FORMULAS IN THE LANGUAGE OF PAUL
A STUDY OF PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES IN GALATIANS

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ABSTRACT
The article examines a peculiar feature of the language of Paul in Galatians, namely the occurrence of some 43 prepositional phrases with distinct theological overtones. It is suggested that these phrases are in fact theological formulas which have an important function in the development of the apostle’s argument in the letter. They represent key theological concepts in abbreviated form and presuppose familiarity with a whole network of relations as part of the wider framework of the apostle’s theological thinking. The function of these formulas on the linguistic, rhetorical and theological level is discussed and the way in which they are integrated to present a forceful and coherent argument in Galatians.

1 INTRODUCTION
The aim of this paper is twofold. In the first place, it is an attempt to call attention to a peculiarity in Paul’s language that has been neglected by researchers, namely the apostle’s use of theological formulas. These usually occur in the form of prepositional phrases in his letters and perform an important function in his theological argumentation. Secondly, it hopes to illustrate how the interaction between different levels of the text occur and that an understanding of the theological implications of the text is not possible without taking these other levels into consideration.

The paper is therefore also an attempt to examine the most suitable methodological sequence when analysing material of this kind. We come to the text from different perspectives and there can be no prescribed way in which the reading of a text should take place in practice. There is always a movement to and fro between the different levels of the text. But in determining the elements of analysis and the sequence of the different steps to be taken in this process, a measure of order is both necessary and desirable. At the same time, all our ‘objective’ statements about the text is reader-mediated, which should be conceded from the outset. But this does not relieve us of the responsibility of giving account of how we handle these reader-mediated insights. And to do this, we are once again obliged to use the medium of language. Thus, although we cannot completely rely on language, we can also not do without language.

In the sections that follow below, we shall examine three levels of the text in turn, namely the linguistic, the rhetorical and the theological levels. In doing so, we shall try to discover how prepositional formulas function on these levels and how the levels interact with one another. For
the purposes of this paper, we shall restrict ourselves to examples from Galatians.

2 THE LINGUISTIC LEVEL

2.1 The occurrence of formulas in Galatians
In his commentary on Galatians, Betz lists some 35 prepositional phrases which he calls 'theological abbreviations' (1979:27-8) — a list which can be expanded even further (cf Lategan 1988:420). Judging from its relative frequency (cf addendum), we are dealing with a phenomenon of some importance in Paul's language. The theological ramifications of these linguistic formulas have not enjoyed the attention they deserve. Without giving any reasons for his viewpoint, Betz claims that all these prepositional phrases 'are abbreviations of theological doctrines' (1979:27). But how do we know this? And why does Paul use them? Where do they come from?

According to Betz, the origin of these formulas is unknown, but they can be most likely explained as coming from the oral transmission of Paul's theology (1979:27). It is not clear what Betz means by this: Were they part of the oral tradition handed down to Paul, that is, are we dealing with pre-Pauline formulations, or were they created by Paul himself and subsequently became part of the oral tradition handed down to his followers by Paul?

There is good reason to believe that these formulas are typical Pauline creations which form an integral part of the process by which his theology was shaped and developed.

2.2 The function of formulas in Galatians
When enquiring further into the character and function of these formulas, not much can be gleaned from existing literature. Betz does not develop his cryptic remarks. Traditional grammatical and stylistic handbooks are especially unhelpful. For example, Spencer discusses various stylistic features of Paul's language, but only talks about 'propositional reduction' under the rubric of 'sentence changes by omission' (1984:35, 50) in a very general sense, without any reference to prepositional phrases. Blass/Debrunner/Rehkopf only lists examples of case 'types' under the different prepositions (1976:166-191) and the discussion remains on a taxonomic level. In this respect, the old faithful Liddle & Scott offers at least a general typification of the prepositional force in each case (e.g. κατά; διά; ἐκ), which might be used as a starting point for considering the Pauline usage.

The approach of Louw & Nida represents a vast improvement in this respect. By using semantic domains as their point of departure, they are able to give a functional interpretation of the various prepositions. They even discuss some prepositional combinations (e.g. διά βραχέων), but the majority of formulas we are interested in, falls outside the scope of their lexicon. We are therefore obliged to do our own spadework, but we shall do so in constant conversation with Louw & Nida.

Firstly, let us get a clearer picture of these formulas in Galatians.
As can be seen from the addendum, four prepositions are dominant in Galatians: διά (10 combinations), ἐκ (9), κατά (7) and ἐν (6). 'Ὑπό is found in four combinations, ὑπέρ in two, while ἐπί and παρά occur in only one combination each. On the other hand, certain nouns show a distinct affinity for prepositions: ἀνθρώπος (4), νόμος (4), ἔπαγγελία (3), πίστις (3), σάρξ (2), πνεῦμα (2) and χάρις (2).

There also seems to be a correlation between the frequency of prepositional phrases and the text type. In narrative material (for example the Gospels and Acts), their incidence is low. In argumentative texts, such as the Pauline letters, but also in books such as Hebrews, the frequency is much higher. It remains to be seen whether this is a particular Pauline characteristic.

When looking for parallels for similar formula-like prepositional phrases in other types of literature, two areas immediately come under consideration: dogma and jurisprudence. Classical dogmatic formulations such as ex cathedra, pro ecclesia, ex audivi verbi belong to this category, but they are especially prominent in legal terminology: pro Deo, ex jure, ex mandato, in forma pauperis, in flagranti delicto, sub jucide, per rescriptum principis, actio ad exhibendum to name just a few. Many of these expressions became part of everyday language: ex officio, in concreto, in memoriam, pro domo, per se.

In these cases, the formulas have acquired a fixed form over a long period of time and a very precise (often technical) meaning. Is this also true of the Pauline formulas? Was the apostle using formulations that were already common currency among his readers, or was he coining new terminology?

This brings us back to the remark by Betz on the oral transmission of Paul's gospel. An important feature of these formulas are their cryptic and abbreviated form which implies previous knowledge and familiarity with the context in which the formula operates. Was this previous knowledge imparted during Paul's former contacts with the Galatians and therefore related to his own specific interpretation of the gospel, or was this part of the common knowledge shared by all believers and therefore already in an established form?

In order to find answers to these questions, a closer look at the occurrence of these formulas in the text of Galatians is necessary. In terms of their distribution (see addendum), it is clear that a classification can be made either in terms of the various prepositions and their combinations, or in terms of the nouns used in conjunction with the prepositions. We shall look at both possibilities, starting with a classification according to prepositions.

When considering the different clusters of formulas around each preposition, a general characteristic becomes apparent. Each of the formulas has either a positive or a negative association, as indicated with either a + or - in the addendum. For example, δι' ἐπαγγελίας would be positive, δι' ἀνθρώπου negative. In some cases, such as κατὰ σάρκα and κατὰ πνεῦμα, the contrast is only to be expected, but it would seem that very few usages are 'neutral'. With some prepositions, such as ὑπό, ἐπί and παρά, all combinations have a negative connotation, while the two
examples with εἰς are positive. Is this a peculiarity of the language as such, or is it indicative of theological motives in Paul's discourse?

Διά

When considering the ten combinations with διά in Galatians, three of the subdomains proposed by Louw & Nida dominate: agent (90.4), instrument (90.8) and cause or reason (89.26).

In 1:1 (an apostle not through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father), διά indeed marks an 'intermediate agent' (Louw & Nida 797), but, in this opening statement of the gospel, immediately sets up the contrast with the other agent, man. The exact way in which the mediation is accomplished, is left open. The same is true of 4:7, where, in the change from 'slave' to 'son', a further transformation to 'heir' is accomplished with God as 'agent'. The change in the status of the believer — be it as apostle or as heir — is a matter of divine intervention.

The instrumental force of διά (Louw & Nida 90.8) can best be seen in 2:16 and 3:26 (διὰ πίστεως) and 5:6. 13 (δι' ἀγάπης). Here the way in which the change of status is achieved becomes clearer. Believers are justified (2:16) and become sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul's own calling was through grace (1:15) and the purpose of Christ's becoming a curse for us was inter alia that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (3:14).

A third nuance is διά as a marker of cause or reason, denoting 'because of, on account of, by reason of' (Louw & Nida 89.26). On account of his promise, God granted the inheritance to Abraham as a gift of grace (3:18). The only 'non-theological' occurrence of a διά-formula is in 4:13, also in the sense of 'because of': 'It was because of an illness of the flesh that I originally preached the gospel to you.'

In the light of these examples, the usefulness of the distinction made by Louw & Nida between 90.8 ('by means of, through, with') and 89.76 ('by means of, through, by') may be questioned — at least as far as combinations with διά are concerned.

Έκ

Some of the combinations with ἐκ are not difficult to classify — the notion of derivation (Louw & Nida 98.3) is clear in examples such as 2:12: Peter was afraid of 'those from the circumcision', that is, those who come from the camp of the circumcised. The same would apply to ἐκ τῆς παιδίσκης and ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθερίας of 4:22 and 23, although in this case the overtone suggests the origin also determines the character of the offspring. In 6:8 the phrases 'from the flesh/from the Spirit' might also be understood as denoting derivation, but the notion of source is more likely (Louw & Nida 90.17): a harvest of corruption reaped from the flesh and a harvest of eternal life reaped from the Spirit. The binary opposition between σάρξ and πνεῦμα is as prominent as ever. According to Betz (1979:308), we are here dealing with a dualism that 'underlies the whole theology of Galatians'.

In 3:13 ('Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law'), ἐκ denotes dissociation: 'from, free from, apart from' (Louw & Nida 89.121).
The ἔκ ἔργων νόμου and ἔκ ἀκοής πίστεως of 3:2 and 5 are more difficult to interpret. They certainly represent a further binary opposition depicting the difference between an existence under the law and in faith, but what is the exact force of ἔκ? It might be interpreted either as 'source' (cf Louw & Nida 90.16) or as 'instrument' (90.12). If a 'minimum' interpretation were chosen, the latter would seem more plausible: the faith resulting from the proclamation of the gospel is not so much the source, but the means by which the Spirit was received. But a variation in 3:21 shows that there is more at stake here: If a law had been given which was capable of making alive, then righteousness would indeed come from the law (ἐκ νόμου). The force of ἔκ indicates more that just an instrument — it is the basis on which righteousness rests that is at stake.

This tendency becomes even more prominent in 3:18 where ἔκ νόμου is constrained with ἔκ παραγγελίας as the basis of the covenant relationship between God and Abraham. Betz (1979: 159n59) points out that ἔκ νόμου occurs not only in 3:21, but in several of Paul's other letters and that there is a difference with regard to the Greek notion of the usage of this term. In Greek rhetoric the phrase ἔκ τον νόμον (plural) or ἔκ του νόμου would mean 'in accordance with the laws or the law'. In contrast, Paul's concept is Jewish and an abbreviation for 'based on the Torah of Moses.'

Paul is forcing the prepositions at his disposal to reflect new nuances — nuances that flow from the new theological insights he is gaining while struggling with the problems of Galatia. Here we see the fine interaction between the linguistic and theological levels of the discourse and how theological connotations influence basic grammatical choices. In this interaction rhetorical considerations and strategies play an important role — an aspect that will be discussed in section 3 below.

Κατά
The most straightforward use of this preposition is a marker of a relation involving similarity of process — 'in accordance with, in relation to', as described by Louw & Nida (89.8). The example they give from Luke 2:22 — 'when the days of purification had been completed κατά τον νόμον Μωϋσέως', is quite similar to phrases such as κατ’ ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι ('heirs in line with the promise, as promised') in Galatians 3:29 and κατά τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ ('according to the will of God') in 1:4. But the scope of reference in both cases should not be underestimated — in the case of 3:29 it sums up the understanding of one of the major themes running through the Torah, while in 1:4 it presupposes a theologumenon on which a whole theological system is based.

A counter example is to be found in the rhetorical question of 3:21: 'Is the law then against, running counter to the promises of God (κατά τῶν ἐπαγγελμάτων)?' As Louw & Nida correctly notes, κατά with the genitive functions as a marker of opposition, may even even imply antagonism or hostility — 'in opposition to, in conflict with' (90.31).

One usage of κατά for which Louw & Nida apparently does not provide, is κατά ἀποκάλυψιν in 2:2. 'In accordance with' (89.8) or 'with regard to' (89.4) do not do justice to the stronger implication of 'on the basis of, on strength of a revelation' in this verse. Paul is emphasising that his
further visit to Jerusalem was not based on human or other considerations, but on authority of a divine intervention.

The classical Pauline contrast between κατὰ σῶρκα and κατὰ πνεῦμα, so vividly portrayed in Romans 8, is also much in evidence in Galatians. It is important to consider each example in its own context and not to assume a standard equivalent wherever these terms appear. κατὰ σῶρκα can have a ‘neutral’ connotation, as for instance in 1 Corinthians 1:26 (οὐ πολλοὶ σοφοί κατὰ σῶρκα) or Romans 1:3 (ΕΚ σπέρματος Δαυιδ κατὰ σῶρκα) — cf also Louw & Nida 9.11-15 for further examples. In Galatians, the only ‘neutral’ occurrence of κατὰ is to be found in combination with ἀνθρωπον in 3:15 — an example drawn from ‘common human life’ (Betz 1979:154). Betz concedes that a contrast to God or revelation is not intended here (154n11), but remarks that the phrase has become a somewhat technical expression in Pauline usage, for which no precise parallels can be found in Jewish or Greek literature (155).

Κατὰ σῶρκα and κατὰ πνεῦμα in Galatians always carry theological overtones. Louw & Nida (26.7) rejects the idea that σῶρξ refers to a person’s ‘lower nature’, pointing out that the distinction between lower and higher nature ‘seems to be primarily one arising out of typical Greek thought than out of the Semitic background which seems so pervasive in the use of the term σῶρξ in such contexts in the NT’ (323). Their own description of the semantic domain ‘human nature’ (σῶρξ variation f, 26.7) is as follows:

the psychological aspect of human nature which contrasts with the spiritual nature; in other words, that aspect of human nature which is characterized by or reflects typical human reasoning and desires in contrast with those aspects of human thought and behavior which relate to God and the spiritual life — ‘human nature, human aspects, natural, human’ (322).

This holds good to some extent, but does not account fully for the dimensions which, for example, are brought into play in the allegory of Hagar and Sarah in Galatians 4:21-31. The construction of 4:23 is symmetrical, indicating that ἐκ τῆς παιδίσκης form the counterpart of ἐκ τῆς ἔλευθερας, κατὰ σῶρκα of δι’ ἐπαγγελίας. In 4:29 the contrast is between ὁ κατὰ σῶρκα and τὸν κατὰ πνεῦμα. In these formulations, δι’ ἐπαγγελίας and κατὰ πνεῦμα become interchangeable elements in their contrast to κατὰ σῶρκα. In essence this is true of all the positive and negative prepositional formulas in Paul (as will be discussed later), but at this stage it already serves to indicate that the contrast ‘human nature’ versus ‘spiritual nature’ fails to describe in full the semantic domain which Paul is developing with the help of, inter alia, σῶρξ and πνεῦμα.

Ἐν
Combinations with ἐν, such as ἐν κυρίῳ and ἐν Χριστῷ represent the most famous of Paul’s formulas, but this preposition also serves as marker for other semantic subdomains.

Justification by the law (5:4) denotes the instrument through which this result is to be achieved (cf Louw & Nida 90.10). Ἐν χάριτι Χριστοῦ
in 1:6 might also be placed in this category, but Betz (1979:48) argues that the ἐν should not be understood as referring to the means of salvation, but to the present state in which the believers find themselves and might therefore be taken as a synonym for 'in Christ'.

Ἐν may simply refer to a state or condition (Louw & Nida 13.8). In 2:20, both ἐν σάρκι and ἐν πίστει may be understood in this way — 'the life I now live as a human, I live in a state of faith.'

The typical Pauline formula ἐν κυρίῳ occurs only once in Galatians (5:10), although it is more frequent in some of his other letters (cf Betz 1979:267n135). It is not so easy to determine the exact range of this combination. Paul says that he has confidence in the Galatians — ἐν κυρίῳ — that they will concur with him in his interpretation of the gospel. But this confidence appears to be a little shaky and hence the qualification ἐν κυρίῳ — to add authority to his appeal to the Galatians, to make clear that his confidence is not based on the flesh, or on human potential (cf Betz 1979:267), or to call on the unity that binds him and the Galatians together. The ἐν κυρίῳ represents a new mode of existence that can include a range of things if it is not specified further. For this reason it is important to take the related formula ἐν Χριστῷ also into consideration.

Ἐν Χριστῷ is by far the most frequently used of the formulas with seven occurrences in Galatians. Interestingly enough, these occurrences show variation among themselves. In 2:4 the phrase serves to qualify the freedom the apostle has as freedom 'in Christ', that is, belonging to a new order and characterised by it. In 2:17 the ἐν Χριστῷ is almost instrumental: 'If those who seek to be justified in Christ are themselves found to be sinners' (cf Betz 1979:119n60 for more details on this option). It would be in line with Paul's use of the term elsewhere to understand the process of justification as participation in the body of Christ. A third, but unlikely possibility is to interpret ἐν Χριστῷ as the result of the justification. In 3:14 we find a similar choice between ἐν Χριστῷ as the channel through which the blessing of Abraham reaches the gentiles, or the way through which the blessing is appropriated, that is, by participation in the body. In 3:26 ἐν indicates the object of the faith of God's children and might serve as an example of subdomain 90.23 of Louw & Nida as a marker of content, specifying a particular referent: 'concerning, with respect to, about, in.'

The most typical use of ἐν occurs in 1:22, 3:28 and 5:6 as the Pauline formula ἐν Χριστῷ ('Ἰσωσὺ'). Basically, the preposition is a marker of location (cf Louw & Nida 83.9 or 13), or of a state or condition (13.8). But the theological ramifications of the formula and its links with the σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ concept in Paul have made it a focal point in the history of Pauline research and it is widely accepted as a cornerstone of his theology (cf Bultmann 1965:328-330; Conzelmann 1968:232-235; Kümmel 1969:193-196; Ridderbos 1971:56-63). In Galatians it is also fundamental importance for understanding the new existence in faith and we shall return to this issue in the final section.

Ὑπό

In Galatians, ὑπό has negative associations only, with as basic function a
marker of control - whether of a person, institution or power - 'under, under the control of, under obligation to' (Louw & Nida 37.7). Predominant is the combination ὑπὸ νόμον (3:23; 4:4,5,21; 5:18). What might have been a positive statement in a Jewish context, that is, to be under the law (cf Betz 1979:176, 207), becomes an unequivocal description of the hopeless situation of people still under the custody of the law 'before faith came' (3:23). In the space of a few sentences in Galatians 3 and 4, ὑπὸ is used five times in different combinations to underline the desperate nature of their plight — ὑπὸ ἀμαρτίαν (3:22), ὑπὸ νόμον (3:23; 4:5), ὑπὸ παιδαγωγὸν (3:25), ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπους (4:2) (as pointed out by Breytenbach) and ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (4:3). This description correlates closely to the statement in 3:10 that those who are 'of the works of the law' are ὑπὸ κατάραν.

Ἀπό, ὑπέρ, παρά and εἰς
Combinations with these prepositions are not prominent in Galatians. Ὑπέρ occurs twice (1:4; 3:13), as does εἰς (3:6, 27), while ἀπό (1:1) and παρά (1:12) occur only once. These examples do not alter the picture obtained with regard to the prepositions discussed so far in any significant way.

3 THE RHETORICAL LEVEL
When we approach these combinations from a different angle, namely from the words with which they combine, a significant picture emerges. The words that occur with at least two or more prepositions, are the following: ἄνθρωπος (4), νόμος (4), ἐπαγγελία (3), πίστις (3), σάρξ (2), πνεῦμα (2) and χάρις (2). Furthermore, there is a marked correlation between νόμος, ἐπαγγελία and πίστις in that they, apart from ὑπὸ in the case of νόμος, combine with the same prepositions. The same holds for the combinations with σάρξ and πνεῦμα and for ἔλευθερα and παντισκη, which both combine with ἐκ.

The pattern which emerges is one of two words combining with the same prepositions to form two sets of positive and negative formulas which are in fact the mirror image of each other. These patterns of similarity and dissimilarity give the impression that we are dealing with more than just the casual usage of language and that other factors than mere linguistic considerations are involved. In our discussion of the individual prepositions we have constantly come across the importance of theological concerns and we now have to deal with these briefly. However, the move from the linguistic to the theological level can only be made successfully if the intermediate level of rhetoric is also taken into consideration.

A question which has kept cropping up in our discussion, but which has been left unanswered so far, is whether these prepositional formulas were Paul's own creation or whether they came from pre-Paulline material — as part of the tradition handed down to him or as common currency in the early church. Taking Paul's own acknowledgement in 1 Corinthians 11 of having received Eucharist tradition into account, the possibility of pre-Paulline material cannot be ruled out. Betz (1979:184) is convinced that Galatians 3:26-28 was lifted from a pre-Paulline liturgical context, when compared to parallel sections like 1 Corinthians 12:13, Colossians 3:11.
and 1 Thessalonians 5:5. But does this also apply to the prepositional formulas so characteristic of Galatians?

One argument in favour of traditional material is the cryptic way in which Paul uses these formulas and which would be very difficult to follow without prior or additional information. But the intensity — and density — of his argumentation in Galatians is directly related to the seriousness of the situation and the difficulty of his task. He is trying to win back a church which for all practical purposes has been lost — and that to a very persuasive and formidable message, which Paul considers an aberration of the true gospel. To understand the function and intention of these formulas, it is essential to gain a clear understanding of the rhetorical situation of the letter. This is a topic on its own and cannot be developed in any detail here. It has been attempted elsewhere, and I shall only quote the two concluding paragraphs (Lategan 1989:9):

However difficult it may be to come to a full understanding of the anti-Pauline opposition in Galatia, it is clear that they were very successful on at least one point. They were able to convince the Galatians that they should — in addition to faith in Christ — obey the Torah and adopt a Jewish way of life. Considering the background of most of the Galatians, it is not difficult to understand why the argument was so persuasive. Their conversion to the Christian faith implied a complete reorientation of both their value system and their lifestyle. For Jews this transition was difficult enough, but did not entail the abandonment of their own tradition — it was rather understood as its continuation and completion. For gentiles, the break was much more incisive. They found themselves at a double disadvantage — new to the Christian faith, but also unfamiliar with its Jewish roots. As Johnny-come-latelys they were in desperate need of practical advice to guide their day to day life in an environment not very sympathetic or supportive of their new convictions. Thus they became easy targets for the proponents of 'another gospel'. For whatever reason, Paul has — at least in their own understanding of the matter — not given them enough practical guidelines to survive as believers under these circumstances. That is why they are so susceptible to the argument of the opponents. Faith in Christ is — also in the opponents view — essential, but to translate that into action and to make it workable in everyday life, one needs a set of time-tested rules for the practice of this faith. That is exactly what the Jewish way of life can offer — it has stood the test of time, it has guided the Jewish people through the most testing and adverse times of their long history. Not only does it offer a practical guide to the Galatians, but it also provides the means to become part of an age-old tradition, to become fully initiated and accepted by the central leadership in Jerusalem. In view of the psychological needs of new converts, their acceptance into the group, — their self-identity and sense of security after being cut off from their natural environment, this is a very attractive and persuasive argument.

Despite the real need of the Galatians for a more coherent and directive
set of instructions, Paul studiously avoids spelling out in more detail how the congregation should behave in different situations (unlike the practical advice he gives for example in 1 Cor). He does this to prevent any slip back into a ‘works of the law’ mentality. Instead, he shows the way to a responsible and participatory ethics, which not only ensures the survival of Christian freedom, but which also correlates with the true nature of the gospel as being οὐ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον.

Paul is faced with a formidable double challenge. On the one hand, he has to compete with the attraction of a proven and established system. On the other hand, he has to present a convincing alternative to the wavering Galatians, but in such a way that he does not develop just another legalistic system. Paul is therefore forced to reconsider the most fundamental elements of the Christian faith. This is not a theoretical exercise, but one that focuses on the most practical issues of the Galatian situation: Are they required to keep the law? Is this essential to the Christian faith? It is a time for clear distinctions and of radical decisions. In the face of the opponents’ argument that the Jewish lifestyle is fully compatible with the newly-found faith of the Galatians, Paul is forced to spell out clearly the difference between the two modes of existence — the one before or outside of faith and the one in faith. To bring clarity to a confused atmosphere, a binary structure almost automatically presents itself to Paul. He starts to develop this by contrasting σάρξ with πνεῦμα, παιδίσκη with ἑλεύθερα, νόμος with ἐπαγγελία and πίστις (cf addendum). These form the building blocks of a vastly expanded system that is based on a binary system and which divides the prepositional formulas into one of two categories — those related to life before and outside of faith and those describing the life in faith (cf addendum). At this point we are already moving over to the level of theological reflection.

Before doing so, a question remains: Is Paul merely using existing formulas from a pre-Pauline source? The apostle certainly did not have any qualms about using such material when the need arose. But what we see in the development of this network of prepositional formulas is too complex and too systematic to be ascribed to the random level of pre-Pauline tradition. The integrating hand of one individual can scarcely be denied and we can only conclude that Paul himself was the decisive factor in developing these formulas.

4 THE THEOLOGICAL LEVEL

The link between the linguistic and the theological levels becomes comprehensible only through the rhetorical level. The rhetorical situation forces Paul to formulate a clear alternative to an established theological framework with its accompanying value system.

In this process, he develops a theological shorthand in the form of prepositional phrases, which, on closer inspection, forms an integrated network of theological relations. These formulas are abbreviations for key concepts on which his understanding of the gospel and its implications for all aspects of the life of the believer is built. These are the basic elements which make up Paul’s ‘theology’ and to pursue each of these in all
its implications will indeed require a full-scale theology. We conclude by giving a very brief indication of how these formulas are related to broader theological themes in Paul’s thinking.

Formulas with ὑπό, as we have seen, all carry negative associations and serve to describe the situation of mankind outside of or before faith. ὑπὸ νόμου, which was in all probability a positive term in Jewish understanding (cf Betz 1979:207) and used in this way by the opposition to convince the Galatians of the desirability of adopting the Jewish way of life, in Galatians becomes the description of life in bondage, under control of the law. This situation is further fleshed out with other ὑπὸ formulas. It is a situation under the regime of sin (ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν) and therefore under a curse (ὑπὸ κατάραν). It represents the position of a minor, still under the supervision of the law (ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν) and it represents a clinging to principles of the unredeemed world (ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου).

Combinations with διά refer, negatively, to the maintaining of the old existence — for example, διά νόμου or διά ἁσθενειῶν τῆς σαρκός. Positively, they make clear how the transition to the new dispensation is effected — through faith (διὰ πίστεως), through God and Jesus Christ (διὰ Θεοῦ, διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), through grace (διὰ τῆς χάριτος) and so forth.

'Ἐκ provides us with good examples of how Paul elicits new dimensions from the prepositions at his disposal to articulate the new insights in his struggle with the problems of Galatia. Ἐκ denotes the deepest motivation behind a certain action or the basis on which it rests: Ἐκ νόμου, Ἐκ ἐργαν νόμου. Positively, it refers to the origin of faith (ἐπὶ ἀκοῆς πίστεως) and to the promise that undergirds the new dispensation (ἐπὶ ἐπαγγελίας). Here we have some of the classical oppositions (ἐκ τῆς σαρκός / ἐκ πνεύματος, Ἐκ ἐργαν νόμου / Ἐκ ἀκοῆς πίστεως, Ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθερίας / Ἐκ τῆς παιδικής)...

Κατὰ and its combinations elaborate on the nature of the new dispensation in terms of the most vigorously developed oppositions (κατὰ σάρκα / πνεῦμα) and also provide us with a deeper insight into the contrast between the position of Paul and those of his adversaries.

Formulas with ἐν relate to the result of the redeeming action of Christ. It describes the mode of the existence in faith and leads to the unique Pauline formulation ἐν Χριστῷ — a frequent expression in Galatians which carries with it a whole spectrum of theological implications.

Combinations with other prepositions and phrases serve to expand the theological kernel of Paul’s theological thinking in various directions.

Language, situation and theological principles are thus the ingredients which interact with one another to hammer out an alternative to the alluring sounds of the ‘other gospel’ and which make Galatians one of the important crucibles in which a new and deeper understanding of the gospel is forged.

WORKS CONSULTED


**ADDENDUM**

Formulas in the language of Paul: Galatians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formula</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>δι’ ἀγάπης 5:6; 5:13</td>
<td>ἔν πίστει 2:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως 3:2,5</td>
<td>πνεύματι 3:3; 5:5,16,18,25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἀπ’ ἀνθρώπων 1:1</td>
<td>ἐκ πνεύματος 6:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κατὰ ἀνθρώπων 1:1; 3:15</td>
<td>κατὰ πνεῦμα 4:29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>παρ’ ἀνθρώπων 1:12</td>
<td>ἐκ τῆς σαρκός 6:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἀποκαλύψεως 1:12</td>
<td>ἐκ σαρκί 2:20; 4:14; 6:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν 2:2</td>
<td>κατὰ σάρκα 4:23,29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>εἰς δικαιοσύνην 3:6</td>
<td>διὰ τῆς χάριτος 1:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐπαγγελίας 3:18</td>
<td>ἐν χάριτι 1:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐπαγγελίας 3:18</td>
<td>διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ 1:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κατ’ ἐπαγγελίαν 3:29</td>
<td>δι’ ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκός 4:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἔργων νόμου 2:16; 3:2,5,10</td>
<td>κατὰ τῶν ἐπαγγελιῶν 3:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ 1:4</td>
<td>ὑπὸ ἀμαρτίαν 3:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>διὰ θεοῦ 1:1; 4:7</td>
<td>ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν 1:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐνόπιον τοῦ θεοῦ 1:20</td>
<td>ὑπὸ κατάραν 3:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐν κυρίῳ 5:10</td>
<td>ἐκ τῆς κατάρας 3:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>διὰ νόμου 2:19,21</td>
<td>ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν 3:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐκ νόμου 3:18,21</td>
<td>ἐκ τῆς παιδίσκης 4:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐν νόμῳ 3:11; 5:4</td>
<td>ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθερίας 4:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ὑπὸ νόμου 3:23; 4:4,5,21; 5:18</td>
<td>ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου 4:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ὑπὸ παιδαγωγῶν 3:25</td>
<td>εἰς Χριστὸν 3:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐκ περιτομῆς 2:12</td>
<td>ἐν Χριστῷ (Ἰησοῦ) 1:22; 2:4; 2:17; 3:14,26,28; 5:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>διὰ (τῆς) πίστεως 2:16; 3:14,26</td>
<td>ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπους 4:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐκ πίστεως 2:16; 3:7-9,11-12,22,24; 5:5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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διά
- δι' ἀνθρώπου
- διά νόμου
- δι' ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκός
+ δι' ἀγάπης
+ δι' ἀποκαλύψεως
+ δι' ἐπαγγελίας
+ διὰ θεοῦ
+ διὰ πίστεως
+ διὰ τῆς χάριτος
+ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

κατά
- κατά ἀνθρώπου
- κατὰ σάρκα
+ κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν
+ κατ᾽ ἐπαγγελίαν
+ κατὰ πνεύμα
+ κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ
+ κατὰ τῶν ἐπαγγελίων

από
- ἀπ' ἀνθρώπου

ὑπό
- ὑπὸ νόμου
+ ὑπὸ πανδαισιών
- ὑπὸ ἄμαρτίαν
- ὑπὸ κατάραν
- ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου
- ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπους

νόμος : διά/ἐκ/ἐν/ὑπὸ ἀργα : κατά/ἐν
+ ἐπαγγελία: διά/ἐκ/ἐν
+ πνεύμα: κατά/ἐν
+ πίστεις : διά/ἐκ/ἐν

ἀνθρώπος: διά/κατά/ἀπό/παρά

κατὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

ἐν
- ἐν νόμῳ
- ἐν σαρκί
+ ἐν πίστει
+ ἐν κυρίῳ
+ ἐν Χριστῷ (Ἰησοῦ)

ὑπέρ
- ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀμαρτίων
+ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν

εἰς
- εἰς δικαιοσύνην
+ εἰς τοῦ Χριστοῦ

παρά

Prof B C Lategan, Dean: Faculty of Arts, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, 7600 Republic of South Africa.