how the source and the content of his preaching do belong together, as a theological unity. He is the apostle of the true and only Gospel (cf. Gal 1,6-9)<sup>39</sup> because it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the double sense of the genitive. Paul has heard the word of God from Jesus Christ and about Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 10,14-17). Therefore he starts his apology with a declaration: "The gospel that was

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<sup>37</sup> F.F. Bruce (*The Epistle to the Galatians. A Commentary on the Greek Text* [NICTC], Grand Rapids: Eerdmann 1982, 270s.) stresses the persecution of self-boasting.

<sup>38</sup> Gal 1,3f. is a key to disclosure the whole text of the letter which gives a first interpretation of the confession; cf. Th. Söding, *Befreiung vom Bösen. Tradition und Transformation im Galaterbrief*, in: Wilfried Eisele et al. (eds.), *Aneignung durch Transformation. Beiträge zur Analyse von Überlieferungsprozessen im frühen Christentum*. Festschrift für Michael Theobald (HBS 74), Freiburg i. Br.: Herder 2013, p. 264-297.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *The Singularity of the Gospel Revisited*, in: Mark W. Elliott et al. (eds.), *Galatians and Christian Theology* (n- \*), p. 187-199.

proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1,11f.). Very often these verse are interpreted as if Paul wishes to underline his independency of Jerusalem<sup>40</sup>. Indeed Paul clarifies to be an Apostle only by the grace of Jesus Christ. But he is not independent from Peter and the Church of Jerusalem, and he do not wish to be isolated from the apostles<sup>41</sup>; to the contrary he is searching the contact with Cephas (Gal 1,18); he is very interested in the *consensus* with the earlier Apostles (cf. 1Cor 15,9ff.); he is a part of the apostolic communion (Gal 2,9). So in Gal 1,11f. he does not dissociating himself from the "Urgemeinde" but from a self-made Gospel which would be a human invention – and an inhuman ideology because it reclaims divine authority for an earthly project. But Paul's Gospel is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He did not conceptualize it from an own idea but received it from revelation. This revelation opened his eyes, his heart and his mind: He could see the crucified Jesus as Son of God; he could feel the love of Jesus to him and to all sinners (Gal 2,19f.), and he could understand the truth of the Gospel. To claim revelation is consequent because it is impossible to find the Gospel from human thoughts or experiences since they are inspired by the Holy Spirit and arranged by God himself. John the Damascene interpreted that Paul became a pupil of God – in another way than the earlier Apostles but on the same level of revelation and education.<sup>42</sup>

The revelation Paul has received reasons his authority as Apostle. Apostolic authority is essential for the Church because she lives in the tradition of the faith which is rooted in the mission of Jesus Christ and always renewed in the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore apostolic authority is nothing else than service: obedience to the will of God, conformation with Jesus the Lord, abandon for the sake of the human beings, pastoral care for the Church, humility in the presentation of the truth, power in the weakness of the flesh, openness for the breath of the Spirit. The authority of Paul is the authority of God himself, because he enables the Apostle to proclaim his Gospel.

The letter to the Galatians expresses directly this apostolic authority. The preface<sup>43</sup> marks the communication level: The Apostle (Gal 1,1) addresses the Churches of Galatia (Gal 1,2). Paul is not alone but belongs to a large group of

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<sup>40</sup> Thjs is the normal protestant reading of Gal 1,10ff.; cf. even Franz Mußner, *Der Galaterbrief* (HThKNT IX), Freiburg i. Br.: Herder 1974, 68f.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Markus Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory. The New Testament Apostle in the Early Church*, Grand Rapids; Baker 2012, 144: „Paul evidently regards Peter as the foremost apostolic figure in this regard Moreover, Paul explicitly claims that his preaching is fully consonant with the other apostles.“

<sup>42</sup> *In Gal.* (PG 95, 781 A): ὡς θεοῦ γέγονε μαθητής.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Franz Schnider – Werner Stenger, *Studien zum neutestamentlichen Briefformular* (NTTS 11), Leiden: Brill 1987, p. 3-41, esp. p. 10f.

brothers and sister who are on his side (Gal 1,2); in the letter he will write that he was fully accepted as a colleague by the other Apostles (Gal 2,1-10). But the Galatians who are on the point almost to follow the opponents of Paul in order to become full members of the people of God should recognize that it is the Apostle Paul who integrates them in the community of the whole Church while his competitors would divide the Church cutting her from Christ. In his letter Paul describes and interprets the revelation of Jesus Christ. For the readers it becomes transparent why and how Paul their Apostle is, and in which way he received, understood and proclaims the revelation of Jesus Christ.

In the same perspective it becomes clear how and why the letter to the Galatians claims something like canonical authority: It is – in the eyes of his author and of his intended readers– a true witness of the Gospel. The letter itself identifies the links that connect Paul with a lot of other witness instances of canonical authority. The Holy Scripture is fundamental, which, according to Galatians, is able to “foresee” and “say” (Gal 3,8)<sup>44</sup> because it is the testimony of God’s promise from the time before the coming of Christ for the time “in Christ”. The witnesses of other apostles is essential (cf. 1Cor 15,9ff.), although in conflict (Gal 2,11-14), because they do proclaim the same Gospel. The integration into the Church of God as a whole is decisive because she is constituted as faith community by the apostolic service and unites different ways of living the faith, primarily the life styles of both the Jews and the pagans (Gal 2,1-10).<sup>45</sup> The letter is not revelation itself, but an original witness of the revelation of Jesus Christ, reflected by the apostolic author and written to an apostolic community which lives from the presence of the Lord in the Spirit and receives the letter as admonition and encouragement.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.2 *The formation of Jesus Christ*

The faith Paul experienced and shares with the readers is an energy which characterizes the whole life – through love (Gal 5,6).<sup>47</sup> Jesus Christ, sent by God the father, is the one who gives the authentic form of human life. The mystery of his life is love (Gal 2,20). In his love he gave his life for those who

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Tor Vegge, Sacred Scripture in the Letters of Paul, in: Matthias R. Hoffmann et al. (eds.), *Paulusperspektiven* (BThSt 145), Neukirchen-Vluyn; Neukirchener 2014, p. 1-33, esp. p. 21ff.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Th. Söding, Justification as Participation. Ecumenical Dimensions of Galatians, in: Mark W. Elliott et al. (eds.), *Galatians and Christian Theology* (n. \*), p. 62-81.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Rudolf Hoppe, Paränese und Theologie im Galaterbrief, in: Michael Bachmann – Bernd Kollmann (eds.), *Umstrittener Galaterbrief. Studien zur Situierung der Theologie des Paulus-Schreibens* (BThSt 106), Neukirchen-Vluyn; Neukirchener 2010, p. 207-230.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Th. Söding, Glaube der durch Liebe wirkt. Rechtfertigung und Ethik im Galaterbrief, in: *op. cit.*, p. 165-206.

are under the curse of the law because they are sinners (Gal 3,13f.); through his love he is their redeemer who brings sovereignty into minority (Gal 4,1-6), freedom into slavery (Gal 4,7), and Spirit into flesh (Gal 5,13-26).

Because the mystery of redemption is love, Jesus Christ as savior is not alone acting *on* the human beings but *with* them and *in* them as well. Although God's grace is always His power and gift and not the contribution of human beings it makes the faithful new creatures who answer the Gospel in free obedience and receive the truth of the Gospel as transmitted and owned truth of their lives. In soteriological, spiritual and ethical aspects Paul reflects this correlation.

The soteriological aspect is that of participation in the sonship of Jesus. According to Galatians the Son of God "sent by God, born of a woman, stayed under the law" has come "in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children" (Gal 4,4f). The sonship of Jesus is not exclusive but positive. It is the reason for the adoption of all human beings who believe in him; and it is the mode of live for all believers; they are called to live like Jesus because they are freed through him to live with him.<sup>48</sup> That is more than morality. To become a child of God means to participate in the sonship of Jesus.<sup>49</sup> He is not adopted but the eternal son of the eternal father; so he can open his relation to his father for those who believe in him (cf. Rom 8,14f.).

The spiritual aspect is the praying expression of this *status* as free children of God: "And because you are children (sons), God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal 4,6). David Wenham, very optimistic regarding the Jesus knowledge of Paul, concludes that Paul here is from the well of Early Christian liturgy whose source is the praying of Jesus himself.<sup>50</sup> It is the Our Father which seems to be the common prayer Paul hints at. Praying with the words of Jesus is an authentic expression of the new relation to God which means participation in the sonship of Jesus.

The ethical aspect is the full correlation of this spirituality. Dealing with transgressions of Church members (Gal 6,1) Paul admonishes the readers: "Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6,2). John Barclay interprets this phrase in a double direction: as hidden quotation of Lev 19,18 (Gal 5,13) and as reference to the exemplarity of Jesus

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<sup>48</sup> Ernest De Witt Burton (*The Epistle to the Galatians* [ICC], Edinburgh: T & T Clark 1962, p. 220f.) stresses only "God's reception of men into the relation to him".

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Christiane Zimmermann, *Gott und seine Söhne. Das Gottesbild des Galaterbriefes* (WMANT 135), Neukirchen-Vluyn; Neuirchener 2013, p. 76f.

<sup>50</sup> *Paul. Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1995, p. 125.

Christ.<sup>51</sup> Both directions belong together because Jesus Christ fulfills the law giving it the best orientation in the sense of the Spirit (cf. Gal 5,23). In a similar way as the praying of the faithful is participation in Jesus' love to his Father, inspired by the Holy Spirit, their practice of love, in particular in relation to sinners, is participation in Jesus' service for their sake, motivated and fulfilled by the Spirit as well.

### 3.3 *The proclamation of Jesus Christ*

The language of polemic and understanding Paul uses in all his letters and in his whole mission flows from the Gospel itself. It is neither self-understandable nor uncritical to assume that a true communication between God and human beings happens. It is, of course, not the capacity of human beings but the creative will of God to initiate and develop such a communication. Paul is elected to understand and communicate just this truth. In Galatians from the first to the last sentence he is a preacher of the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ (cf. Gal 1,1; 6,18). He transmits a lot of so-called formulas of faith which help the Church to find a common language of faith (cf. Gal 1,4; 2,20; 3,13f.; 4,4f.). He reminds the proclamation of the cross (Gal 3,1) which is an offense (*skándalon*) but as such the effective sign of salvation (Gal 5,11; cf. 1Cor 1,18-23). The theology of justification by faith is presented by Paul in his report from Antioch as a common tradition of Peter and him (Gal 2,15f.), founded on the elementary confession: "We believe in Jesus Christ". That is, no doubt, a rhetorical effect but not without reference in the first Christian tradition.<sup>52</sup> Paul is not a theological outsider even though his proclamation of Jesus Christ is profiled both in its theological substance and in its missionary practice. Paul types Jesus as Messiah in the wider spectrum of different messianic concepts;<sup>53</sup> so he roots the Christian confession through the witness of the Scriptures and places the faith of the Galatians in the creed of the whole Church with her Jewish roots in Jerusalem and the rest of the world. It is a character of Paul's Christology that its soteriological impetus is very strong<sup>54</sup>;

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<sup>51</sup> *Obeying the Truth. A Study of Paul's Ethic in Galatians* (SNTW), Edinburgh: T & T Clark 1988, p. 132ff.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Christoph Burchard, *Nicht aus Werken des Gesetzes gerecht, sondern aus Glauben an Jesus Christus – seit wann?*, in: Hermann Lichtenberger (ed.), *Geschichte – Tradition – Reflexion*. FS M. Hengel. Bd. III: *Frühes Christentum*, Tübingen: Mohr 1996, 405-415. He finds traces back into the „Urgemeinde“.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Matthew V. Novenson, *Christ among the Messiahs. Christ Language in >Paul and Messiah Language in Ancient Judaism*, New York: OUP 2012.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Reinhard von Bendemann, *Die Fülle der Gnade – Neutestamentliche Christologie*, in: Jens Schröter (ed.), *Jesus Christus* (Themen der Theologie 9), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2014, p. 71-118, esp. on Paul p. 85-93 („Der auferstandene Gekreuzigte als Integral der Liebe Gottes“).



so he is able to reflect how Jesus Christ the son of God acts as human redeemer in a way that communication and participation of the faithful is possible and becomes reality.

The letter is not only a treasure of Early Christian theology; moreover, it is a document of ongoing proclamation. Paul chooses the written form because for the moment he is not able to be bodily present in Galatia (Gal 4,20). So the letter is his medium of actual preaching and teaching. The aim of his writing is a renewed assertion to the proclaimed Gospel; hence the language of understanding is necessary. But in the recent conflict it needs a decision; hence polemical critique is necessary as well. The letter clears up the alternative. But it is more than information. Galatians becomes a canonical function insofar as Paul marks a frontier between him together with Jerusalem on the one side and his opponents on the other side. The double *anathema* of the *prooemium* marks the distinction (Gal 1,8f.). It is an apostolic judgment *jure divino*. The *anathema* is a curse: a prayer of exclusion.<sup>55</sup> It is a speech act which works in the moment of speaking by the right speaker.<sup>56</sup> In this case: if the letter written by the Apostle is read, the curse is present and the exclusion is set. Of course it needs the assertion of the readers that the words of Paul are not empty words. But the strategy of the Apostle is to use the letter to the Galatians as medium in order to actualize the excommunication. The one and only criterion is the authenticity of the Gospel. There is only one Gospel because there is only one God, one Lord and one Spirit, who are absolutely clear in the universal salvation will although the grace is so rich that it is never possible to express its richness. In the eyes of Paul it is the problem of his opponents to reduce the grace of God and the gift of Jesus Christ while they claim circumcision as presupposition of a full membership in the people of God. So the Galatians needs a new proclamation of Jesus Christ which follows his own service,

The revelation of Jesus Christ is not only information from him but participation in him; the formation of Jesus Christ is not only imitation of him but living with him; and the proclamation of Jesus Christ is not only teaching and preaching about him but witness through him. Hence humanity and divinity are not counterparts but foci of the Gospel. Jesus is the divine redeemer as true man. The Apostle is like God's angel as weak witness of the

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. Katell Berthelot, The notion of Anathema in Ancient Jewish literature written in Greek, in: Eberhard Bons et al. (ed.), *The Reception of Septuagint Words in Jewish-Hellenistic and Christian Literature* (WUNT II/367), Tübingen: Mohr 2014, p. 35-52 (who concludes that the Early Christian concept depends on the Septuagint not from the Early Jewish writings) New Testament. For the Qumran parallels (1QS 6,24 - 7,25); cf. André Caquot, Malédiction et bénédictions qoumrâniennes, in: *RHPhR* 82 (2002), p. 3-14.

<sup>56</sup> John Langtshaw Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, Oxford: OUP 1962.

faith (Gal 4,14). In the first sentence he mentions to be an Apostle “not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father” (Gal 1,1 – KJV). The humanity of the Gospel depends on divinity, and the divinity of the Gospel reveals itself in its humanity.

#### 4. A handy canon

“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen”(Gal 6,18) – this is the last sentence and the final prayer of Paul, handwritten, in order to be read so that his prayer will be present in the Galatians audiences and will lead their own prayers. Ending the letter with this prayer Paul opens it for a communication between him, their Apostle, and them, the Church communities in Galatia, which continues the dialogue locating him in the dialogue between God and his creations. The praying Apostle writes a letter with his own hands which establishes a liturgy being read. The “Amen” does not signature a *Paulus locutus – causa finita*, but the personal engagement which makes Paul the Apostle of Galatia and the author of this letter – a which makes the letter a document of mission with authority. It is a reminder of the common history which is a part of the Church history; it is an identity marker of a faith community which depends on apostolic proclamation and needs a creative assertion; it is an advice for an ecclesial life in the freedom of faith.

Galatians is one of the oldest books of the New Testament canon which is a work in progress for a long time. The letter constructs a dense and big network of faith witnesses which are essential for canon building. (i) Paul integrates his Galatian mission and his recent letter into his apostolic service which is rooted in the vocation of him by the revelation of Jesus Christ; therefore Galatians is open for other documents of his mission although it did not mention it. (ii) Paulus connects his work as Apostle with the mission of the other Apostles; the three pillars of the Church in Jerusalem, James, Cephas and John (Gal 2,9), will become the (real oder ideal) authors of the so-called Catholic epistle which get their own place in the canon;<sup>57</sup> therefore Galatians is open for other faith experiences and Christian life styles although it marks the frontiers beyond them the legitimate plurality of the Church is in danger. (iii) Paul receives and interprets the Scripture as original document of faith which is necessary in order to understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ; therefore he establishes a hermeneutic of dialogue between the Scripture and the

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. Dieter Lührmann, Gal 2,9 und die katholischen Briefe. Bemerkungen zum Kanon und zur frühchristlichen regula fidei, in: *ZNW* 72 (1981), p. 65-87.

Christian faith tradition although it sharpens the *interpretatio Christiana* in conflict with typical Jewish readings of the Bible.

In this relations Galatians belongs to a handy canon. It is handmade canon because it is inspired; because it is of divine right, it is developed in the formation of the Church. Galatians is a paradigm of canonization because the biblical canon does not deny the humanity of its emerging and growing but connects it with God's communicative revelation. The biblical canon notes a lot of authors and readers, of spaces and times, of "Gattungen" and traditions.<sup>58</sup> Galatians is a very good example. The biblical canon is handy: it gives orientation for life in faith; it forms the *regula fidei* in order to find a theological interpretation of the Scripture; it testifies the decisive experiences and communications from the times of the prophets and Apostles in order to stimulate personal and ecclesial faith in new times and at new spaces.

It was a long way from Galatians to the fixed New Testament canon; but it was a short way from writing to reading the letter and from the witnesses of faith by the Apostle to the reception of faith in the Galatian Churches. This communication is the nucleus of the canonical process. The decisive orientation is the audience to the word of God "to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Gal 1,5).

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. Thomas Söding, *Einheit der Heiligen Schrift? Zur biblischen Theologie des Kanons* (QD 211), Freiburg i. Br.: Herder 2005.