DISSOCIATION IN THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

J N VORSTER

From the perspective of modern rhetoric, this article proposes the technique of dissociation as an alternative to approaches in which the antithesis featured predominantly. The technique of dissociation is applied, not only to the person of Paul, but also to the related question of what being a real Jew entails. It is indicated that the technique of dissociation should be seen in relationship to the pragmatic argument. Seen from this perspective, the letter to the Galatians is an attempt at the confirmation of status.

INTRODUCTION

In the interpretation of the letter to the Galatians, and, for that matter, also in the interpretation of the Pauline studies as such, the antithesis has always reigned supreme. It has been pointed out in different ways that this state of affairs was mainly due to Lutheran Pauline interpretation which contrasted law and gospel. While Dunn (1983) quite correctly praises Sanders (1977) for breaking this mould by his emphasis on ‘covenantal nomism’, he equally correctly criticises him for still adhering to a viewpoint which maintains a radical distinction between Judaism and Paul’s religion. Thus Sanders (1983:207) concludes that there are two points at which the break with Judaism becomes visible, namely the Jewish doctrine of election and Paul’s denial that acceptance of the law ensures entry into the people of God. Although Dunn criticises Sanders for having Paul jump from one system to another and also indicates that Paul’s argument takes place within the realm of the covenant, he too does not seem to avoid the supremacy of the antithesis [cf also Räisänen’s (1985:547) criticism of Dunn]. In his explanation of Gl 2:16, Dunn finds ‘antithetical opposites’ (his formulation) in ‘justification by works of law’ and ‘justification by faith in Jesus’. He writes:

Indeed it is quite likely that Gal. 2:16 reflects the step by which Paul’s thinking hardened these two propositions into a clear-cut antithesis....Perhaps, then, for the first

1 Antithesis is here used in a very wide sense. There are, of course, various kinds of antitheses in the letter to the Galatians, but it is a moot point whether the elements of an antithesis can be used to substantiate an existential, historical antithesis.
time, in this verse faith in Jesus Messiah begins to emerge not simply as a narrower definition of the elect of God, but as an alternative definition of the elect of God. If this understanding of Gal. 2.16 is correct, then we in fact are being given the unique privilege in this verse of witnessing a very crucial development for the history of Christianity taking place. For in this verse we are seeing the transition from a basically Jewish self-understanding of Christ's significance to a distinctively different understanding, the transition indeed from a form of Jewish Messianism to a faith which sooner or later must break away from Judaism to exist in its own terms.

(1983:112, 113, 115)

Although I can agree with much of what Dunn has said, maintaining the notion of an antithesis causes the impression that Paul advocated a break with Judaism, thereby creating the church. However, I would like to indicate that Paul, within the context of the way in which he understood his own people, did not intend a break with Judaism. Instead of approaching the interpretation of this letter from the perspective of antithesis, I suggest we approach the letter from the perspective of dissociation and pragmatic argument. In the light of what Sanders and Dunn have indicated concerning Judaism, does Paul's good news herald a new system of thought, that is, in antithesis to Judaism, or does he plead for a modification? In terms of his understanding of Judaism, does he see his movement in antithesis to the Jews, or does his good news disclose what a 'true Jew' should be; does he want to replace or does he want to reform?

2 WHAT IS DISSOCIATION?

The designation dissociation can be misleading as if dissociation refers to 'dis-association', that is, the antithesis of association. If that were the case, dissociation would have referred to the severance of connecting links and would actually have belonged to the phenomena where association plays a role (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969:411-412). However, that is not the case. Dissociation must be seen as that part of the rhetorical process in which a profound modification is suggested, prompted by the detection of an incompatibility (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969:413). The difference between dissociation and 'dis-association' lies in the assumption from which it operates. Where 'dis-association' assumes a non-associative relationship between phenomena, dissociation assumes the original unity of a phenomenon. Its concern is the modification of that phenomenon's structure. It stands to reason that the dissociative process plays a very important role in the development and birth of any philosophical system. Owing to the strong 'in-group' values of religious circles, dissociation becomes a key to the understanding of related religious movements.2 The objec-

tive of dissociation is not to sever links, but to compromise. Using shared knowl-
edge, a modified structure of reality is presented, that is a new hierarchy of values
is established.

We have indicated that dissociation operates on the assumption of an original
unity. There is a further aspect, however, that needs our attention and that per-
tains to the notion of incompatibility. Dissociation presupposes an incompatibili-
ty within a system. As a matter of fact, it is precisely by this incompatibility
within and dissatisfaction with a system of thought that dissociation is prompted.

*Dissociation* can be visually expressed as a pair consisting of Terms I and II.
Term I is that which is to be disputed; it is immediate, accepted and known and it
can be expressed by qualifiers such as pseudo-, quasi-, non-, or descriptions
which emphasise the illusionary, the veil-like character of a phenomenon or its
distorted nature. Term II is always a construction deviating from Term I and it
functions as a critical norm for Term I. Term II is usually not visible or available,
it is that which presumably lies behind a phenomenon, that which might be perceived and described as its ‘essence’. *Dissociation* proceeds by indicating the
incompatibilities concealed within Term I and proposes that within that specific
system of thought, Term II would be more congruent. Consequently Term II is
usually expressed by qualifiers such as true, real, genuine, authentic (cf Perelman

Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969:415-419), in a polemic with the existen-
tialists, consider the pair ‘appearance-reality’ the prototype of all dissociations.
Within a system of thought a person can start the rhetorical process rolling by
indicating that what that specific group holds as reality, is actually distorted or
apparent reality. As a figure of style *antithesis* can play a major role in expressing
dissociation, but the original unity of the phenomenon must always be borne in
mind.

*Dissociation* can be used in interaction with various other *topoi*. As will be
indicated, it is used in the letter to the Galatians in interaction with the *pragmatic
argument*. The concern of a *pragmatic argument* is the link between an event and
its consequences. The consequences function as criterion for the favourable or
unfavourable appraisal of the event. What happens in argumentation is that the
values, associated with the consequences, are transferred to the event. These
consequences may be future, past, observed, foreseen, hypothetical, et cetera (cf
Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969:266-270). A more specific form of *pragmat-
ic argument* is the *argument of waste*. This refers to a situation in which certain
sacrifices have been made, resulting in the present situation. The consequence of
discontinuing the process which involved these sacrifices, would prove the sacri-
fices worthless. Owing to the value attached to the sacrifices made, the continuity of
the process can be propagated.

*Dissociation* can be used in conjunction with *pragmatic argument* when the
consequences, for example, are seen as Term II and function to evaluate the event at issue. This, to my mind, is what happens in the letter to the Galatians.

3 DISSOCIATION IN THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

3.1 Dissociation and the person of Paul

Reading the letter to the Galatians from an antithetical perspective creates the problem of Paul's opponents who served as a threat to his apostleship. The scholarly debate then centres around the question whether the letter to the Galatians should be seen as a defence of his apostleship (cf Betz 1979; Hester 1984; 1986).

However, when the letter is studied from the perspective of dissociation, Paul's apostleship as such, does not seem to be the issue here (cf for example Lategan 1988). Instead of Paul being the defendant, he might be seen as the plaintiff, denying the right of any other person to be an apostle to the Gentiles, simultaneously claiming the position of normative criterion when apostleship to the Gentiles is at stake. Put differently, Paul claims the right of normative criterion for apostleship to the Gentiles. In order to claim the right of normative criterion, it becomes necessary to prove superiority with regard to status. It stands to reason that if he is to be the normative criterion, his person will be the focus. In Galatians 1 and 2, we therefore find an interplay between two topoi, namely that of person and dissociation. That Paul can be seen as normative criterion for the good news belongs to the essence of his person.

Dissociation already commences in the exordium. The epitheton ἀπόστολος indicates that the notion of apostleship is not something strange to Paul's audience. However, the elaborations on ἀπόστολος suggest that the notion of apostleship can be differently defined. By means of antithesis the 'true' apostle is removed from the human sphere. Normative criterion for the 'true' apostle is being divinely commissioned and Paul, of course, fits the bill. In terms of dissociation, apostleship functions as Term 1. As such, it is immediate, apparent, but it can also be illusionary. The illusionary is expressed by Paul's use of the negative. Divine instrumentality functions as Term 2, that is, the normative criterion for what true apostleship entails (cf also Lategan 1988:421).

3 In Hester's most recent study (1991:282, 289) the notion of an apostolic 'defence' has made room for Paul's person and he now characterises the first two chapters as a 'self-referent encomium' in which he presents himself as a model of the gospel revealed to him and preached to them.

4 Although Hester (1991) would probably not express this so strongly, this seems to be suggested when he describes Paul as 'placing the blame' (cf also Hall 1991:319).

5 Various scholars exclude the prescript from the exordium (cf Betz 1979, Smit 1989, Hester 1984). However, there is no reason whatsoever why 1:1-5 (the prescript of the letter) should be excluded from being part of the exordium.
However, divine instrumentality, that is, the fact of being commissioned by Jesus Christ and God the Father, functions here within the context of Paul's construction of his 'person'. It cannot be separated from him. That he is the focus, is illustrated by the fact that he does not even include, within this class, all those brothers that are with him at the stage of writing. Neither apostleship in general, nor divinely commissioned apostleship in general, is the subject, but Paul's divinely commissioned apostleship which serves as normative criterion.

By relegating his role to the sphere of the divine and explicitly away from the human sphere, he puts his role beyond verification and accountability and gives himself absolute status. The same tendency permeates 1:6-2:14.

Firstly, the good news which Paul proclaims is not to be distinguished from his 'person'. According to him, there is no other good news than that received and proclaimed by him (1:6,8,9) Although he seems to subject himself to the proclamation of the good news in the past (1:8) one should bear in mind that this proclamation was his own. Furthermore, by the use of the first person plural (1:8), Paul diffuses responsibility. Using the first person plural in conjunction with ἀγιελος, Paul clearly exaggerates, which means that he is actually conveying the total impossibility of such an action. To proclaim the only true good news belongs to the essence of Paul's person (cf also Smit 1989:3).

Secondly, no indication is given of the contents of the good news at this stage. The audience is only reminded of the good news that Paul proclaimed in the past. Closest to an indication of the contents of the good news is the denial of the necessity of circumcision (2:3,7). In 1:6-2:14, at least, the point is not to clarify issues concerning the contents of the good news, but to establish Paul as normative criterion of the good news. Paul's good news has to function as normative criterion.

Thirdly, this version of the good news is again very explicitly removed from the human scene and tightly linked to divine intervention. It is Paul's good news which is not κατὰ ἀνθρωπον (1:11), which he neither received παρὰ ἀνθρωπον (1:12a), nor was taught, but which was revealed to him (1:12c, 16). The God-man antithesis (1:10-12) does not function to include Paul under the category of 'man', but to associate him with God's revelation. The God-man antithesis therefore functions to serve the 'person' of Paul, dissociating him from other versions of the good news and confirming his status as its true proclaimer (cf also the strange καὶ ἰδοεἰμι τῶν θεον 1:24).

Fourthly, that the essence of Paul's person can be situated in him being normative criterion for the good news, can be seen in his self description as protector of its truth (2:5,14). The Antiochean episode (2:11-14) serves no other function than to demonstrate Paul's stability of person and to eliminate both Cephas and
Barnabas as possible criteria for the truth of the good news.⁶

Fifthly, Paul makes a considerable effort to distance himself and the receipt of the good news for the Gentiles from the apostles in Jerusalem (1:18-19, 2:1-2, 7, 9). This appears strange, especially since they are assigned a position of power; they are called δοκούντες (2:2,6). However, the reason again seems to be the uniqueness of Paul’s person. The good news which he has proclaimed has been revealed to him. As far as the good news to the Gentiles is concerned, his power exceeds theirs, also subtly suggested by linking their status to that which is of man (2:6).

The main question is of course why Paul found it necessary to claim absolute and unique status for his person. Adherents of the opponents theory would be quick to point out that Paul is probably defending his apostleship against opponents infiltrating the Galatian communities and threatening his position. However, there do not seem to be opponents as far as Paul’s apostleship is concerned.

Firstly, the postulated opponents are rather vaguely defined and in Paul’s description of these characters, they are usually used in interaction with the Galatians themselves and their views on the good news (cf 1:7,9; 2:4; 3:1; 4:17; 5:7,10,12; 6:12-13). Whether a group of people opposing Paul can be inferred is highly disputable, since no indication whatsoever is given of their opposition to him. It seems more likely that Paul is creating a suspicion among the members of his audience that those relegating them to an inferior status, do not have a correct understanding of his superior status.

Secondly, Paul is not defending his apostleship; his apostleship is acknowledged as shared knowledge, as point of departure for argumentation. No charge against Paul as apostle can be inferred. Neither is the apostleship of others denied. What is at stake is the uniqueness of Paul’s apostleship to the Gentiles and this seems to have a different function in the discourse.

There is, of course, no clear and final answer to this question. However, Koptak (1990)⁷ reminds us of the relationships in the autobiographical section and the intention to effect a ‘consubstantiality’, that is, a ‘standing together’. This consubstantiality is effected by identification. According to Koptak, the various oppositions serve the process of identification. Thus the ‘God-man’ opposition is

⁶ Paul’s selection of words confirms his desire to establish himself as normative criterion for the good news. The behaviour of Cephas, the other Jews and even Barnabas (who was earlier depicted as cooperator in his ministry among the Gentile of cf 2:9) is described as hypocritical (συνωμορφεισθη, ὑπόκρισις, ὁς ὄρθοποδεῖ) thereby exposing an incompatibility and prompting Paul to dissociate himself from their instability concerning the good news to the Gentiles. Their adherence is illusionary; his is consistent as is clear from the use of ἀληθεία (2:14).

⁷ Koptak (1990) follows a Burkean approach. According to Burke (cf Koptak 1990:99), identification seeks to elicit cooperation and consensus by demonstrating consubstantiality. Consubstantiality is an attempt to describe the mutual framework between communicator and audience, a ‘standing together’.
used to establish identification between Paul and his audience. Paul identifies with those who identify with God (cf 1990:101). Although consubstantiality, identification and relationships are the contextual categories which might help us in our search for an answer, Koptak’s formulation is problematic. In the light of the focus on Paul’s person, it would perhaps be better to formulate that those who identify with Paul, identify with the normative criterion of the good news and consequently will find themselves on the side of the divine. Therefore, identification with Paul’s person elevates to a superior status, even if it means persecution, and prevents stooping to behaviour which could assign to an inferior status. Their status is thus dependent on the confirmation of his status.

4.2 Dissociating being a Jew
The construction of Paul’s person as unique and normative criterion for the proclamation of the good news, is inextricably connected to the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, which implies that the focus of the good news is also concerned with the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. That the role of his person is tied up with social interaction has already become apparent in the autobiographical reference to his earlier adherence to a form of Judaism (1:13-14). It is, however, very explicitly concretised in the circumstances surrounding the Apostolic convention (2:1-10) and the Antiochean episode (2:11-14). The fact that Paul closes the narratio with an incident associating his person with the interaction between Jew and Gentile, before he launches into an argument, provides a clue for the argumentation to follow.

The question Paul is concerned with in the letter to the Galatians is not the antithesis between law and gospel, but rather the confirmation of the status of the Gentiles within the sphere of the Jews. To put it differently: it is the type of question typical of the interaction of religious movements, and the way in which Paul goes about it, suggests that compromise with the mother movement and not conflict is envisaged. His objective is not to sever the ties with the Jews, but rather to justify the integration of the Gentiles within their circle. This is done by means of dissociation.

The notion of ἀκοὴ πίστεως functions as normative criterion, whereas this status is denied for ἐξ ἐργασίας ἑκτόμου. Adherence to this normative criterion either decides your status favourably or disfavourably. On the other hand, the inflated status of ἑκτόμου produces incompatibilities. Since these incompatibilities prompt dissociation, they must first receive our attention.

Paul does not seem to situate an incompatibility within Judaism, but among those who have elevated the ἐξ ἐργασίας ἑκτόμου to normative criterion for justification. According to him, those that are Jews by descent, know that justification cannot be obtained by virtue of works of law (cf 2:15). That does not mean that those adhering to ἐξ ἐργασίας ἑκτόμου do not stem from the Jewish society, but only
that it is, according to Paul, shared knowledge among Jews that justification does not happen according to ‘works of law’.

It is in this respect that we have to take further cognizance of Dunn’s debate with Sanders (1977; 1983). Whereas Sanders indicates a break with Judaism, Dunn (1983:105) shows that Paul is appealing to Jewish sensibilities, that he is in fact using covenantal language. According to Dunn (1983, 1985, 1988), covenantal language is expressed by the phrase εὐγνωμοσία, the notion of justification and the distinction made between Jews by nature and Gentiles as sinners. The perspective from which Paul proceeds to conduct his argument, is therefore Jewish. If the point of departure is a Jewish perspective, with which Paul identifies and which he explicitly emphasises, the incompatibility must be something within the Jewish circle which is in disagreement with their shared knowledge. There is therefore no antithesis with Judaism (that is, Judaism as perceived from Paul’s viewpoint); the problem rather concerns a specific understanding, a specific claim which some have made.

The problem addressed by Paul seems to be an absolutisation of what Sanders identifies as ‘covenantal nonism’. The problem is not with the law as such (cf also Dunn 1985:531), but with the status of being a Jew, that which identifies and constitutes a Jew as a real Jew. Dunn has indicated that the εὐγνωμοσία does not refer to deeds as such, but rather to certain ‘boundary markers’, these being the circumcision, observance of food laws, festive days, as well as the law itself (Dunn 1985:526). These ‘boundary markers’ were associated with being justified. Observing these identity markers created a very strong ‘in-group’ consciousness with exclusivistic tendencies. Consequently to be justified meant having observed these identity markers and being part of the inner circle. The problem to which Paul responds, is therefore one of status.

Irony functions to expose both the incompatibility on the side of those threatening the implied audience, as well as the implied audience themselves. It is precisely because ‘we’ are Jews, that ‘we’ ought to know that justification does not come εὐγνωμοσία (2:15f); while Peter lives like a Gentile, he requires the Gentiles to live like Jews (2:14); while the law is given power to effect inclusion, that is to justify, its only power lies in having restrained transgressions for a period (3:21-25); while those under the law demand the observance of the law, not only do they not meet their own demands, but they are on equal footing with those they have assigned to an inferior status: to be under the law, means to be where the Gentiles are, means to be children of Hagar, that is ‘enemies of Israel’ (cf Gaston 1982), νηπίολοι under supervision, slaves — in short, while superior status is claimed and pretended, inferior status is the reality.

The implied audience is portrayed as being confused on their present status. Ironically they too seem to accept the need for an entrance requirement, thereby acknowledging an inferior status, while not recognising their present status.
However, this failure to recognise their status means not going ‘in’, but ‘out’. A further irony is that they and those who adhere to ‘works of law’ are then on an equal inferior footing. Both are under the curse of the law (3:22). Their acknowledgment of these entrance requirements is described as a regression to a previous inferior state (that of oúρξ 3:4; under the κατάρα τοῦ νόμου 3:10,13, 23; 5:3, 4; they are then νηπιόλοι under the supervision of others 4:13; to be a νηπιος also means to be a δοῦλος 4:3,8; 5:1 or τέκνα παιδόκοις 4:31, means to be ἀσθενής 4:9). Thus, while they hope to gain status as ‘true Jews’, this is exactly what they will lose! As a matter of fact, they will provide status to those who have seduced them (4:17; 6:13).

These incompatibilities, resulting in an inferior status for the implied audience and an exalted status for those demanding entrance requirements, are resolved, not by placing the implied audience in antithesis to the Jews. On the contrary, the Jewish value system is used as point of departure for the creation or structuration of a new reality. Antitheses do play a role in the structuration of this reality, but they do not have the function of reflecting a party of opposition, or an adversity towards the Jewish value system. As a matter of fact, true to the technique of dissociation, antitheses are used to effect a reversal of roles, but not a rejection of the role as such. Relying on old notions, that is, values mutually shared, the new hierarchy which has been structured by his earlier visit, is confirmed for the benefit of the Gentile implied audience. Dissociation is used to establish what the ‘true Jew’ is.

We have already seen that Paul established himself as normative criterion for the good news. That was done because the message of faith is to be the normative criterion against which a number of notions is measured in the letter. As such, Paul’s person functions as guarantee for the truth of these notions.

The kerygma of faith functions as normative criterion for the following:

Firstly, by means of antithesis the ἀκοή πίστεως is made normative criterion for the ἔργα νόμου. Within the dissociative frame of reference it functions as Term 1. That these two notions are meant to be played off against each other is clear from their consistent association (2:16,19,20; 3:2,5,7 and 10,11,12,13,14,22,23,24,25; 5:3,5).9 The law’s role as normative criterion for those who have absolutised covenantal nomism, is relativised by consistently associating this notion with the negative. Yet, despite the negative connotations attached to it, it is not rejected. However, it is made totally powerless. The only way in which it

---

8 That ἔργα νόμου can indeed be seen as Term I is also confirmed by Kraftchick (1990:77), although from a totally different perspective. He indicates that the odds as far as the demonstrability of Paul’s argument is concerned, are against Paul, owing to the external and visible nature of ἔργα νόμου. We have already seen that Term I usually refers to the immediate, the visible, that which is accepted.

9 These references do not distinguish between πίστες, ἀκοή πίστεως and νόμος, ἔργα νόμου, since the intention is to show the association of two conceptual fields.
could be of value, is when deeds function as its normative criterion (3:12; 5:2). It cannot ensure justification (2:14-15), that is, entrance into the covenant; consequently, it cannot ensure a position of power (3:21c). The implied audience did not receive the spirit by virtue of works of law (3:20; on the contrary, adhering to works of law as normative criterion, effectively means to be under the curse of the law (3:10-13). Furthermore, the law cannot authorise sonship of Abraham (3:26; 4:7) and is consequently also unable to ensure the κληρονομία (3:18). Finally, adhering to the law after the advent of the time of faith, means to regress to an inferior status, that of a νήπιος or a δοῦλος (4:1-3), that is, to a state of the powerless, the weak (4:9).

The law's power and status have therefore been completely reduced. In the reality Paul constructs for his readers, it has been relegated to a past era and even there its role has been restricted to restraint. To assign any power to the law in the present is a distortion of reality, can only be 'external', is a mask or a veil of power, but not actual reality.

Secondly, πίστις, in one way or the other, functions as normative criterion. Whenever πίστις is used, it is associated with the positive. The criterion for justification is 'faith' (2:15-16). If justification indeed refers to the process of becoming part of the covenant, faith becomes the criterion for 'true' justification. That faith provides access to the inner-group is well illustrated by the reference to Abraham. Not only is Abraham referred to because he came from a time before the nation of the Jews was constituted and because he was both circumcised and uncircumcised, but it is Abraham's faith that established his relationship with God (3:6). The redefinition of one of Israel's patriarchs in terms of 'faith' and not of national categories, opens the way for a redefinition of what a 'true' son of God entails. Consequently, faith becomes the criterion that determines a 'true' son of God (3:7). That means the scope of sons of God has been extended to include believing Gentiles (3:8).

It is important to see that entrance into the circle of Jews is at stake. That Paul pulverises the natural boundaries between Jews and Greeks, slaves and freemen, man and woman in 3:28 should not be seen as an attempt at establishing a unity and equality of all mankind. Not only is this possibility contradicted by the preceding context which is concerned with the question of a 'real' son of Abraham, that is, a real Jew, but it is also summarised in 3:29. The point is that faith should be seen as criterion for what a 'true' Jew entails and not ethnographical, social or sexual distinctions.

The notion of πίστις also functions as normative criterion for a host of other
concepts. Having been incorporated into the circle of sons of God, they have become recipients of the Spirit (3:2, 5; 4:6); however, faith has been designated as normative criterion. It is by virtue of faith, and not the works of the law, that powers were activated among them (3:5); it is by virtue of their being sons of God on account of faith that they have become κληρονόμοι (3:29; 4:7).

Thirdly, πίστις has a Christological orientation (cf 2:15, 16, 17, 20; 3:24, 26; 5:6) and is specifically directed at the crucifixion of Christ (3:13; 6:14). However, this Christological orientation of πίστις does not have the function of creating distance from Judaism, but rather of confirming the integration of the implied audience into the circle of the Jews. The context of 3:6-20 is concerned with the integration of the εθνίμοι into the sphere of the ‘sons of Abraham’. Owing to πίστις being normative criterion for ‘sonship’, it features prominently in assigning the honorific ‘son of Abraham’ to the Gentiles (3:7, 8, 9, 14). In order to make the promises to the descendants of Abraham applicable to the Gentiles, σπέρμα, as the recipient of the promises, is redefined. Its singularity is foregrounded and Christ is seen as the σπέρμα of Abraham (3:16). ‘Christ’ therefore functions to integrate the Gentiles into the sphere of the Jews. That the Christological orientation of πίστις does not have as its objective to distance from the Jews, is also clear from Paul’s emphasis on the stability of the covenant (3:15, 17).

One might ask why Paul emphasises the crucifixion of Christ (cf 3:1, 13; 6:14) when he clearly intends to confirm the status of the implied audience within the realm of Judaism. The cross could surely not have been a symbol of honour, but rather one of shame. Although there is no explicit reason for the emphasis on the cross, Barton (1982; cf also Meeks 1983:702) has shown that the cross probably functioned as a symbol of shame with which the powerless were able to identify. There is no indication in the letter to the Galatians that the implied audience belonged to a sociological inferior position. However, from Paul’s perspective on what Jews thought of Gentiles, that is from their ideological viewpoint, they clearly belonged to an inferior class of people. A symbol of social rejection now becomes a symbol which serves to strengthen group-identity and -consciousness. Dissociation again functions in the sense that the ‘actual’ meaning of the cross is to be seen in the way it provides access to a position of honour within the circle of the Jews.

4.3 Dissociation and pragmatic argument
In Paul’s attempt to restrain the implied audience from adhering to the ‘works of law’, a form of the pragmatic argument is used. To put it differently: dissociation has been embedded within the pragmatic argument. The event on which the

11 It is this function to integrate within the circle of ‘sons of Abraham’ that Dunn (1983) seems to have missed. It is really impossible to speak of a ‘hardening into a clear-cut antithesis’, when integration is the objective of the Christological orientation of πίστις.
implied audience has to bring out a decision, is whether or not 'works of the law', especially the circumcision, will be elevated to the position of normative criteria.

Owing to their faith in the crucified Christ, they are, in the present, in a position of status;\(^{12}\) they have been integrated into the privileged circle of sons of Abraham and can even been called sons of God (3:26; 4:6). They belong to the descendants of Isaac (4:28) and are consequently 'children of freedom' (4:30; 5:1) By virtue of faith in Christ, they have become κληρονόμοι (3:29). There is little doubt that the present situation, based on the advent of a period of faith (3:23; 4:4) and their acceptance of Paul's good news concerning faith in Jesus Christ in the past, is characterised by their status as 'true' Jews. That their status is that of 'being in', is further confirmed by the intention of those requiring adherence to 'works of law' (4:17, 29).

However, the consequences of a decision for 'works of law' will, according to Paul, result in a loss of their status. It would entail a regression to their previous status, that which they occupied in a pre-past situation. Their status in the pre-past, according to a Jewish perspective, was that of ἀμαρτωλοί (2:15). Ironically, however, that is the same state as being under the law. In 3:22-23 the time before the advent of 'faith', is seen as a time ὑπὸ ἀμαρτίαν, a time in which all were caused to be watched over. Although Paul does not elaborate, Jews and Gentiles again seem to be placed on an equal footing, even in their mutual inferiority. Their inferior status in this period is further described as that of νήπιοι (4:3). The possibility is again created that even the κληρονόμος can still be νήπιος, which again also relegates the Jew to an inferior status (4:1-2). Being a νήπιος, either as a κληρονόμος or ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, means to be enslaved (4:1,3).

By the use of an argument of waste Paul indicates the consequence of a decision in favour of 'works of law'. Both his labour among them (4:11), as well as the privileges effectuated by Christ (2:21; 5:2) would have been wasted, should they decide to have themselves circumcised. This would, in effect, mean that their mutual past, the time in which the good news was proclaimed to them and in which sacrifices were made by Christ, Paul and even themselves (3:4) would be wiped out, leaving them stranded in their inferior status. Ironically, their attempt to achieve more status by adhering to 'works of law' would have exactly the opposite effect. Instead of 'being in', they would be excluded. A decision to elevate the 'works of law', would effectuate a discontinuity with the status ac-

---

\(^{12}\) Smit's (1989) description of the letter's genre as *deliberative* suggests that a loss of status has already taken place. The audience is encouraged to opt for that which would be to their advantage, that which could bring them honour. Restricting the letter's genre to the *deliberative* is problematic, since it might also be argued that they are persuaded to maintain what they already have.
quired and retained in the present. The argument of waste points them to a visualised and hypothetical future which corresponds with their catastrophic and futile past—a past without any status. The persuasive element in the use of the argument of waste lies in the negative value attached to an inferior status, which would again be theirs should a decision for 'works of law' be made.

It remains to emphasise yet again that the use of an argument of waste also indicates that an opposition with the Jews is not the intention. An antithesis with Judaism has not been established. On the contrary, loss of status is depicted as a movement from being a 'true' Jew to a state of either being under the law, or under the στόχεια of this world, that is, 'being out'—and 'being out' is negatively evaluated.

4 CONCLUSION

Looking at the letter from the perspective of dissociation confirms the few lonely voices voicing their opposition to antithesis as the key to the understanding of the letter. It has been indicated that antithesis serves dissociation. The problem of the letter being that of status, dissociation is used to confirm both the status of Paul and the audience. However, this confirmation of status happens within the sphere of the Jewish movement. It was consequently not Paul’s intention to cause a rift between his followers and Judaism, but rather to make an attempt at integration.

Furthermore, the absolute and unique status Paul confers upon his 'person' also serves the confirmation of his audience's status. Identification with Paul means identification with the stability and truth of the good news as initially presented by him. However, although differently intended, linking normativity for the truth of the good news to his person, might have created an in-group consciousness detrimental to his attempt at integration.

Finally, the notion of dissociation provides a new hierarchical structuration of reality. Paul's person functions as ultimate criterion for the truth of the good news, that is Term II. As normative criterion, the good news centres in faith with Christological orientation, specifically the crucifixion of Christ. This 'shameful' criterion again functions as Term II for the status of being a 'real' Jew. From this normative criterion, the law, the 'works of the law', the covenant, righteousness, the status of being offspring of Abraham and κληρονόμου have to be redefined. Furthermore, it is also from this normative criterion that the implied audience has to appraise its present status and the consequence of deciding in favour of the immediate, the apparant, yet the illusion.

WORKS CONSULTED

Lategan, B C 1988. Is Paul defending his apostleship in Galatians? The function of Galatians 1.11-12 and 2.19-20 in the development of Paul’s argument. NTS 34, 411-430.

Dr J N Vorster, Department of New Testament, UNISA, P O Box 392, PRETORIA, 0001 Republic of South Africa.