THE ASSERTION OF REVEALED TRUTH AS COMPELLING ARGUMENT IN GALATIANS 1:10-2:21

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ABSTRACT

In order to defend 'the gospel of Christ' against the preachers of a 'different gospel' in Galatia Paul autobiographically refers to the revelation granted to him. This revelation is the proper origin of the gospel. Although Paul stresses the independence of both his apostleship and his gospel, he also tries to demonstrate his fundamental agreement with those who were apostles before him. As a result 'Jerusalem' gets the meaning of a 'subsidiary' criterion with regard to the validity of the gospel. Thus the koinonia with the Jerusalem authorities refers to the one gospel, that reveals its truth in granting the unity of the church to all who trust in it.

1 INTRODUCTION

More than any other of Paul’s letters the Letter to the Galatians is characterised by the excitement that stirred its author due to the particular conditions which gave rise to it. To some extent chapters X to XIII of II Corinthians, the so-called ‘Tränenbrief’, is comparable in this respect, although, in this case, the preceding chapters offer a certain explanation. In order to explain the excitement that immediately finds expression in Galatians 1:6-9 it would be necessary to analyse and interpret the whole of the letter. This would however exceed the limits of this paper. Anyway, the first two chapters present some important indications.

Paul was upset about the changes in the Christian communities of Galatia. In 1:6 he blames them for their changed attitude towards the gospel. He sees them ‘turning’ (μετατηθεσθε) to a ‘different gospel’, though he immediately adds that there is no such ‘different gospel’, nor could there be. Rather, there are only ‘some’ (τινες) who ‘trouble you’, trying to pervert ‘the gospel of Christ’. Paul does not address these τινες, that is his opponents1, directly, but he emphatically warns the Galatian communities against them and their preaching. He wants it to be unmistakably clear that he pleads for the gospel of Christ and that he is going to defend it straightforwardly and energetically. The strongest evidence for this

1 On the identification of Paul’s opponents see the recent contribution by Söding (1991).
is the fact that twice he even proclaims the διαθήκη against anyone who should preach a 'different gospel'. In Paul's definition it is characteristic of this 'different gospel' that it claims to be an alternative to his own preaching, that is to its central content determined Christologically in v7 and, similarly, in v12. So Paul's firm engagement in favour of this gospel becomes the theme of the whole letter. Already in v1, and with reference to v1 in v11 and v12, he presents this theme and, indeed, the whole letter in the form of an apology. H D Betz (1979), therefore, calls Galatians 'an example of the "apologetic letter" genre' and analyses it accordingly.

Significantly enough, Paul attributes both his vocation as an apostle and his being entrusted with the gospel to one fundamental event, namely: Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead (v1), who has been revealed to him by God as the message he has got to preach. The gospel came to him διʼ ἀποκάλυψις Ἡσυχοῦ ἔκθεσίας (v12). More authority he cannot ascribe to the gospel. He, however, adds arguments to substantiate his thesis; and this is due not only to his theological viewpoint but also to his pastoral engagement in favour of the threatened communities in Galatia. Yet, he does not answer the question as to what it is that relates the argumentation in 1:13-2:21 to the statement in 1:11-12, which founds the gospel on God's revelation.

In studying 1:13-2:21 it is clear that Paul is arguing from an autobiographical point of view. Starting with his former life in Judaism he describes his own history, as he now sees it in the light of the revelation granted to him and as a faithful and an apostle. Particular stations along his way are united to become, on the whole, a biographical testimony to the 'truth of the gospel'. It is upon this renewing power of the revelation of Jesus Christ that the logic of Paul's life is based. Of course, Paul does not speak of the gift of the pneuma granted to all the faithful till chapter 3. Even in chapters 1 and 2, however, it is clear that it is the power of God himself that has called him to follow this way and that has kept him on it. Summarising, to some extent, his own experience, Paul then describes the truth of the gospel in 2:16 as 'justification by faith in Jesus Christ'. This thesis proves to be the conclusion reached from what has been said in the preceding context from 1:13 onward. It leads Paul back to the fundamental statement in 1:12. Furthermore, in 2:16 the theme of the 'revelation of Jesus Christ' is taken up in a soteriological way: Jesus Christ is the central content of the gospel, in so far as He becomes the foundation of life for all those who come to faith in him and thus find their 'life', which is participation in the power of resurrection and 'life to

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2 As far as Betz's classification of Galatians is concerned, there, however, remain some questions with regard to the exact application of the categories of Greco-Roman epistolography (and rhetoric) to the Pauline letters. Cf the critical reviews of Betz's commentary by Davies, Meyer and especially Aune (1981); also, Hüben (1984); Vouga (1988); and Lategan (1988); especially Lategan underlines the function of the text with regard to communication, not only with the 'original', but also with the 'present readers'.

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God' (2:19 et seq). In 2:16 Paul uses the term 'faith in Jesus Christ', which is so relevant in Galatians, for the first time, and this term is opposed to the 'works of the law', which again is characteristic of the letter. This conclusion at the end of chapter 2 then becomes a 'Leitmotiv' in chapters 3 and 4, also exerting its influence on the ethical and exhortative parts of chapters 5 and 6.

In 2:5 and 14 Paul speaks explicitly of 'the truth of the gospel'. As the origin and content of the gospel, it is to Jesus Christ that this 'truth' refers. This is unmistakably stated by Paul 1:11 et seq. The term ἀποκάλυψις in this case seems to exclude the possibility that the claim of the gospel to truth might be called in question rationally. Indeed, verses 11 and 12 express a personal attitude that Paul supports by means of proofs relating to the self-evidence of the truth of the gospel. The catchword 'revelation' refers to an origin of the gospel that can no longer be substantiated in a rational way (cf Kertelge 1974). It therefore seems to be difficult to establish a conclusive connection between vs12 and 13, which is in any case indicated by the introductory ἕκοψατε γὰρ. Through his biographical outline Paul thus presents a kind of 'historical' substantiation in order to safeguard a fundamental event that cannot be grasped in a purely historical sense. To be sure, what seems to be offered as a 'historical proof' has the meaning of a substantiation in a restricted sense only, as follows from v12.

If we take a closer look at this biographical sketch, it reveals an historical point of reference that has become increasingly important in Paul's personal relationship to the gospel, which after all has given him enough trouble, as indicated in this passage.

This point of reference is summarised, in one word, Jerusalem. It is certainly right that Paul sets store by his independence from Jerusalem. At the same time, however, it becomes clear that he does not succeed in freeing himself from it. In a certain way he needs the relation to Jerusalem, although this is not on a level with the ἀποκάλυψις ἡ πρὸς Χριστοῦ, which he claims to be the real substantiation of his gospel.

A few years ago James D G Dunn (1982) dealt with the problem of the relationship between Paul and Jerusalem according to Galatians 1 and 2 in a paper presented at the SNTS Meeting in Leuven. With regard to the beginnings of early Christianity, as related by Paul, B Holmberg (1977: 15) had already observed that 'the dialectic between being independent of and acknowledged by Jerusalem is the keynote of this important text'. Dunn, in turn, tried to attribute this dialectic within the framework of Galatians 1 and 2 to a 'development' in Paul's relation to the Jerusalem leadership (cf Dunn 1982:473: 'By the time Paul wrote Galatians he was no longer prepared to acknowledge the authority of Jerusalem to the same extent.' Without doubt our passage suggests a certain change in Paul's attitude towards Jerusalem. We should, however, not overlook that the theme of the 'revelation of Jesus Christ' remains very relevant in 1:13-2:14 and that the
problem of the relationship between Paul and the Jerusalem authorities is subordinated to it.

And, with this, I now proceed to the main thesis of this paper: In Paul’s argumentation in Galatians 1 and 2 there exists a certain relationship between the foundation of the gospel on the ‘revelation of Jesus Christ’ (1:11 et seq) on the one hand, and Paul’s assessment of ‘Jerusalem’ as a criterion of the validity of the gospel on the other hand.

2 EXEGETIC EXPLICATION

We shall now proceed to interpret Paul’s notion of the gospel as revealed truth according to our thesis. A certain affirmation of our interpretation may be expected of Paul’s autobiographical outline, which is to be referred to the fundamental statement in 1:12.

2.1 1:10-12 — the starting-point of argumentation

During a first survey the operative function of εὐαγγελίων within the framework of chapters 1 and 2 will be evident. The noun εὐαγγελίων occurs seven times, and the verb εὐαγγελίζεσθαι five times. In the following chapters of Galatians εὐαγγελίζεσθαι is found once only, in 4:13 (Paul here refers to his first visit to Galatia, during which he preached the gospel to the Galatians en passant, as it were, διὰ ἃσθένειαν τῆς σαρκὸς). Indeed, εὐαγγελίων is a keynote in chapters 1 and 2. It refers to the reason for the conflict that had arisen in the Galatian communities. To the same extent that Paul sees his apostleship questioned in 1:1, he very firmly states in 1:22 et seq that the basis of his apostleship is at stake, that is to say: the gospel! However strongly Paul may have stressed his authority as an apostle in 1 and 2 Corinthians, he now, in Galatia, finds the gospel, as the basis of this very authority, called in question. The gospel preached by Paul is the ‘gospel to the uncircumcised’ (2:7-9). Preaching to the Gentiles, Paul could afford to take a different view of circumcision and law than the so-called ‘Judaizers’ at the ‘council of the apostles’ in Jerusalem. The gospel of Christ is the Magna Charta of freedom from circumcision and law to all the Gentiles (however the Jewish Christians on the side of James might choose to deal with circumcision and law further on) (cf. Kertelge 1984).

In 1:11-12 Paul states that the gospel he has preached to the Galatians, as well as to the Gentiles everywhere is not a gospel adapted to suit men, but is qualified as revealed to him by God himself. When in v12a Paul denies that the authority of the gospel might have originated from men, he only puts forward a variant of his fundamental thesis concerning the divine authority of the gospel as preached by him. He denies that his gospel has its origin in human tradition; it is, however, beyond doubt that he did derive decisive elements of his preaching from early Christian tradition and, insofar, ‘learnt’ from it. This is stated explicitly in 1
Corinthians 15:1-5. With his preaching to the Corinthians Paul enters into the line of tradition. Being a firm factor handed down to him, he quotes this tradition in a typical wording of ‘traditio’: Paul says: παρέδωκα ὑμῖν...ο καὶ παρέλαβον (v3); and previously in v1 et seq: ο καὶ παρελάβετε..., τίνι λόγῳ ἐνηγγέλασάμην. And then he adds the statement concerning the death of Christ for our sins and his resurrection on the third day. This Christological confession is of fundamental importance to Paul. When he asserts in Galatians 1:12 that the gospel which he preaches is independent of men and originating from Jesus Christ, it cannot be reasonably assumed that he has forgotten the statement in 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 with its reference to tradition.3

Rather, in spite of all the references to the tradition handed down to him, Paul claims the authority of an apostle who has been called by Jesus Christ and by God (1:1); and it is exactly this authority which is imparted to the gospel as preached by him. In particular, this applies to the qualification his preaching as the gospel to the Gentiles has necessarily gained. This means: The gospel of Jesus Christ is the gospel of ‘freedom’ from a law that enters into competition with Christ. Thus, in the notion of the ‘gospel of Christ’, the thesis of justification is already put forward implicitly in Galatians 2:16.

Paul therefore does not advocate a double gospel, as Jan Lambrecht4 and before him also Scandinavian scholars, such as Anton Fridrichsen (1947:8ff), seek to infer from Galatians 2:7, namely the ‘gospel to the uncircumcised’, with which he himself has been entrusted, on the one hand, and the ‘gospel to the circumcised’, with which Peter has been entrusted, on the other hand. Rather, both Paul and Peter have been entrusted with one gospel only, which is always the same, though it certainly must be elucidated with respect to the special needs of the Gentiles. This ‘elucidation’ which Paul feels authorised to, then, of course, results in feedback so that, in turn, it will ‘elucidate’ the preaching to the Jews, and more specifically to the Jewish Christians. According to the interpretation in 2:1-10, this is what was discussed by the ‘council of the Apostles’. After all, Paul

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3 H D Betz presents a special excursus on conversion, revelation and tradition in his commentary. Regarding the relationship between revelation and tradition, Betz affirms (1979:65): ‘In Paul’s view, which is of course rejected by his Jewish-Christian opponents..., there is no material conflict between his gospel and the tradition of the church’, although a certain tension with regard to his ‘order to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles’ remains.

4J Lambrecht in his paper presented to a SNTS-seminar group in Dublin in 1989, Church and Churches in Gal 1-2: ‘it strikes the reader that after 1, 6-12 with its stress on the one gospel Paul distinguishes in 2, 7-10 between the two ‘gospels’: to euangelion tês peri­tomês and to euaggelion tês akrobystias, v7, equally between two ‘apostolates’ or missions (v8) and, implicitly, between two ‘graces’ (v9). Schlier (1971:76) takes a different view: ‘the gospel that is preached among them (scilicet the Gentiles)...’, Betz (1979:96): ‘...not Paul’s language’. Cf also Schmithals (1965:47): This ‘does not mean two gospels differing in content ...’, although regarding ‘that the Jerusalem group, in contrast to Paul, clung to the Law.’
is concerned about the one gospel to both Jews and Gentiles, and about the one church comprising both Jews and Gentiles.

2.2 1:13-2:14 — the perspective of Jerusalem
It is clear that Paul attaches his extensive autobiography in 1:13-2:14 as a substantiation to the statement (i.e thesis) of 1:11-12: ἡκούσατε...γάρ. Thus he starts by referring to his pre-Christian life in Judaism. It should be borne in mind that the γάρ-particle with its causal sense refers to the preceding statement about the divine, non-human origin of Paul’s gospel, as G Lyons seems to suggest in his monograph (1985), when he says: ‘The γάρ in 1:13, introduces the autobiographical substantiation of the preceding claims, particularly, those in 1,11-12, which are in turn connected with 1,10 and through it to 1,6-9.’ Furthermore, he pays attention to the meaning of γάρ as a conjunction, as is found three or four times in 1:10-13: ‘It appears that the γάρ in each of its four instances in 1,10-13 conveys a different nuance’ (p.137f), which depends on the particular context of each case. Looking at v13 it is interesting to note that the expression ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ appears immediately here.

At that time Paul already had to deal with ‘Jerusalem’. He had been a witness to the persecution of the ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ, the new community of God. From his own point of view Luke describes in Acts (8:1 and chapter 9) what Paul records autobiographically in Galatians 1:13: Paul has persecuted the ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ in order to destroy it (cf Philippians 3:6). We can reasonably assume that ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ refers to the primitive Christian community in Jerusalem.

As far as this ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ is concerned, Paul’s value judgement is a very positive one. It has received its right from God, although Paul did not realise this at the time. However, this characterisation of the ἐκκλησία in Jerusalem seems to be forgotten in the following verses. In v17 Paul speaks of Jerusalem in a thoroughly Christian way: in Jerusalem there are those who have been ‘apostles before me’. Anyway, in interpreting verses 15-17 we have to take into consideration that Paul does speak of a ‘revelation’ that came to him from God on the way to Damascus. He even emphasises the importance of this revelation by stating that he was thus called to preach the Son of God among the Gentiles (v16). But the real emphasis in this statement falls on the remark that he, Paul, did not go up to the apostles, who were apostles before him. ‘Jerusalem’ and ‘the apostles before me’ are closely linked together here. Jerusalem proves to be the seat of the ‘apostles’. Paul obviously did not make haste to get in touch with them after his conversion. V17b expresses what constitutes the real conclusion of this passage: ‘but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus’. In the whole course of the chapter and also in respect of v18-20 it however becomes clear that the real intention of the text is directed to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is here regarded
as a possible alibi for the Apostle Paul. He did not resort to it, nor need he. This indicates his independence of Jerusalem, as well as the authenticity of his apostleship. Not by the grace of Jerusalem is he an apostle, but by the vocation of Jesus Christ. And that applies to his gospel, too.

Nevertheless, according to 1:18, Paul then did go up to Jerusalem 'to visit Cephas'. Clearly enough, he strives for precision here.

- It was his intention ἵστορησεν κεφαί. His visit only served to get acquainted with Cephas. To be sure, it was not only courtesy that made him visit the apostle 'before him', but also his wish 'to make inquiry', as Dunn observes.

- For 'fifteen days' Paul was with Cephas, and, as far as his purpose was concerned, this was enough. Obviously Paul intended to limit the duration of this meeting.

- In respect of this first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion, it seems quite improbable that Paul would not have seen anyone from the Jerusalem community. However, he does not mention the community at all. Instead, it is 'the apostles' who engage his interest here. He stresses this explicitly by remarking that he saw 'none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother' (v10). It remains uncertain whether, after all, he wants to call James 'one of the apostles' here. Taking into consideration what is said in 1 Corinthians 15:7, we may speak of the possibility, perhaps of a certain probability that Paul reckoned James among the apostles, as Roloff (1965:63ff) and Rohde (1989:67) are inclined to do. According to Galatians 2:9, James was doubtlessly regarded as one of the 'pillars' of the primitive Christian community, and he is even mentioned before Peter here.

This sheds light on the particular view Paul holds with regard to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the seat of the apostles. Jerusalem is the original Christian community. First of all, however, it is the apostles who lend authority to it, especially Cephas. Paul cannot ignore Cephas and, thereby, the eminent importance of the Jerusalem community. In other words the more he stresses the independence of his apostleship and his gospel (1:1 and 1:11-12), the less he can deny that he must achieve a positive relationship with those who were apostles before him.

Fourteen years later Paul comes to Jerusalem as an apostle a second time. As opposed to the first time, he now comes because of a concrete necessity; κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν, he is able to say significantly, attaching a wider meaning to the word ἀποκάλυψις than in 1:12. This time it is precisely the gospel as preached by

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5 Dunn (1982:463) directs attention to the meaning of οὐ προσώπου ὑπεριμπη in 1:16: 'It was not necessary for him (scilicet Paul) to consult with any man about the meaning of his revelation and commissioning; the meaning came in the revelation itself, it came to him independently without human agency, it came to him direct from God.'

6 Dunn (1982:466): '...to draw out the sort of information which had not come to him with the apostle-making gospel-giving revelation three years earlier.' Perhaps this is just a more detailed description of the 'inquiry'. Anyhow, Paul considered it important that it was not he who was questioned.
him that is in question. If his preaching was not approved explicitly on the occasion of his first visit, this time it is. So 2:2: ‘and I laid before them...the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles’. His explanation is: He did not wish it to be found that he had run in vain. Here, now, the scene described becomes transparent to Paul’s relationship with the Galatians. Paul fundamentally agrees with the apostles before him. But this agreement does not imply any dependence; it only serves to protect the ‘truth’ of the gospel as he has preached it, for instance, to the Galatians. This is the truth which Paul firmly upholds in his dispute with the Galatians: there is only one gospel for all men. The difference between the addressees (Jews or Gentiles) does not result in any double truth with regard to the gospel. Of course, certain circumstances might render it necessary to acknowledge — within limits — the religious and cultural indebtedness of the Jewish Christians to the religion of the Mosaic Law. However, this should not be allowed to burden the one gospel and the koinonia between Jews and Gentiles in the church.

It is this fundamental intention which Paul finally tries to support by referring to the so-called incident at Antioch in 2:11-14. The perspective of Jerusalem is maintained here. This is strongly suggested by Cephas on the one hand and by the people who came from James on the other hand. There is, however, sufficient indication that the term ‘Jerusalem’ is a problematic one in Paul’s view. Perhaps we may add somewhat ironically that the problem ‘Jerusalem’ is eventually solved in Paul’s view when he has recourse to the άνω τεροσαλήμι in 4:21-31.

What, then, was Paul’s problem with Jerusalem?

Denoting the Christian Jerusalem of the early stage ‘Jerusalem’ shows a two-fold distinction in Paul’s diction:

a) Jerusalem is the home of the original Christian community and confers a certain status upon it. In Jerusalem Paul searched for the πρὸ ἐμοῦ ἀπὸστολα (1:17). ‘Jerusalem’, therefore, implies a certain precedence of those who were apostles before him, at a time when he was still persecuting the church. According to 1:18 it is particularly Peter whom Paul has in mind. This assessment of Jerusalem is confirmed in chapter 2.

b) In Paul’s view the original Christian community in Jerusalem certainly did not constitute the ‘Garden of Eden’, a sort of ‘paradise on earth’. Rather, it was also the place where he met the ψευδάδελφοι he refers to in 2:4, although he calls their representative function in question here. They were παρείσακτοι, who had slipped in, and did not belong to the genuine stock of the community. Yet, they are dangerous. In this way, ‘Jerusalem’ denotes a certain danger as far as the gospel and its claim to truth are concerned. It is this danger that Paul is concerned about in the present situation of the Galatian communities.
Hence it is clear that an extensive field of problems forms the background of Galatians 1 and 2 and, also, of the whole letter.

The various questions all revolve around the catchword ‘Jerusalem’ and, therefore, once again, though with a difference regarding importance, around the person of Peter. Thus Paul’s autobiographical outline in 1:13-2:14 becomes a ‘statement of accounts’, as far as his relationship with Jerusalem is concerned. Paul explains what he regards as ‘Jerusalem’ and what not. The reconsideration of his past is refreshed now with regard to the part Jerusalem seems to play for the present in the Galatian communities.

Protesting against the accusation that his gospel and apostleship are not legitimate Paul emphasises that both his apostleship and his gospel have been given to him directly by Jesus Christ, by way of divine revelation. He has come to an agreement with those who have been apostles before him and who now approve his mission. Nevertheless, this does not imply any dependence on or subordination to their authority, which Paul, to be sure, does not wish to call in question (2:6). It does, however, imply a common responsibility. Jerusalem has the authority of an ἀπαρχή here, in analogy to the idea of the ‘dough offered as the first fruits’ in Romans 11:16. As far as beginnings should always be regarded as a fundamental orientation, even Paul is in need of some communication with Jerusalem, ‘lest somehow he should be running or had run in vain’ (cf 2:2).

Hence, in Paul’s view, Jerusalem is of limited importance only. The confrontation with Jerusalem into which he has been forced according to 2:1-10, belongs to a wider field; twice, in 2:5 and 2:14, Paul refers significantly to this field by introducing the catchword ἀλήθεια τοῦ εὐαγγελίου.

2.3 The ‘truth of the gospel’ as a criterion
In both passages referred to above the term ‘truth of the gospel’ has a double connotation. In 2:5 the noun ‘truth’ is afforded its own colour by being opposed to the ‘false brethren’ in v4. Paul does not regard these ‘false brethren’ as a thing of the past, on the contrary he urgently warns the Galatians against them in the present time. The truth of the gospel is factually based on its content. It is εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1:7) and has been imparted to him by God through a revelation (cf 1:12 and 1:15f). The substantiation of the truth of the gospel in 2:5 therefore refers to Paul’s thesis in 1:11-12.

Moreover, in 2:14 the same term is related to the conclusion which follows in 2:15-21. The gospel that Paul has defended against Peter at Antioch reveals its truth in the thesis of justification of man through faith in Jesus Christ (v15-16). Here the gospel of Christ, which Paul attributes to a ‘revelation’ in 1:12 is explicated in respect of its content; that is, it is described more precisely as God’s action towards man, by which He, God, surpasses all that man ‘does’ or desires to do. Once again 2:16 refers to the truth of the gospel that is given to man: εἰδότες,
'we know', scilicet: by 'revelation'. The truth of the statement regarding justification by faith does not require a rational deduction from human theological premisses. Rather, it is obvious — from God, testified to by the Scripture which the end of v16 alludes by quoting from Psalm 143:2 which is used, in particular, in chapters 3 and 4 in order to substantiate Paul’s 'Scriptural proofs'.

D Lührmann (1978:25), therefore, is entirely right when he states that the 'aim of the passage' (from 1:11 onward) is to be found in 2:15-21, namely, the 'justification through faith, without the law'. He calls this thesis 'the consequence from the gospel'. We might perhaps more correctly call it the soteriological explication of the Christological kernel of the gospel.

3 THE RELATION BETWEEN REVEALED TRUTH AND HISTORICAL ASCERTAINMENT

Using the term ἀποκάλυψις Paul shows that his gospel reveals its truth directly, not by means of tradition or theological deduction, however important they may be. Thus the addressee gains an insight, that is the insight of faith. The gospel manifests itself to those who accept its truth in obedience to its authority, which after all is the authority of God revealing himself in Jesus Christ. Although the truth of the gospel does not require any other foundation than this ἀποκάλυψις, Paul, in arguing for the integrity and sufficiency of the gospel he preaches, presents a 'foundation' of its own from 1:13 onward, introduced by γὰρ. This 'foundation' uncovers a genus that differs from the ἀποκάλυψις. It is the way of an 'historical' ascertainment Paul follows now. To some extent, however, the question regarding the function of this historical biographical ascertainment within the argumentation after and beside 1:12 (and 1, 15 et seq) is left unanswered. This question proves to be all the more urgent, as Paul is trying to clarify his relation with Jerusalem. What can this clarification actually contribute to the substantiation of the truth of the gospel?

Paul is under suspicion of preaching his 'own' gospel, different from and independent of Jerusalem. As such, he is in fact suspected of proclaiming an insufficient gospel. Now, as before, it is argued, the truths of circumcision and law do guarantee the validity of the promise to Israel.

Paul reacts by appealing to the fact that Jerusalem has approved his missionary preaching and that he is in fundamental agreement with those who were apostles before him. Hence, the kernel of the gospel is Jesus Christ. Compared to him all 'advantages of Israel', such as circumcision or the Mosaic law, are eclipsed.

7 Cf Schlier (1971:44): 'Seine Göttlichkeit eröffnet sich im Blick auf seinen Inhalt nur dem, der es gehorsam auf seine Autorität hin annimmt ...' — Of course, this theological 'security' the Apostle claims with reference to the 'revelation' imparted to him must not be mistaken as a sort of 'fundamentalism', an aspect considered especially by Broer (1991).
They can never be relevant to salvation. De facto Jerusalem does not demand circumcision and acknowledgement of the Law as a requirement for salvation. An agreement has even been reached between him and 'Jerusalem', as represented by James, Peter and John. There has been the handshake of koinonia: 2:9.

This koinonia becomes the expression, the true sign of the one gospel. The one gospel establishes the unity of the church. Avowing the programme of the unity of the church Paul cannot ignore Jerusalem. Hence, 'Jerusalem' becomes an outward sign of the unity of the church, a unity, to be sure, that is very fragile, as revealed by the incident at Antioch related in 2:11-14.

At any rate, this implies that the truth of the gospel can only be maintained if its foundation in Jesus Christ, and in the divine revelation, is safeguarded. It is efficiently safeguarded by those who have assumed the responsibility for the full and authentic preaching of the gospel. According to Acts 15 it is the 'council of the Apostles' together with the Christian community in Jerusalem that has assumed this safeguarding and supporting role. This ecclesiastical 'institution' is recognised in the meeting and the agreement with the apostles, the 'pillars' of Galatians 1 and 2. However important their task may be with regard to the protection of the unity of the gospel and of the church, it should not be overlooked that their task only has the connotation of secondary assistance. It cannot replace the basis of the gospel and the church, which is God himself and his revealed truth. It can only give effect to this truth. It is this Paul strives for.

So, eventually, it becomes clear that the apostles at Jerusalem, and the church derived from them, can only fulfil their task of protection of the truth of the gospel and in favour of the unity of the church founded on this gospel in an appropriate way if they remain under the gospel as the testimony of God's revelation.

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