



Galatians

Through the Centuries

Wiley-Blackwell
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Commentaries

John Riches

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John Riches

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To Emma, Helen and Susanna
James, Tom, David, Jennifer, Hannah and Sophie

Abbreviations

ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, series latina
<i>CF</i>	<i>The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church</i>
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
<i>EH</i>	<i>The English Hymnal</i>
<i>Fort.</i>	Augustine, <i>contra Fortunatum</i>
<i>JThS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LW</i>	American edition of <i>Luther's Works</i> . Philadelphia and St. Louis, 1955-
NPNF ¹	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 1st series
NPNF ²	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd series
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PL	Patrologia Latina
<i>RGG</i> ³	<i>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i> . Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck). 3rd edition 1957-62
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and its World
<i>ST</i>	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i>
<i>TRE</i>	<i>Theologische Real-Enzyklopaedie</i>
<i>WA</i>	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke</i> . Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Weimar, 1883- Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen

WUNT Testament

ZThK *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

Augustine, *epistulae*
ep.

Augustine, *City of God*
Civ. Dei

Augustine, *Contra Faustum*
Faust.

Augustine, *Ad Simplicianum*
Simpl.

Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*
Instil

CH and Pseudo Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy and Divine*
DN *Names*

Clem.
Alex. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*
Strom.

CR *Corpus reformatorum*

DS *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et*
declarationum de rebus fidei et morum. Ed. H.
Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer

Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*
h.e.

Exc. ex *Excerpts from Theodotus*
Theod.

Gosp. Phil. The Gospel of Philip

Ignatius, *Epistle to the Magnesians*
Magn.

Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*

AH

Jerome, *ad Galatas*
ad Gal

Jerome, *Letters*
ep.

LXX *Septuagint*
mend. De mendacio

Origen, *CJ Commentarium in Johannis*

Origen, *Commentary on John*
Comm.
Joh.

Ps. Clem. Pseudo-Clementine Homilies
Horn

Seneca, *epistulae*
ep.

Tertullian, *Against Marcion*
Marc.

Galatians 1:1-9

The Beginning of Paul's Argument

Literary and Historical Context of the Letter

This section marks the beginning of Paul's argument (in both senses of the word). It opens with an interestingly modified form of the standard epistolary greeting (1:1-5; see Betz 1979: 37,44-6; Stowers 1986: 20-4). As is usual, it gives the name of the writer and his companions, the names of the addressees and a salutation: each of these sections is used to develop points germane to the argument of the letter. Unusually, the salutation concludes not with a thanksgiving but with a doxology. Seemingly, there was not much to give thanks for. Verses 6-9 go on to set out Paul's main charge against the Galatians, that they have rapidly abandoned the faith to which he had introduced them, and to pronounce a curse on anyone who preaches a gospel other than the true gospel which they have received (from him). Chrysostom refers to the opening simply as a '*prooimion*', a term of wide usage, referring to the prelude of a piece of music or the preamble or preface of a poem or speech (NPNF¹ 13.1, translating *prooimion* as *exordium*). According to Plumer (Augustine 2003:126, see n. 9), Augustine refers to the opening vv. 1-5 as a *salutatio* and

vv. 6–11 as an *exordium*. Evidence of a close rhetorical analysis of Galatians among the Fathers is hard to find, and this may indicate that they would not have thought such analysis appropriate to Paul's writings (Cooper 2000).

The precise setting and occasion of Paul's letter is not easy to determine, though the broad outlines are clear. Paul has recently founded the congregations to which he is writing. However, as Paul sees it, they have suddenly, under the influence of other teachers, started to abandon the faith that he taught them, which did not require strict obedience to the Law of the Old Testament, and to embrace a Law-observant form of Christianity. Who were Paul's opponents who had disturbed (unsettled, confused, frightened) 'his' Galatians (1:7; 5:10)? Paul associates them with the opposing party at Jerusalem, the 'pseudo-apostles' (2:4–5; 2 Cor 11:13; Marcionite Prologues in Harnack 1996:127*–128*), with the 'men from James' (2:12) and with the group who sided with Peter in the controversy at Antioch (2:11–14), referred to in the narrative in Acts 15 as the 'men who came down from Judaea'. They were, on that reckoning, people who saw the preservation of the observance of the Law as essential for the maintenance of the true faith. For, as the fourth-century Latin commentator Ambrosiaster argued, they taught that 'believers from the Gentiles, unless they were circumcized according to the law of Moses and judaised, could not be saved'. Thus they turned the gospel into 'shifting traditions, that they might be Jews under the name of Christ' (Ambrosiaster 1969: 9; cf. Luther 1953: 63, 66; *LW* 26.53,55).

Until the nineteenth century, interpreters were largely unanimous that those who were leading the Galatians astray were seeking to persuade the Galatians to embrace Judaism. Ignatius (*Magn.*10.3) writes: 'It is monstrous to speak of Jesus Christ and to practise Judaism. For Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in

Christianity, wherein every tongue believed and was gathered unto God' (Lightfoot 1912:145). Paul's reference to the Galatians having been called *in grace*, v. 6, is generally taken to be an allusion to the fact that the Galatians were exchanging a gospel of grace for one of salvation through 'the law of works' (*lex factorum*; so e.g. Ambrosiaster 1969: 8). The change made by the Galatians is described as one from the spiritual to the carnal (Augustine 2003:129; Lombard, PL 192.97A). Aquinas (1966:12; 1953: 568) contrasts the temporal and carnal goods of the old law with the celestial, spiritual and eternal goods of the new law. The Galatians make void (*evacuare*) the *glory* (Augustine's variant reading of v.6) *of Christ*, by so valuing the circumcision of the flesh and other such works of the Law that they hold that they are salvific (Augustine 2003:129). Such views were strongly affirmed by the Reformers.

However, the Reformers disagreed about the role of the Law in the new life of faith in Christ, Calvin and his followers arguing, against Luther, that it had a continuing role in instructing and encouraging believers. The relation of emergent Christianity to its Jewish matrix was given fresh attention with the rise of historical criticism and its greater interest in the development of religious beliefs and communities. Baur and his school attempted to set Paul's dispute with the 'false apostles' within the wider parameters of theological tendencies in the early church: there were two parties, the Petrine and the Pauline, with opposed views about the importance of observation of the Law. For Baur, the Petrine party was divided between the apostles, who reluctantly agreed to the Pauline mission to the Gentiles, and the more rigorist Jewish Christians who opposed Paul's Law-free gospel and who were not reined back by the Jerusalem apostles (Baur 1876: 105-45, 250-7, esp. 253-5). Hilgenfeld emphasized the unity of the Petrine party more than Baur. The opponents must have 'based the authority of

this other gospel, which Paul condemns in 1:8, 9, specifically on the authority of the first apostles, as those who had been instituted by Christ himself' (Hilgenfeld 1852: 42). Paul knew that 'he shared the same foundation as his older colleagues in office, but only this foundation: for he no longer, like them, passes on the old with the new, righteousness of the law with the righteousness of faith, Jewish particularism with Christian universalism; he asserted the newness and independence of Christianity without any national Jewish limitations' (Hilgenfeld 1852:64). Such views were questioned by Lightfoot on the basis of Acts 15 with its account of the 'going forth' of the believers who had been formerly Pharisees from the apostles. For Lightfoot this is a group committed to circumcision which has no apostolic authority for its actions (Lightfoot 1865: 276-346).

While all these commentators saw Paul as engaged in controversy with those who wished to contain the emergent community within the bounds of Judaism, they were in turn questioned, first by those who thought that Paul was fighting on two fronts (Lütgert 1919), against Law-observant Jewish Christians on the one hand and enthusiastic libertines on the other, then by those who believed that the opponents' concern with the Law was derived from Gnostic beliefs about certain aspects of the Law only (Schmithals 1972a). There is, however, little or no evidence of Gnosticism in Galatians, and more recent scholarship inclines to the view that the 'opponents' were Jewish Christian missionaries, engaged in mission to the Gentiles on their own account and coming into conflict with Paul because of their engagement in the same field (Martyn 1997b: 117-26). Some have thought that the opponents were in fact less than whole-hearted followers of the Law, who saw circumcision as a kind of mystical rite, but were otherwise not interested in the Law as such (Crownfield 1945). Others (e.g. Barclay 1988: 68-72) have suggested

that the Galatians themselves may have felt a strong attraction to the Law. As Gentiles who had renounced the mores of the pagan world, they would have felt the need to replace them with a clearly defined code such as that offered by the Law (see Longenecker 1990: lxxxviii-c for a full discussion of the debate). All of this remains somewhat speculative. However, if we assume that Paul's letter, to a degree at least, meets and therefore reflects the theological positions and arguments of his opponents, then it seems difficult to deny that the opponents were strong proponents of the Law, whatever their more detailed emphases. This for Paul was tantamount to preaching *another gospel*, which was no gospel at all (1:6-7).

More recent debates among scholars have focused on the nature of Paul's understanding of the relationship between the gospel he preached and the Judaism of his time. To what extent did Paul continue to consider himself a Jew *and therefore* obligated to follow Jewish customs? To what extent did he make a break with Judaism? In this enquiry, critical scholarship has particularly scrutinized the constructions of Judaism which underlay much historical work on Paul, notably in the Lutheran tradition (Sanders 1977). Lutheran readings of Paul, it is argued, have tended to project on to the Judaism of Paul's day the theological characteristics of the Catholic piety against which Luther battled, 'works-righteousness'. Sanders rejected portrayals of first-century Judaism as a religion of 'self-redemption', arguing that it was centred on God's covenantal grace to Israel ('covenantal nomism'). Entry to the covenant ('getting in') depended on God's free election; continuance within the covenant ('staying in') depended on Israel's obedience to the covenantal Law, which also provided means for dealing with transgressions of the Law. Paul abandoned such a religion in favour of a Christianity which stressed participation in Christ, a new religious relationship wherein obedience to the

Law was replaced with a new relationship with Christ, whereby the believer dies to sin and lives in hope of resurrection (Sanders 1977: 549). Dunn, while basing his understanding of contemporary Judaism on Sanders's work, has suggested that Paul was not making a complete break with Judaism and the Law, but rather attacking a nationalistic understanding of the Law, particularly associated with circumcision and the observation of purity rules about food (Dunn 1990:183-264).

Since the nineteenth century, there has also been much debate among scholars (see e.g. Lightfoot 1865:1-34) about whether the congregations were to be found in the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia (Iconium, Lystra and Derbe) which, according to Acts, Paul visited on his first and second missionary journeys (Acts 13-14; 16:1-18:23), or whether, as had been almost universally held until then, they were located in the northern part in towns like Ancyra, Pessinus and Tavium, where Gallic invaders settled in the late third century BCE, an area which Paul visited only on the second and subsequent journeys (Acts 16:6; 18:23). The debate, which is well summarized by Longenecker (1990: lxi-lxxii) is finely balanced. As Lietzmann, after reviewing the contemporary linguistic evidence, remarked: 'A review of the sources undoubtedly speaks more for the north Galatian theory, but I know that a few new facts (discovery of inscriptions, etc.) could completely change the picture' (Lietzmann 1910: 228).

Nevertheless, although it is almost impossible to reach secure judgements on this topic, careful, balanced scholars like Lightfoot and Lagrange (Lagrange 1918) invested huge amounts of time in the debate and saw its resolution as of great importance to their readings of the letter. They were strangely fascinated by the topic of national characteristics and made much of ancient writers' views of the Gallic peoples in northern Galatia, which they believed were

consonant with Paul's portrayal of his addressees as foolish, fickle and impetuous (1:6; 3:1). Their motivations in this were varied. Lightfoot wished to combat Baur's view (Baur 1878:44-183) that first-generation Christianity was polarized between Peter and Paul, between a Law-observant and a Law-free Christianity, for which fundamental division Galatians was a prime witness. He wished, by contrast, to show that Galatians was more a witness to fickleness and a certain type of religiosity ('passionate and ritualistic', Lightfoot 1865:15), and that the errors of the Galatians were a special rather than a typical case of the divisions of the early church (Lightfoot 1865:26), albeit ones which were carried on by a variety of heretical groups, Marcionites, Montanists, and even the wonderfully named Passalorynchites and Artotyrites, 'the one so-called from their placing the forefinger on the nose while praying, the other from their offering bread and cheese at the Eucharist' (Lightfoot 1865: 31, n. 3 citing Jerome, *ad Gal 2*, praef. p. 430, ed. Vallarsi). Lagrange's interests are more overtly nationalistic. Writing from Paris in 1917, he draws analogies between the Galatians and the French, with their 'mobility', their past glories, then their apparent separation from God, and their present spirit of sacrifice 'always aflame with love of Jesus Christ, always penetrated with the true spirit of religion which is sacrifice', with that of 'these sons of ancient Gaul. . . One can imagine all that Paul says to the Galatians,' he concludes, 'being said as easily to French people!' (Lagrange 1918: v). Much scholarly effort and historical zeal is expended in this wild chase for the national/cultural characteristics of the Galatians. Nevertheless, the question as to what extent Paul's opponents stand for a particular tradition within Christianity is an important one, as is the further question, to what extent Paul's counter-arguments themselves generate a further distinct tradition of Christianity, such as that noticed by Jerome above. By reacting strongly against those who

insisted on Law observance, Paul may have encouraged a wider reaction against the Law and, as in the case of Marcion, against the 'god of this world'.

Main Themes: 1:1-9

A number of major issues are raised in this opening passage which have occupied subsequent interpreters: (1). Paul's claim to be an apostle and his insistence on the truth of his Gospel; (2). the understanding of evil and salvation suggested in v. 4.*

1 Paul's Apostolic Authority

Patristic interpretation

Paul introduces himself as an apostle 'not from men nor through men but through Jesus Christ and God the Father'. Theodore (1880: 311.21-2) and Chrysostom (NPNF¹ 13.2), with their keen interest in the original context of the letter, see here an attempt on Paul's part to counter charges by his opponents that he was a follower of the Jerusalem apostles. While this view is generally accepted, there is less agreement about the meaning of Paul's claims. Is he claiming to be the equal of the apostles or, indeed, in some sense to be set apart from them and endowed with greater authority? The latter view creates two problems for mainstream/official interpretation: on the one hand, it concedes too much to Marcion, who had also sharply distinguished Paul who had the 'word of truth' (see the Marcionite prologue in Souter 1912:188) from the apostles

who had distorted the gospel; on the other hand, it may concede too much power and authority to those who appeal to their own inspiration and empowerment by the Spirit and so pose a threat to church order and hierarchical control. A number of interpreters then take the view that Paul is claiming to be on a par with the apostles. Pelagius asserts that Paul was not an apostle by 'human presumption, as his opponents asserted, nor through the agency of other apostles, as Aaron was through Moses, but by the Lord himself like Moses and all the apostles and prophets' (Souter 1922: 306-7). Chrysostom agrees that Paul's call was like Peter's, but adds that it was from the risen Lord (NPNF¹ 13.2). There are others who explore this kind of difference more fully and more dangerously. Victorinus asserts that Paul did not learn anything from Christ as man, but from Christ who was in man, 'for Christ is both God and a human being'. Paul's revelation from the heavenly Christ was unambiguously from God and not from Christ as a human being, which is how some of the heretics understand him (Victorinus 2005: 251). Augustine, more boldly, distinguishes those who are sent by men, who are liars, those sent through men, who may speak the truth because the truthful God can commission people through the agency of men, and those sent by God, who speak the truth. And he goes on to distinguish the apostles who were sent by the man Jesus from the apostle Paul 'who was sent through Jesus Christ now wholly God after his resurrection' (Augustine 2003:127). He does admittedly underline the fact that both the earlier apostles and Paul were truthful; but still the distinction remains and is available for exploitation.

At the extreme end of this spectrum in the early period is the figure of Marcion, who believed that the apostles had distorted the tradition which they had received from Jesus and that it was only Paul's letters and Luke's Gospel which

provided (albeit in the somewhat expurgated version which Marcion made of them) the true account of the message which Jesus brought from the unknown God. Similarly, the Gnostics maintained that the apostles had 'intermingled the things of the law with the words of the Saviour; and that not the apostles alone, but even the Lord himself, spoke as at one time from the Demiurge, at another from the intermediate place, and yet again from the Pleroma, but that they themselves, indubitably, unsulliedly, and purely, have knowledge of the hidden mystery' (Irenaeus *AH* 3.2.2; ANF 1.415). Irenaeus comments: 'this is indeed to blaspheme their Creator after a most impudent manner! It comes to this, therefore, that these men do now consent neither to Scripture nor to tradition.' Marcion in v. 1, as Jerome tells us (PL 26.337), omitted the phrase 'and through God the Father' and spoke of Jesus's raising himself from the dead; otherwise he would have seemed to have accepted the unity of the creator God of the Law and the unknown God of mercy, who was revealed by Jesus Christ.

Thomas Aquinas

These themes are developed in the Middle Ages and then surface critically in the claims and counter-claims of the various factions at the time of the Reformation. Thomas Aquinas, the Dominican friar-preacher, sees Paul as insisting on the authority which stems from his office as a preacher in order to crush the stupid and proud Galatians. Aquinas follows Augustine in distinguishing Paul's commission by the risen Christ from the apostles' by Jesus in mortal flesh. And he adds a little barb for those in positions of ecclesiastic authority (from whom he had had on occasion to suffer) that on papal bulls Peter is on the left (the side which represents the present life) and Paul, who was called by the risen Christ, on the right (representing the future life, which is heavenly and spiritual, Aquinas 1966: 6; 1953: 7).

[PLATE 1](#) The seal (Latin: *buila*) which was attached to Papal bulls or edicts, showing the heads of Paul and Peter with a cross between them. Paul is on Peter's right hand. The saints' names are abbreviated SPA and SPE. Courtesy Canterbury Archaeology Trust, photo Andrew Savage.



Reformation readings

This identification of the Christian preacher with Paul is challenged by Luther, who insists that God 'calleth in two manner of ways: by means and without means. He calleth us all to the ministry of his Word at this day, not immediately by himself, but by other means; that is to say, by man.' This is directed against the 'fantastical spirits. . . which either lurk in corners and seek places where they may pour out their poison. . . or else they resort thither where

the Gospel is planted already'. He accepts that preachers may be called by others, but distinguishes the apostles and Paul from all others, in that they were called by Jesus Christ and God the Father. He, Luther, by contrast with the apostles but like the bishops who were called by the apostles, has a mediated calling, and is happy to be appointed by 'the prince or other magistrate'. So Paul is reclassified, now again as one of the apostles. It is particularly important for Luther that such a mediated calling is localized, not universal: 'it is not lawful for me to leave my appointed place as a preacher and go unto another city where I am not called, and there preach' (Luther 1953: 33-4; *LW* 26.18). This position was not altogether acceptable to the Reformed, those in the Calvinist tradition. Luther's Elizabethan English translators omitted the passages just quoted. Calvin presents a more nuanced account: when Paul says that he is not called 'from men', he is speaking of the sense of vocation which is proper to all true ministers in Christ'; when he says that he is not called through men, then he is speaking of the 'highest order in the church', of the apostolate. One problem here is that in Acts 13 Paul is commissioned by the church at Antioch. Calvin and others recognize the problem: Paul 'did not want to exclude entirely the calling of that Church but merely to show that his apostleship rested on a greater and previous choice'. Even in his case, 'the solemn rite of ordination was afterwards added' (Calvin 1965: 8-9). So too here, there is no room for self-styled apostles of the free spirit operating without the official sanction of the church.

By contrast, for the Anabaptists, the mark of true apostles is that they 'have preached to us the true gospel, and beside this no other may be preached (Gal 1:9)' (Philips 1957: 257). The same argument, in an ethical mode, could be turned against the Lutheran authorities by Hutterites like Paul Glock. Objecting that Christ had not commanded his

disciples 'to force people to faith or infant baptism and put them in prison', he concludes, 'since I see you acting other than Christ your master or the apostles your predecessors, I will follow you less than him'. For, as he insists, 'the disciples of Christ evidenced their office of apostleship with good works' (Glock 2001: 356). Similarly, Pilgram Marpeck asserts that the 'physical voice of Christ' is still channelled through 'men and the Scriptures'. Where this physical voice of Christ 'is believed sincerely our spirit is free and the drawing of the Father revealed'. It is this Spirit of Christ which 'possesses all power and authority, even unto the end of the world. . . . Such authority is committed to all true believers by Christ. . . Not all are apostles, not all are prophets, not all perform miracles, not all are teachers (1 Cor 12:29). But none of these gifts of faith will be lacking to the believers in their need.' Such authority is not committed to any human institution, 'to any creature in heaven or on earth, nor will it ever be. The Lord alone remains in power and glory forever. Therefore, Paul says (1 Cor 1:31): "Whoever glories let him glory in the Lord," and it is not he who lives, but Christ who lives in him (Gal 2:20)' (Klaassen and Klaassen 1978: 76-8). This last passage nicely conveys the tension within Anabaptism between a belief in the gift of the Spirit to all true believers and a strong desire to test the spirits in order to discern who are the true apostles who speak with the 'physical voice of Christ'. Institutional authority should play no part in this process of discernment; the fundamental question was whether a preacher's doctrine and works agreed with Scripture and with Christ.

Clearly, such radical doctrine runs counter to traditional views of the apostolic succession of bishops, as expressed by Jerome, *ep.* 58 (NPNF² 6.121) that bishops 'hold the rank which these [the apostles] once held'. It should be noted, however, that he made the same claim for presbyters. Hooker took a similar position, but allowed that the apostles

might be held to have no successors at all, in that they 'were sent as special chosen eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ, from whom immediately they received their whole embassage, and their commission to be the principal first founders of an house of God, consisting as well of Gentiles as of Jews' (Hooker 1885: ii.339). Puritans like Perkins, appealing to 'the propertie of an Apostle to be called immediatly by Jesus Christ,' denied the doctrine of apostolic succession unequivocally, and *a fortiori* denounced the 'falshood that the Pope of Rome succeeds Peter in Apostolicall authoritie, and in the infallible assistance of the spirit, when he is in his Consistory' (Perkins 1989: 5). Perkins insists, specifically against the Anabaptists, nevertheless, that 'wheras Paul in the very forefront of his Epistle, begins with his owne calling, I gather, that every minister of the Gospel ought to have a good and lawful calling'. Such a calling is of God, and the church's authority is no more than a 'ministerie or service, whereby it doeth testifie, declare, and approve whom God hath called'. It therefore becomes important for him to set out the distinguishing marks of a true calling: that 'must be manifest to their owne consciences, and the consciences of their hearers'. Knowledge that they are thus called depends on three things:

the first is the testimony of their consciences, that they entred not for praise, honour, lucre, but in the feare of God, with a desire to glorifie him, and to edifie the Church. The second is a facultie to do that to which they have a desire and will. In this facultie are two things, knowledge of God and his wayes, and aptness to deliver that which they know. The third is the Ordination of the Church, which approoves and gives testimony of their wil and abilitie. (Perkins 1989: 3-4)

Significantly, there is nothing here about any spiritual experience of being called as such: the emphasis is on

purity of will and ability to do the job.

Nineteenth-century readings

Lightfoot does not engage directly in these controversies, but writes an extended historical note. For him the term 'apostle' has its roots in Jewish usage and signifies primarily a messenger. He doubts whether the term in early times was restricted solely to the Twelve and Paul. Barnabas is included along with Paul in the Lucan account of 'his consecration to the office' (Acts 13:2-3). Paul's language in Gal 2:9 and 1 Cor 9:5 supports this view. The question, then, is what were the limits on this extension of the term. For Lightfoot the apostles 'comprised the *first order* in the Church', first both temporally as constituting with the prophets the foundation on which the church was built and first in terms of spiritual superiority over the prophets. What characterized the apostles was two things: first, that they had seen Christ and been a witness of the resurrection; second that they manifested the 'signs of an apostle' (2 Cor 12:1-2), both 'moral and spiritual gifts - patience, self-denial, effective preaching' and 'such powers as we call supernatural, "signs, wonders and mighty deeds"'. Such marks clearly allow for a relatively wide application of the term, and this use is to be found in the Apostolic Fathers and later church writers (Lightfoot 1865: 89-97).

As his later essay on the Christian ministry shows (Lightfoot 1903), Lightfoot clearly distinguishes apostles as itinerants ministering to the church as a whole from bishops who emerged under the direction of the apostles from the presbyterate and who had a localized ministry. While he regarded the threefold ministry as 'the completeness of the Apostolic ordinance and the historical backbone of the Church' (Lightfoot 1903: xii), he saw this as a practical development which in no way supported the kind of sacerdotalism which had later developed in the church,

‘which is in the fullest sense free, comprehensive, universal. . . . It has no sacred days or seasons, no special sanctuaries, because every time and every place alike are holy. . . . Each individual holds personal communion with the Divine Head. To Him immediately he is responsible, and from Him directly he obtains pardon and draws strength’ (Lightfoot 1903:181). Similar views can be found in Hooker who, however, is at pains to stress the continuity between the role of the apostles and the bishops to whom the apostles gave episcopal authority (Hooker 1885: ii.326-482, esp. 336-9).

Against all this concern with identifying the character and marks of the true Christian preacher must be set Kierkegaard’s dry entry in his Journal headed ‘An apostle in our day’:

If I try to think of one in our day I think of him abstaining altogether from preaching in order, if possible, to draw attention to what it means to exist, preaching by giving self-denial existential expression, the imitation of Christ. And moreover how could he compete verbally with all these artists in rhetoric who now preach— and forget entirely about living.

A man is castrated in order to make him into a singer who can take higher notes than any normal man can take: and so with these preachers: from a Christian point of view they are castrati, are deprived of their real manhood which is ‘the existential’—but they can take notes higher and more fascinating than any true Christian. (Kierkegaard 1938: 424)

Or again:

Had St. Paul an official position? No. Had he any means of livelihood? No. Did he make a lot of money? No. Did he marry and have children? No. But in that case St. Paul cannot have been a serious man! (Kierkegaard 1938: 215)

2 The Understanding of Evil and Its Overcoming

The long-drawn-out struggle between emerging Christian orthodoxy and various forms of dualism is one of the most important in the development of the culture of Christian East and West. Paul's reference in v. 4 to 'this present evil age' would be a contested site for many centuries. Was he using the phrase metonymically, to refer to the evil deeds which were done in it by men and women (so e.g. Jerome, PL 26.338; Chrysostom, NPNF¹ 13.5), or was he referring to the dark powers who rule over this present age and will ultimately be destroyed? Such a reading might be suggested by passages in the deutero-Pauline letters (Eph 2:2; 6:12); it was strongly taken up by Gnostics, Marcionites and Manichaeans, all of whom saw the world in different ways as being under the sway of forces opposed to the good God. So strong was the orthodox reaction to dualist readings of any sort that it was not till the discovery and dissemination of apocalyptic writings beginning in the nineteenth century that commentators again began to take seriously Paul's engagement here with myths of the demonic rule over the world. For Wrede, Gal 1:4 becomes the prime text for an apocalyptic reading of Paul. 'Redemption for Paul, to put it briefly yet concisely, is redemption from this whole present world. Any other way of putting it, for example, redemption from sin, would be too narrow' (Wrede 1904: 56).

Dualist readings

It is not easy to find direct examples of dualist readings of this passage, though the sensitivity with which it is read by more orthodox commentators, carefully guarding against