

“Towards a Communal Reading of Paul: Galatians as a Test Case”

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“What life have you if you have not life together?
There is no life that is not in community,
And no community not lived in praise of God.”¹

Introduction

There is no doubt that American society is deeply individualistic. Modern American individualism has been celebrated by some to be the source of individual freedom, self-development, and dignity.² However, it has increasingly been criticized by sociologists and political scientists who view it as a danger to American society and democracy.³ It has also been accused of hindering American Christians from seeing a communal nature of Christian faith.⁴ It is generally acknowledged that the Enlightenment brought individualism to the western world. Darrel Guder, however, argues that the roots of western individualism go deeper than the Enlightenment itself: “The reductionism of the Christian understanding of salvation... prepares the way for modern individualism”⁵ What he means by the “reductionism” is a narrow

¹ From T. S. Eliot, “Choruses from ‘The Rock,’” in *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1952), 101.

² Steven Lukes, “Types of Individualism,” in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, ed. Philip P. Wiener, vol. 2 (New York: Scribner, 1973), 594-604. It was Alex de Tocqueville’s observations on American life that made American individualism well known (*Democracy in America*, 2 vols., [New York: Knopf, 1966]).

³ See Robert N. Bellah, *et al.*, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985); Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); and Robert Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey: Support Groups and America’s New Quest for Community* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

⁴ See Charles H. Grove, “Paul and American Individualism,” in *Cross-Cultural Paul: Journeys to Others, Journeys to Ourselves* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 68-103.

⁵ “Missional Hermeneutics: The Missional Vocation of the Congregation - And How Scripture Shapes That Calling,” *Mission Focus: Annual Review* 15 (2007): 127-8.

individualistic understanding of salvation: the focus on “my” salvation, how “my” religious needs are met, and finally where “I” shall spend eternity.⁶ When this reductionist soteriology is combined with a powerful consumerism in an American social context, a profoundly individualistic Christian has been produced in our church today.⁷ Thus, in our church an individualistic reading of Scripture is only a natural phenomenon, confirming the reductionist understanding of salvation.

Interestingly, Guder points out that the deterioration of the English language has contributed to this phenomenon; the loss of the distinction between the plural “ye” and the singular “thee” from King James Bible has not helped American readers hear the predominantly plural pronoun “you” in the Bible.⁸ Therefore, whenever the second person “you” is read, the readers simply hear the singular instead of the plural, imagining an individual rather than a community as the audience in Scripture, and consequently perceive the modern recipient as an individual rather than a corporate community. This hinders today’s readers from reading Scripture in its proper context simply because it is difficult to imagine an ancient individualism in the first century, for example.⁹

When it comes to the Pauline writings, an individualistic reading has been fostered by the Reformation’s emphasis on justification by faith as the salvation of the individual believer. Once

⁶ Ibid., 128. See also Philip J. Lee, *Against the Protestant Gnostics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 257-60. Lee argues that this kind of individualistic soteriology is closer to Gnosticism than to historic Christianity.

⁷ See Vincent J. Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2005).

⁸ Guder, “Missional Hermeneutics,” 129.

⁹ Cf. Gary W. Burnett, *Paul and the Salvation of the Individual* (Leiden: Brill, 2001). See also Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, *Portraits of Paul: An Archaeology of Ancient Personality* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996). A helpful table is provided comparing “Western Cultures” and “Ancient Mediterranean Cultures” in 227-31.

the meaning of justification by faith is limited to individual salvation, the communal dimension of the Pauline writings has been minimized, if not completely lost. At the same time, the so-called “Lutheran” reading of Paul, which had dominated the Pauline interpretation for so long, has also been solidified by the individualistic reading of Paul.¹⁰ Therefore, these two factors have come to have a reciprocal relationship to each other, feeding one another. When “justification by faith” is perceived as the center of Paul’s thought in Protestant theology, and its meaning simply the individual believer’s “getting into” the correct relationship with God, it is no wonder the individualistic reading of Paul poses no problem for those who practice historical-critical scholarship, even when they realize such reading could not be justified historically.¹¹ The individualistic reading of Paul has also concentrated almost exclusively on the vertical aspect of justification while the horizontal aspect has been missing. When this aspect is ignored, it is no wonder that a communal reading has not been developed. Therefore, it is revealing to see that although Pauline scholars agree that Paul’s letters should be read in their proper historical context, a communal reading of Paul is difficult to find, and even when one finds it, it is most likely not treated as the central issue in his theology, but as a subsidiary one such as pastoral theology.¹² One wonders, though, what if the *Mitte* in Paul’s theology in his letters is not

¹⁰ See the well-known protest of E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 33-59.

¹¹ Cf. Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 2-8.

¹² I am not saying that the pastoral theology should be a subsidiary theological discipline--I am simply stating current sentiment in academia. Cf. James W. Thompson, *Pastoral Ministry according to Paul: A Biblical Vision* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2006). Thompson’s work is a serious attempt to read Paul communally, avoiding the individualistic reading, from a seasoned NT scholar. I believe that this book should be taken more seriously.

justification by faith, but something else?¹³ What if it is indeed the pastoral concern? It is plainly acknowledged that the majority of Paul's letters were pastoral letters to address the problems that the newly formed Christian communities were encountering. Therefore, it is only natural to see pastoral concerns in the community rather than the individual's theological problems.¹⁴

In this paper, we will attempt a communal reading of Paul's letter to the Galatians. We will treat two passages in the letter to test our reading: 2.11-21 and 4.12-20. We selected these two passages because the first one is Paul's sustained theological argument that includes one of the central passages for the doctrine of justification by faith (2.15-21) and the second quite abruptly appears as Paul's emotional appeal in the middle of the theological argument (3.1-5.12). Rhetorically speaking, the first passage uses *logos*, and the second *ethos* and *pathos*. By examining these two passages closely, we would like to demonstrate that a communal reading of Paul should be practiced and developed for proper exegesis.

The Galatian Crisis

The traditional approaches to the so-called Galatian crisis show what has preoccupied the interpreters for many years: the crisis over individual justification. Therefore, the Galatian crisis that has been diagnosed by the majority of scholars all focused on the issue of individual justification because of their individualistic reading of the letter.¹⁵ It is true that justification by

¹³ Cf. Paul J. Achtemeier, "The Continuing Quest for Coherence in St. Paul: An Experiment in Thought," in *Theology and Ethics in Paul and His Interpreters: Essays in Honor of Victor Paul Furnish* (ed. Eugene H. Lovering, and Jerry L. Sumney; Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 132-145.

¹⁴ Of course, theological problems with which individuals struggle are closely connected to their behavioral problems in the community.

¹⁵ See numerous articles, especially part 3 in Mark Nanos, ed., *The Galatians Debate* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002).

faith is the crucial issue in the letter but it is a mistake to regard it as an individual problem. Once it is perceived as an individual problem, the Galatian crisis has been probed as an individual believer's theological problem. No matter how the crisis is determined, most analyses fail to account for the presence of the so-called ethical section of the letter in 5:13-6:10 and its relationship to the rest of the letter.¹⁶

Now let us take a brief look at the Galatian situation itself. The reconstruction of the Galatian situation unavoidably involves a "mirror-reading"¹⁷ since we don't have any sources from the so-called opponents of Paul (we will call them "the Missionaries" following James Dunn and Richard Hays)¹⁸ and completely depend on what Paul says about them and their messages. What Paul calls a "perversion" of the gospel can be summarized as follows:

- 1) The Missionaries believed that Jesus was Israel's Messiah but demand that the Galatians follow at least some of the law, especially circumcision as the means of entering a covenant relationship with the God of Israel. Thus, their gospel preaches the observance of the law in addition to Christ for justification.
- 2) The reason for the necessity of the Law is that the Torah was "divinely ordained to provide moral order and restrain human fleshly impulses (5:16, 24)."¹⁹ Therefore, without the law, the

¹⁶ John Barclay's survey shows well how the interpreters have struggled with the problem over the years. See his *Obedying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 9-35. I do not agree with the interpreters who arbitrarily divide the letter into the theological and ethical sections. I think the divide is resulted from an individualistic reading. See the complaint of Richard Hays against Hans Betz in regards to his tendency to read "the text through hermeneutical filter that highlights the relation of the human individual subject to God" ("Christology and Ethics in Galatians: The Law of Christ," *CBQ* 49 [1987], 270-71).

¹⁷ John M. G. Barclay, "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case," *JSNT* 31 (1987): 73-93.

¹⁸ James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 9-11; Richard B. Hays, *The Letter to the Galatians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections* (NIB 11; Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 185.

¹⁹ Hays, *Galatians*, 186.

works of the flesh cannot be stopped. In other words, faith in Christ alone is not sufficient to complete their justification.

Simply put, the nature of the perversion from Paul's perspective is the insufficiency of Christ for justification. Therefore, Paul cries out: "...if justification (δικαιοσύνη) comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing" (Gal 2.21).²⁰ At the same time, since the perverted version of the gospel teaches that only the law is able to function as the moral guide so as to provide the power to overcome the works of the flesh, the Galatians came to depend on the law in their community. Paul perceives that this dependency resulted in the breakdown of the newly formed community in Galatia. Thus, when the Galatians turned to the perverted gospel (1.6), believing that Christ should be supplemented by the law, there were consequences in their community life. Much of what Paul describes in chapters 5 and 6 (e.g., 5:15-21) may be real a situation in the Galatian community as a result of following the different gospel. Countering this, Paul argues that it is not the law but the Spirit who provides the power for moral guidance in the community (3.1-5; 5:22-26).

Ultimately, at the heart of what Paul responds to is the Galatians' following of the different gospel, rather than either their theology or the Missionaries' theology. Of course, their theological misunderstanding led to their behavioral problems and therefore Paul's theological argument occupies major portions of the letter. However, the Galatians' behavior in the community should be treated as the main target of Paul's polemic in the letter. There is an

²⁰ Otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from NRSV.

overwhelmingly clear pastoral concern in the letter and it is not really about the individuals but the community.²¹

At the heart of the Galatian crisis is the “the truth of the gospel” (2.5, 14). By denying “the truth of the gospel,” which is for Paul the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, they ultimately undermine the community formation because through the works of the Law, the new community cannot be formed. In other words, they teach a different mode of life, which is exclusive and harmful, so that the community is destroyed.

Galatians 2:11-21 and the Community in Galatia

We will treat two passages mainly to test our communal reading of Galatians (2:11-21 and 4:12-20). The first one, 2:11-21, contains what has been identified as the *propositio* of the letter,²² which forms the important part of Paul’s theological argument. Again, individualistic interpretations abound concerning this passage since this passage is considered as one of the most important passages for the theology of justification by faith.²³ We will expose the shortcomings of these individualistic readings and then explore whether a communal reading can lead to a better understanding of the passage. We will first attempt to put this passage in its literary context by surveying the letter from the beginning.

²¹ Cf. Yon-Gyong Kwon, *Eschatology in Galatians: Rethinking Paul’s Response to the Crisis in Galatia* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 36.

²² Hans D. Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 114. But compare the recent challenge by Scott Shauf, “Galatians 2.20 in Context,” *NTS* 52 (2006): 93-5.

²³ Since Betz explains that the *propositio* in Greco-Roman letters is “extremely concise and consists largely of dogmatic abbreviation, i.e., very short formulaic summaries of doctrines” (ibid.), it is only natural to see that the passage is central for the theology of justification.

Paul begins his letter with a brief prescript (1.1-1.5). Then, surprisingly without the thanksgiving which is customary for the epistolary form,²⁴ he directly refers to the situation in the community, expressing his surprise at the sudden fall from the gospel and pronouncing his judgment on the seducers (1.6-1.10).²⁵ After that, Paul begins a defense of his apostolic authority by emphasizing that his gospel does not derive from human beings but has been received directly from God through a revelation of Jesus Christ (1.11-12). Neither his gospel nor his apostolic authority originates from the Jerusalem church. Before his conversion (1.13-14), Paul had been a zealous Jew, and had had no contact with the apostles in Jerusalem until three years after his conversion, and then he had stayed in Jerusalem for only fourteen days (1.15-20). After that, his missionary activity had been an independent enterprise in Syria and Cilicia far from Jerusalem (1.21-24). But his gospel and his apostolic authority had been recognized by the apostles in the Jerusalem church as the apostle to the Gentiles (2.1-10). This brief survey reveals one striking feature of this section of the letter: Paul's relational approach to the crisis. To begin with, Paul perceives their apostacy as "deserting the one who called" them (1.6). It broke their relationship with God. Also, the perversion of the gospel led to the breakdown of the unity between the Jews and the Gentiles (1.7).²⁶ Paul's insistence on seeking the favor of God is also a relational matter (1.10) as well as the origin of his gospel through a revelation of Jesus Christ (1.11-13). In 1.16, he says that God "was pleased to reveal his Son through (ἐν) me" so that he might preach him

²⁴David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987), 185-6.

²⁵According to Hans Dieter Betz, this forms an *Exordium*, which is an introduction of the letter. It sets out the character of the author and defines the issues being addressed. (*Galatians*, 44-46). Even though I am not completely persuaded by Betz' rhetorical analysis, his theory seems to fit better in chapters 1 and 2 than later (so Wayne A. Meeks, "Review of H.D. Betz, *Galatians*," *JBL* 100 [1981]: 305).

²⁶ This interpretation will be supported by exegesis of 2.11-21 and 4.12-20.

among the Gentiles. Again, this is a relational understanding of his missionary activity. 1.18-2.10 describes his relationship with Cephas and other apostles. To Paul the gospel of Jesus Christ is all about relationship: with God and with other people.

Now let us look at 2.11-21 in detail. In Gal. 2.11-21, Paul ends the defence of his position and makes a transition to his proposition.²⁷ The first part, 2.11-14, gives a very unusual account of a conflict between two apostles: Peter and Paul. Paul does not understand the conflict as an accidental happening. Rather, he considers it a crucial moment in his law-free missions to the Gentiles. As Paul sees the activity of the false brothers in the Jerusalem conference as the threat to “the truth of the gospel” (2:5), he likewise sees the same threat to “the truth of the gospel” (2:14) in Antioch.²⁸ The second part, 2:15-21, commonly understood as the primary source (and the very first one) of the doctrine of “justification by faith,” presents a difficult line of thought to follow. Historically, commentators have attempted to interpret this passage focusing on Paul and Peter, defending one and attacking the other, or defending both.²⁹ But what Paul tried to tell the Galatian people and what they heard was not who was right or wrong. The

²⁷ From *narratio* to *propositio*, according to Betz.

²⁸ Notice the repeated usage of ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ εὐαγγελίου in both verses. I believe that the understanding of this term holds the key to the proper exegesis of 2:11-21.

²⁹For the history of interpretation see Karlfried Froehlich, “Fallibility instead of infallibility?: A Brief History of the Interpretation of Galatians 2:11-14” in *Teaching authority and infallibility*, ed., P. Empie, *et al.* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 259-269; Maurice F. Wiles, *The Divine Apostle: The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles in the Early Church* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1967), 19-25; I. Lönning, “Paulus und Petrus, Gal. 2, 11ff. als Kontrovers-theologische Fundamentalproblem,” *Studia Theologica* 24 (1970): 1-69. It can be summarized that there are mainly three kinds of interpretations : 1) Majority of commentators say that Paul was right and Cephas was wrong (Marcion, Augustine, St. Aquinas, M. Luther, etc.); 2) some commentators think that Cephas was right and Paul was wrong (Tertullian, P. Gaechtner, etc.); 3) Not a little number of commentators insist that both were right and try to rationalize Cephas' behavior theologically (Clement of Alexandria [actually, he insisted that the ‘Cephas’ in Gal. 2 was not the apostle ‘Peter.’], John Chrysostom, Origen, Jerome, Bo Ricke, etc.). One more interpretation can be added from non-Christian view; some insisted that both Paul and Cephas were wrong (Porphyry, Celsus, etc.) to oppose the gospel of Christianity.

main attention should be given on the theological issue and its consequence, inflicted by Cephas' behavior. The answer can only be found in a careful analysis of the reasons behind Paul's attack on one of the three pillars of the Jerusalem church in public.

Galatians 2.11-14

Paul's account of the famous incident at Antioch³⁰ begins with the arrival of Cephas.³¹ When and why did Cephas come to Antioch? We cannot be sure about the purpose of Cephas' visit,³² but it was probably not out of hostility toward Paul as his participation in the table fellowship shows.³³ We are not sure about the time of visit, either, though some commentators agree that it was not long after the decision on circumcision at the Jerusalem Council.³⁴

In any case, Paul opposed Cephas to his face (*κατὰ πρόσωπον*), because "he stood condemned" (*κατεγνωσμένος ἦν*). The verb *καταγινώσω* is a strong word to use, denoting

³⁰Space does not allow us to discuss about this important city. See excellent excurses of Betz, *Galatians*, 104-5, and Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas: Word, 1990), 65-71, for discussion. One thing we are interested in knowing is that the church at Antioch is composed of both Jews and Gentiles.

³¹Betz, *Galatians*, 105, points out that v. 11 is a brief statement of the facts concerning the incident as in other parts of the *narratio*.

³²Paul Achtemeier aptly summarizes possible reasons in three: 1) a courtesy call; 2) stop over on one of his missionary journeys; 3) an attempt to convert Jews in Antioch (*The Quest for Unity in the New Testament Church* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987], 24).

³³G. Ebeling, *The Truth of the Gospel: An Exposition of Galatians* (trans. David Green; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 112.

³⁴J. Fitzmyer, "Galatians," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, et al. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990), 784; Ebeling, *Ibid.*; F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 128, thinks that the council described in Acts 15:6-29 is not the conference of vv. 1-10 (which is earlier) and the conflict between Peter and Paul happened between these two meetings. Also, he sees that the purpose of the decree in Acts was to solve the social problem inflicted by the Antiochene incident. Bruce, however, does not provide the reason why he thinks so.

more than mere ethical or moral wrongdoing, but being “condemned in the sight of God.”³⁵

What in the world caused Paul to pronounce such judgment on one of the “pillars” of the earliest church? Paul goes on to explain the situation of the church at Antioch. No matter why Cephas came to Antioch he was participating in the “table-fellowship” with Gentile believers.³⁶ Paul’s use of *συνήσθην* could be interpreted in various ways. It could refer to “ordinary meals with Gentile believers”³⁷ or the Lord’s supper or both.³⁸ The imperfect tense suggests that Cephas ate with Gentile believers repeatedly and habitually. This “table-fellowship” surely was a shocking practice to the Jews considering their tradition (cf. Acts 10:28; 11:2).³⁹ The practice signifies the actualization of the salvation in Christ who broke down the wall between God and human beings as well as the Jews and the Gentiles. It was an apocalyptic celebration of “the gospel of truth.” Breaking up this fellowship is not only the threat to the gospel but actually the denial of it.⁴⁰

When “certain ones” (*τινας*) came, Cephas behaved in the way that Paul had to confront him publicly. Who are these “certain ones”? Grammatically, the Greek phrase *ἔλθειν τινας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου* could be translated as 1) “certain ones from James came” or 2) “certain ones came

³⁵Ulrich Wilckens, “ὑποκρίνομαι,” *TDNT*, VIII, 568, n. 51.

³⁶The articular *τῶν ἔθνῶν* clearly refers to “Gentile believers” as does *τὰ ἔθνη* of v. 14b (Longenecker, *Galatians*, 73).

³⁷E. deW. Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), 104.

³⁸Bruce, *Galatians*, 129; Longenecker and Betz do not hold a view.

³⁹The “table-fellowship” was not distinctly a Christian practice but in Judaism it also had a significant place (James D. G. Dunn, “The Incident at Antioch [Gal. 2.11-18], *JSNT* 18[1983]: 12). Dunn also contends that the “table-fellowship” was being done at Antioch within the context of Judaism since the earliest Christians believed that they were a sect of Judaism (Ibid., 5). While I agree with him that the self-identity of the early Christians was not so clear, I suspect that the “table-fellowship” was given an entirely new meaning, especially at the church of Antioch where the believers were first called “Christians” (Acts 11.26).

⁴⁰Cf. M. Barth, “The Kerygma of Galatians,” *Int* 21 (1967): 142.

from James.”⁴¹ Using the latter translation, James could be seen as the one who sent these people, possibly with a mission. Using the former translation, it could simply be taken as “the followers of James” or “people around James.”⁴² In the context of this passage, where Cephas and other Jewish Christians withdrew and separated themselves from eating with the Gentiles Christians when they appeared, these people should be the delegation from James himself.⁴³ Two imperfect verbs (ὑπέστειλεν and ἀφώριζεν) are inceptive, denoting the gradual beginning of action. Why did Cephas behave like that? Paul’s explanation is that he was afraid of “the Jews” (τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς).

Who are these τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς? Lightfoot takes the preposition ἐκ as a separation and thus translates it to “converts from Judaism.”⁴⁴ But it is more probable that the phrase should simply mean “the Jews.”⁴⁵ What kind of Jews were they? Bruce thinks that they were the Jewish

⁴¹Cf. BDF §210 (3).

⁴²In English, the difference is not obviously seen (in Korean the distinction is a little easier). Bruce, *Galatians*, 128-129 along with J.B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962; orig. 1865), 112, takes the latter case, while Betz, *Galatians*, 108, takes the former. Burton, *Galatians*, 107, opens the possibility for both (also see his discussion). Longenecker, *Galatians*, 72-73, translates it as “certain men from James” but in his comment changes it to “certain men came from James.” In any case, however, commentators generally agree that these people are some kind of delegation from James. (except Donald Guthrie, *Galatians*, [NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973], 84)

⁴³Achtemeier insists that they brought a message from James. While it is highly possible, there is no solid evidence for that (Achtemeier, *Quest*, 24-5); Dunn also speculates that they demanded that Peter and other Jewish believers show greater loyalty to the Torah (Dunn, “Incident,” 36).

⁴⁴Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 112.

⁴⁵Longenecker, *Galatians*, 73; Burton, *Galatians*, 107-8; Betz, *Galatians*, 109.

militants who viewed the Jews who fraternized with Gentiles traitors.⁴⁶ It could also point to Jews as a whole (non-Christian Jews and Christian Jews) or either one of these two groups. If we translate the phrase as “the circumcision party” (Bruce, Ebeling, Barclay, NRSV, RSV, NIV, etc.) it should refer to Jewish Christians (or non-Christian Jews) who held a conservative view of the circumcision. In any case, τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς probably refers to more than ordinary Jews but the people who insisted on the superiority of Jews or privilege of the circumcision.⁴⁷

Cephas’ behavior induced “the rest of the Jews” (οἱ λοιποὶ Ἰουδαῖοι) to participate in what Paul calls “hypocrisy” (ὑπόκρισις). Οἱ λοιποὶ Ἰουδαῖοι apparently refers to the Jewish Christians at Antioch.⁴⁸ The fact that they followed Cephas does not mean that Cephas had won the ‘victory’ over Paul,⁴⁹ but that the situation at the Antiochene church had become more

⁴⁶Bruce, *Galatians*, 130-1; more detailed explanation is given by Longenecker, *Galatians*, 74-75, by utilizing Robert Jewett’s thesis (“The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation,” *NTS* 17 [1971]: 198-212). This theory is also followed by Dunn (“Incident,” 7-11) but Craig Hill convincingly shows that the theory is not really plausible based on the historical evidence (see Craig C. Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews: Reappraising Division within the Earliest Church* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 130-1). In any case, the whole theory is really sympathetic to Cephas’ behavior (so Betz, *Galatians*, 109). On the same line, Peter Richardson insists that Cephas’ action was to protect his “mission to the Jews” (“Pauline Inconsistency: I Corinthians 9:19-23 and Galatians 2:11-14,” *NTS* 26 [1980]: 360). Even though I agree that we need to find out the motivation of Peter’s action, the main point that Paul wants to say, I believe, is not whether Cephas was wrong or right but how Cephas’ behavior affected ‘the truth of the gospel.’

⁴⁷For a detailed discussion, see W. Schmithals, *Paul and James* (trans. D.M. Barton; SBT 46; London: SCM, 1965), 66-68; J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (trans. F. Clarke; Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1959), 106-9; G. Dix, *Jew and Greek: A Study in the Primitive Church* (London: Dacre, 1953), 43ff.; Bo Reicke, “Der geschichtliche Hintergrund des Apostelkonzils und der Antiochia-Episode, Gal. 2,1-14,” in *Studia Paulina*, J. de Zwaan FS, ed. J.N. Stevenster and W.C. van Unnik (Haarlem: Bohn, 1953), 172-87; H. Lietzmann, *An die Galater*, 4th ed., HNT 10 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1971), 15-16. It can be summarized as following: 1) Non-Christian Jews (Schmithals); 2) Non-Christian Jews who are conservative extremes like Zealots (Bo Reicke); 3) Judaistic Gentile Christians (Munck); 4) Jewish Christians (Lietzmann).

⁴⁸Longenecker, *Galatians*, 75.

⁴⁹Betz, *Galatians*, 109, thinks it was Cephas’ victory that the rest of the Jews followed him in withdrawal from the “table-fellowship.” It is strange of Betz to insist that the rest of the Jews “had simply arrived at the same conclusion as Cephas.” I do not know how he reached this conclusion.

serious.⁵⁰ The compound verb *συνυποκρίνομαι* occurs only once here in the NT but in both classical and Koine Greek it means “join in hypocrisy” or “join in playing the hypocrite.”⁵¹ Betz points to the political connotation of the word and insists that Paul saw the political compromise in Cephas and “the rest of the Jews,” and goes on to say even that Cephas’ behavior was “an act of manipulation” to get “the rest of the Jews” to join him in the withdrawal. But if Paul understood Cephas’ move as a political compromise, he would have said it differently to him. But as the next verse and subsequent section (2.15-21) show, what is at stake is not the political issue, but the theological one.⁵²

What is more shocking to Paul was that “even Barnabas was carried through hypocrisy.” The painful feeling of Paul can be seen in his expression, *καὶ βαρναβᾶς*. Indeed, Barnabas was Paul’s mentor and advocate (cf. Acts 11.25-30 and 9.26-28). Furthermore, he was a co-worker of Paul in his mission to Cyprus and southern Galatia (cf. Acts 13.2-14.26). But Paul uses the verb which has a strong connotation of irrationality, implying that Barnabas was carried away with irrational emotions.⁵³ Either way, the situation at Antioch becomes even more serious. Paul’s use of *ὑποκρίνομαι* and *ὑπόκρισις* is mainly directed towards Peter rather than towards “the rest of

⁵⁰Many scholars agree that Paul did not prevail at Antioch on that day and the incident ended unhappily (Achte-meier, *Quest*, 59; James D. G. Dunn, “The Theology of Galatians,” in *Pauline Theology I: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon*, ed. J. Jouette M. Bassler [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991], 140; Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 126-7).

⁵¹See Longenecker, *Galatians*, 76, for references to Greek literatures.

⁵²I think Betz reads his ideas into the text a little excessively here, since it is plain that what Paul is trying to say is not really political, but theological. His problem seems to be his rigid insistence on the rhetorical analysis of the letter as a whole, that he tries to see Paul’s account only as a self-defence as a part of *Narratio* and thus he feels that Paul’s language is “highly subjective and polemical” (*Galatians*, 110).

⁵³Longenecker, *Galatians*, 76; Betz, *Galatians*, 110. Betz insists that Barnabas was the victim of manipulation of Cephas.

the Jews,” or Barnabas. Peter’s behavior does not appear to be a “tactical hypocrisy,”⁵⁴ nor is he accused of ὑπόκρισις because of inconsistency in his attitude. But what makes Paul use these strong terms is because “they were not walking straight with the truth of the gospel” (2.14). What Paul saw was not a political defeat of his faction but the perilous status of “the truth of the gospel.”

Then, what is ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ εὐαγγελίου? In traditional individualistic interpretations, it is usually described as “the freedom we have in Christ Jesus”⁵⁵ or “the Gospel in its integrity”⁵⁶ or “the truth contained in, and so belonging to, the gospel.”⁵⁷ Paul should have the false gospel that the Missioaries preached in his mind. We really do not know what they preached exactly; but we can be assured of one consequence of the false gospel: the exclusion of the Gentile believers from the table fellowship unless they conform to their teaching. Therefore, in its immediate context, ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ εὐαγγελίου should have a direct implication of the inclusion of the Gentiles into the table fellowship with the Jews.⁵⁸

Now, Paul takes an action to preserve “the truth of the gospel.” Paul says, “If you, being a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how do you compel the Gentiles to become a Jew?” The meaning of the phrase ὑπάχων ἔθνικῶς καὶ οὐχὶ Ἰουδαϊκῶς holds the key to this sentence. The fact that the protasis is constructed in a first class condition shows that it is true. It probably

⁵⁴U. Wilckens, “ὑποκρίνομαι,” 569; Bruce, Burton, Lightfoot, Betz, Longenecker, Dunn, and C.B. Cousar, *Galatians* (Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox, 1982) see Cephas’ behavior in this way in a way or another.

⁵⁵Fitzmyer, “Galatians,” 784.

⁵⁶Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 107.

⁵⁷Burton, *Galatians*, 86; Betz does not even explain what it means. On the use of the phrase on 2:5 he just says, “the expression is peculiar.” (*Galatians*, 92)

⁵⁸Wilckens, *Ibid.*

means that the Jewish Christians, including Cephas, practiced somewhat different lifestyle, especially, the dietary law.⁵⁹ I think “living like a Gentile” symbolically signifies Cephas’ violation of the dietary laws.⁶⁰ The content in the apodosis was not actually done by Cephas, but Paul exposes the implication of the consequence of Cephas’ behavior. The use of third person singular ἀναγκάζεις⁶¹ can be seen as conative referring to the intention or tendency of Cephas’ action.⁶² Ἰουδαίζειν is the crucial term to understand what Paul means here. Dunn shows that to “judaize” could mean for Gentiles to have a high level of social intercourse without assimilating to Jewish customs completely, that is, being circumcised.⁶³ But here in v. 14, it is more likely that Paul uses the verb to mean “to become a Jew” because he is contrasting two

⁵⁹Dunn, “Incident,” 25; E.P. Sanders thinks that Paul exaggerated what Peter had been doing. Since “Paul very often used extreme or hyperbolic language to polarize a situation,” what Paul said about Peter’s behavior is not reliable. This is highly unlikely. He seems to justify his interpretation of the incident (he thinks that Peter’s problem was “too much association” with Gentiles and he withdrew from the ‘table-fellowship’ after the delegation from James warned him about it) by accusing Paul that he exaggerated the situation (E.P. Sanders, “Jewish Association with Gentiles and Galatians 2:11-14,” in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul & John. In Honor of J. Louis Martyn* [ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990], 186-7). Then, if he can’t trust what Paul is saying about the incident, how can he construe other aspects of it? Our only evidence about the incident is what Paul said about it and it is my feeling that the polemical language of Paul does not give us any other choice but to concentrate what he wants to say through the incident rather than the incident itself.

⁶⁰ *Contra* Dunn, “Incident,” 35, and Sanders, “Jewish Association,” 171.

⁶¹Paul uses the same verb in 2.3. Dunn points out that Paul objects “the agreement made in Jerusalem is being set at naught by the de facto compulsion of the Jewish Christians’ behavior in regard to table fellowship at Antioch” (Dunn, “Theology,” 140).

⁶²Longenecker, *Galatians*, 78.

⁶³Dunn, “Incident,” 26-7.

opposite extremes: “living like a Gentile” and “becoming a Jew.”⁶⁴ It should mean to keep the whole Torah and to be circumcised in order to become Jewish converts.⁶⁵

Note that Cephas never meant to urge the Gentile believers to become Jewish converts. Paul does not mean to attack Cephas personally, either. What Paul does here is making a theological judgment on the implied consequence of Cephas’ action. Intentionally or not, consciously or not, Cephas’ withdrawal from the “table-fellowship” is in fact saying to the Gentile believers, “If you keep sharing ‘table-fellowship’ with us, you have to keep the whole Torah and be circumcised and become a Jew!”

Galatians 2.15-21

Gal 2.15-21 has been hailed as the original source for the doctrine of ‘justification by faith.’⁶⁶ This passage should not be isolated to be seen as a theological statement in a vacuum, but should be seen directly interrelated with the preceding incident (2:11-14) and the later argument in 3:1ff. The context in which this passage is found dictates any interpreter to approach it with the situation of Antioch and its relation to “the truth of the gospel.” Once this is lost, the individualistic interpretations go astray and wonder into abstract theological argument about justification. The change of subject is striking: from ‘I’ to ‘we.’ What does Paul mean by

⁶⁴There are ample evidences in Greek writings (see Longenecker, *Galatians*, 78, for references to them) and the preceding discussion in *narratio* (1:11-24) supports this interpretation.

⁶⁵Betz, *Galatians*, 112, translates it as “to live like a Jew” and then explains that it means to become a Jew by keeping the Torah and being circumcised. I think that his translation contradicts his comments. Other commentators except Cousars, *Galatians*, 46f and Longenecker, *Galatians*, 78, translate it as “to live like a Jew.”

⁶⁶For how theologians, beginning from Augustine, have individualized the concept of justification, see K. Stendahl, “The Apostle Paul and the introspective conscience of the West,” *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 78-96 and Barth, “Kerygma,” 131-46.

‘we’ (ὁμεῖς)? If we take v. 15 as a continuing speech which started in v. 14, we should take this to mean Paul and Cephas.⁶⁷ Some interpreters argue that since v. 15 is the beginning of a transition to *propositio*, speaking generally to the Galatians, then ‘we’ should mean “Jewish Christians” including Paul and Cephas.⁶⁸ This tendency among interpreters has resulted in the loss of the context of 2.11-14 and treat 2.15-21 as an abstract theological statement. There is no reason why 2.15ff should be treated separately from the previous verses. The phrase φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι means Jewish by birth. Paul consciously contrasts the difference from the Gentile proselytes who were converted to Judaism and became Jews later in life.⁶⁹ “Sinners of Gentiles” (ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί) seems to be a colloquialism used by Jews to refer to Gentiles.⁷⁰ It probably had a connotation of uncleanness and lawlessness, signifying the disqualification of Gentiles from participating in the “table-fellowship.”⁷¹ Paul’s language here in this verse is evidently to express irony.⁷²

Here Paul sets up front the ‘self-definition’ that Jewish people have in common.⁷³ An adversative conjunction δέ in 2.16 sets the following phrase as an objection or correction of what has been stated previously. That is exactly what Paul is doing in v. 16, “yet we know that a human being is not justified by the works of the law except through the faithfulness of Jesus

⁶⁷Dunn, “Incident,” 55, n.116, thinks that v. 15ff is a continuation of what Paul said to Cephas at Antioch.

⁶⁸Longenecker, *Galatians*, 83; Ebeling, *Truth*, 119.

⁶⁹Dunn makes a distinction of three kinds of Gentiles who were associated with Jews: The proselyte, the resident alien, and the God-fearer (“Incident,” 19-21).

⁷⁰Longenecker, *Ibid.*

⁷¹Dunn, “Incident,” 28. Dunn defines them as “Gentiles who knew the law but whose regard for it was seriously defective in practice” (32); Betz, *Galatians*, 115; cf. K. Rengstorf, “ἁμαρτωλός,” *TDNT*, I, 332-33.

⁷²Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 115.

⁷³Betz, *Galatians*, 115.

Christ” (my translation). The verb δικαιόω is used here three times in this verse all as a passive form (but there are many instances that are used as active: Rom. 4.5; 8.30, 33; Gal. 3.8). It is well known that this word was a legal term in the Greco-Roman world.⁷⁴ Here, Paul employs the legal term to explain the relationship of human beings to God.⁷⁵ Commentators generally agree that Paul also uses the terms according to the Old Testament meaning (right relation with God).⁷⁶ But they differ in the way they understand whether these terms signify “ethical aspects” of believers or a “forensic relationship.” Longenecker, adopting J.A. Ziesler’s thesis⁷⁷ that the terms include both, tries to resolve the problem. But his argument does not really resolve the problem because he does not offer any explanation or implication that his understanding brings in.⁷⁸ We prefer the meaning of legal-forensic implication,⁷⁹ signifying the right relationship with God. And since God only acquits human beings, they are not liberated from their own entanglement in unrighteousness. Also, in the imagery of legal dispute where God is the judge,⁸⁰ it is possible to imagine two parties of a dispute. In his book, Ziesler emphasizes that δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ does not

⁷⁴G. Schrenk, “δικαιοσύνη,” *TDNT*, II, 216.

⁷⁵G. Schrenk, *Ibid.*, 214-18; See also K. Kertelge, “δικαιόω,” *EDNT*, I, 330-33.

⁷⁶See L. E. Keck, *Paul and His Letters* (Proclamation Commentaries, 2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 111-113.

⁷⁷J. A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Inquiry* (SNTSMS 20; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

⁷⁸Longenecker, *Galatians*, 84-5.

⁷⁹So Cousar who says, “one way out of the dilemma was to look again at the legal-forensic context of justification, particularly in light of its OT roots, and to redefine it basically relational terms. If the judge renders a favorable verdict, then all the defendants are placed in a new and right relationship to him. Justification has to do with the determination of the relationship, not with a quality inherent in the judge or in those justified.” (*Galatians*, 60)

⁸⁰ K. Kertelge points out that God is not only “a party to the dispute but also the judge” (“δικαιόω,” 332).

mean possession of it, but *participation in* God's righteousness.⁸¹ Thus, in God's righteousness both Jews and Gentiles are created as one people (6.16: "the Israel of God"; Eph. 2.15: "one new humanity").⁸² Thus, justification has a strong social dimension.⁸³ To put another way, there are both the vertical and horizontal dimensions in the the righteousness of God. We believe that this aspect is very important in the context of our passage. The incident at Antioch is in nature the conflict between Jews and Gentiles. When the relationship of Jews with God is justified, the implication is that their relationship with Gentiles should also be justified. God as the judge pronounces the justification not only between God with people but also between people. Therefore, both 'vertical' and 'horizontal' dimensions are restored in the justification by faith.⁸⁴

The phrase ἐξ ἐργῶν νόμου presents another difficulty.⁸⁵ Dunn, borrowing E.P. Sanders' term, asserts that the phrase "works of the law" is used to describe the Jewish mind-set of "covenantal nomism." Thus, it refers to "the praxis which the law of the covenant laid upon the covenant member."⁸⁶ Dunn rejects the traditional understanding of it ("good works by which individuals try to gain acceptance by God") by arguing that "works of the law" mainly refers

⁸¹ Ziesler, *Righteousness*, 160.

⁸² Barth, "Kerygma," 142.

⁸³ Nils Alstrup Dahl puts it this way: "The Pauline formulation of the doctrine of justification has a clear social relevance; it implies an understanding of what Christian community is, and it provides guidelines to show the members of that community how they ought to relate one another." (*Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977], p. 108.)

⁸⁴ Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *Beginning From Jerusalem* (Christianity in the Making, vol. 2; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 488-9: "Evidently the two dimensions are inextricably interlocked -- the vertical and horizontal, acceptance by God with acceptance of others."

⁸⁵ This is the first time that Paul mentions "the Law." The Galatians should have waited anxiously for Paul to talk about it since the major difference between Paul's teaching and the Teachers lied on it. But Paul "makes them wait" (to borrow Martyn's words) (J. Louis Martyn, "Events in Galatia," in *Pauline Theology I*, 164).

⁸⁶ Dunn, "Theology," 128.

(especially in this verse) to Judaism's "ethnic badges" of circumcision, Sabbath keeping, and dietary restrictions.⁸⁷ Therefore, Dunn argues that "works of the law" indicate "the boundary markers" that separate the Jews and the Gentiles. Yet it is not confined to the markers of ethnic identity: "it is the 'boundary markers' which in the historical setting served to focus the faithful Israelite's commitment to the entire revealed will of God."⁸⁸ Then, the issue here is not an entrance requirement but "the maintenance of covenant status" of Jewish Christians.⁸⁹ Therefore, when Paul says that "a human being is not justified by the works of the law" he is not saying he is against "good works" or even "the law" itself but he argues that "works of the law" cannot provide "what defines and delimits who the people of God are and how they ought to live and behave."⁹⁰ The New Perspective understanding of the phrase "works of the law" has crucially undermined the validity of the individualistic interpretation of the passage like 2.15-21. If the issue is not about an individual's attempt to earn God's favor by observing the law but about who can be defined as the people of God, the focus can now be shifted to community from individual.⁹¹

Since the phrase ἐξ ἔργων νόμου stands clearly as the antithesis of διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, the meaning of ἐξ ἔργων νόμου can be understood better in the light of what διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ signifies. The discussion on πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ has been

⁸⁷ idem, "The New Perspective on Paul," in *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 191-2.

⁸⁸ Don B Garlington, *An Exposition of Galatians: A Reading from the New Perspective* (3rd ed.; Eugene, Ore: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007), 150.

⁸⁹ Dunn, "Theology," 130.

⁹⁰ Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 172.

⁹¹ On this understanding, see N. T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 110-13.

extensive.⁹² In order to determine what it really means we need to examine all seven occurrences in the NT (Rom. 3.22, 26; Gal. 2.20; 3.22; Phil. 3.9 and here twice). It is as impossible here as unnecessary in this paper to do an exhaustive analysis, we will only mention some problems briefly. Traditionally, the genitive has been taken as objective to mean “faith in Jesus Christ.”⁹³ But recently many scholars (especially in North America) take the genitive to be subjective to mean “faith(fulness) of Jesus Christ”⁹⁴ Bruce well represents the traditional way of interpreting the phrase that καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν determines the sense of διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ.⁹⁵ But this is a very strange logic. Why does Paul have to repeat twice on the object of believers’ response to God’s action?⁹⁶ It is more probable that Paul means two different concepts (“faith of believers in Christ” and “faithfulness of Christ”). Furthermore, when we take the genitive as objective, there is a danger of separating Jesus from justification. That is, the justification depends solely on human belief.⁹⁷ In other words, faith can be another kind of work, a human achievement.⁹⁸ Especially in this verse, G.M. Taylor sees the theological problem that “faith in Jesus Christ” could lead the Galatians to substitute the physical entrance requirement (being circumcised) with the mental act of having faith even if Paul succeeds in persuading

⁹² See Hung-Sik Choi, “ΠΙΣΤΙΣ in Galatians 5:5-6: Neglected Evidence for the Faithfulness of Christ,” *JBL* 124 (2005): 468-9, nn. 5 and 6 for the list of relevant works.

⁹³Bruce, Betz, Lightfoot, Burton, Dunn, etc.

⁹⁴Martyn, Longenecker, Hays, Hooker, Williams, Keck, etc.

⁹⁵Bruce, *Galatians*, 131; similarly, Betz, *Galatians*, 117.

⁹⁶Hooker, “ΠΙΣΤΙΣ,” 322; Keck, “Jesus,” 454.

⁹⁷Keck, *ibid.*

⁹⁸Hays, *Faith*, 139.

them!⁹⁹ Also, those who oppose the view seem to think that when we take the genitive as subjective, there is the danger of neglecting the faith of the believers. But M. D. Hooker shows that all the passages which include πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in the NT refer to the faith of the believers as well. Interestingly, she points out that these passages form a pattern of ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν of Rom. 1:17. Therefore, she asserts that “we have a reference both to his faith and to our own” whenever πίστις Χριστοῦ is mentioned.¹⁰⁰

Then, the rendering of “faithfulness of Jesus Christ” seems to speak for Paul’s argument well in this verse that whereas ἐξ ἔργων νόμου denotes the human boundary markers, διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ signifies the divine act of God in the new, eschatological age. The use of ἐὰν μὴ (“except”) by Paul clearly shows that these two concepts are in an antinomical relationship.¹⁰¹

Thus, the next phrase, “καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν,” can be understood as a statement which expresses the objective faith of Jewish believers. The emphatic καὶ (“even”) emphasizes the fact that not only the Gentiles believed in Christ Jesus but also that the Jewish believers (ἡμεῖς) did. Although in 2.15-16 Paul’s use of the pronoun is consistently the first person plural (“we”), a typical individualistic interpretation still understands the meaning of “faithfulness” and “believe” in an individual term. One interpreter argues that with the phrase πίστις Χριστοῦ, Paul points to “eschatological faith as introduced into the world by Christ as a

⁹⁹Taylor, “Function,” 75; see Hays’ succinct summary of the issues (fairly in my judgment) in *Galatians*, 239-40.

¹⁰⁰ Hooker, “ΠΙΣΤΙΣ,” 336.

¹⁰¹ It introduces an exceptive qualification of the entire preceding statement (“a human being is not justified by the works of the law *except...*”)(so Dunn, “Perspective,” 196-197). Grammatically, it could be taken to introduce only the principal part (“a human being is justified *except...*”) (so Burton, *Galatians*, 120-1 and Longenecker, *Galatians*, 83-4 who translate it as “but only”). Cf. BDF §376. But Andrew Das has shown that Paul’s usage is consistently exceptive in his letters (“Another Look at ἐὰν μὴ in Galatians 2:16,” *JBL* 119 [2000]: 529-39).

new possibility of human existence” and therefore by “believing,” Paul points to “the personal act of taking up that mode of personal existence which Christ pioneered.”¹⁰² However, what Paul argues here is not about individuals’ obtaining existential authentic life but the Jews and Gentiles’ justified relationship with God and one another. When the communal dimension is not accounted for, the following verses will be difficult to interpret. The final clause of the sentence, “ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιοθήσεται πᾶσα σάρξ” is Paul's interpretative quotation from Psalm 143:2 (142:2 LXX).¹⁰³ Strictly speaking, this is not just a quotation but a mixture of quotation of content and Paul's own interpretation. Paul seems to show support for his argument from the OT by paraphrasing this verse. But the insertion of ἐξ ἔργων νόμου indicates a different understanding of his from rabbinic Judaism of the law that Paul seems to deny any saving significance to the law.¹⁰⁴ By the changing of ζῶν to σάρξ, Paul stresses the weakness and corruptibility of human beings since σάρξ has a clearly ethical connotation as shown in 4.17-26.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, with the omission ἐνώπιόν μου, Paul seems to add an eschatological significance to the text, which is absent in the original context of Psalm 142. Indeed, Paul emphasizes that since the eschatological age has arrived, the works of the law cannot work but only the faithfulness of Christ works for our justification.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Williams, “*Pistis Christou*,” 444.

¹⁰³ Psalm 142.2 LXX: ὅτι οὐ δικαιοθήσεται ἐνώπιόν σου πᾶς ζῶν; Paul uses a similar quotation in Rom 3.20. Bruce comments, “...for him [Paul] ...this paraphrase of Ps. 143.2 had become a habitual proof-text for the doctrine by faith apart from works of law.” (*Galatians*, 140)

¹⁰⁴ Bruce, *ibid*; see also his references to the Qumran texts.

¹⁰⁵ Thielman, *Plight*, 63.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. J. Louis Martyn, “Apocalyptic Antinomies in Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians,” *NTS* 31 (1985): 410-24.

If Gal 2.15-16 establishes the process of justification by faith, now the following verses delineate the implication of that process in 2.17-21. First, Paul presents a possible objection that either men from James or even the Missionaries could raise against the Jewish Christians who practiced the table fellowship with the Gentiles in Antioch.¹⁰⁷ By eating with the Gentiles, the Jewish Christians become “sinners” and furthermore, making Christ a servant (διάκονος) of sin!¹⁰⁸ Paul’s response is a strong one: “Certainly Not!” (μὴ γένοιτο). The reason for this denial is provided by Paul in verse 18: “For if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor.”¹⁰⁹ The imagery of tearing down and rebuilding strongly points to the Torah as a wall that divides Israel and the Gentiles.¹¹⁰ In Christ, the boundary marker between Jews and the Gentiles is torn down and it is impossible to reerect it. Paul continues with verse 19a where he says, “For I died to the law through the law, that I might live to God.” The γάρ in the beginning of the verse explains why what has been torn down should not be rebuilt. The boundary marker that used to separate the Jews from the Gentiles should not be rebuilt because “I” died to the law!¹¹¹

At this point, we would like to emphasize that the immediate implication of the justification by faith involves not the vertical dimension but the horizontal one. The traditional individualistic reading cannot adequately explain vv. 17-8 with its emphasis on the individual’s vertical justification with God. Also, in 2.18, we should note that Paul changes the pronoun from

¹⁰⁷ Hays, *Galatians*, 241.

¹⁰⁸ Dunn points to the original sense of διάκονος, which is a “table-waiter,” a clear allusion to the incident of table fellowship in Antioch (*Galatians*, 141).

¹⁰⁹ NRSV translates γάρ in v.18 as “but” but it cannot be justified. It actually breaks the train of thought because Paul provides the reason for v.17 in v.18.

¹¹⁰ Hays, *Galatians*, 242.

¹¹¹ Shauf, “Galatians 2.20,” 92.

“we” to “I” which continues through verse 21. Various explanations are given for the reason why this change occurs at this point of Paul’s argument. Hays argues that it is more than a rhetorical tact to soften his tone from his aggressive accusation of Peter in 2.11-14 but he is making “the mental transition from the situation in Antioch to the situation in Galatia”.¹¹² The change, however, is more than a transition of focus in Paul’s mind. Paul now applies the principle of the justification by faith he sets forth in vv. 15-6 with a potential objection denied in v. 17 to a general situation of the Jewish Christians, including himself in vv. 18-21.¹¹³ Further, the emphatic ἐγὼ in 2.19 indicates that Paul begins a personal and intense demonstration of what N. T. Wright calls “the radical change of identity” experienced not only by Paul but all the Jewish Christians in Christ.¹¹⁴ Wright emphasizes that what Paul says in 2.19-20 is more than “private religious experience” but something the Jews who believe in Jesus all go through: “a dying to the old identity defined by Torah (and thus separated from Gentiles) and a rising into their new identity defined by the Messiah himself.”¹¹⁵ It is crucial to note that Paul still stays on the topic of the justification by faith throughout these verses, especially 2.20. Shauf shows that with many exegetical difficulties in 2.17-19a it is not plain to see that these verses concern justification by faith. He convincingly shows that Paul consistently stays with the topic of justification in 2.15-21 with 2.11-14 providing the context from the Antiochene incident.¹¹⁶ I would add also that when

¹¹² Hays, *Galatians*, 242.

¹¹³ Shauf, “Galatians 2.20,” 91.

¹¹⁴ N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (London: SPCK, 2009), 99. See also Scot Mcknight, “The Ego and “I”: Galatians 2:19 in New Perspective,” *Word & World* 20 (2000): 279-80.

¹¹⁵ Wright, *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Shauf, “Galatians 2.20,” 92-3.

justification by faith is understood only in terms of the vertical dimension, 2.17-21 is indeed difficult to be seen as a part of Paul's discussion of the justification issue.

The last sentence in Gal 2.19 forms a somewhat rough parallel to the first one: "I have been crucified with Christ" (Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι). As "I" died to the law through the law (διὰ νόμου) (19a), "I" have also been crucified yet this time it is with Christ (19b). There is a subtle distinction in the parallel, however. The "I" in v.19a can only represent Jewish Christians (because "I" died to the law through the law) while "I" in 19b can include both Jews and Gentiles.¹¹⁷ This distinction is important because the movement of Paul's thought now expands from the Jewish particular to the universal one that includes the Gentile believers. In Paul's exposition of the doctrine of justification by faith, the horizontal dimension is expanded this way, that shows clearly where his emphasis is laid. In Gal 2.19b-20, Michael Gorman argues that Paul now explains the second part of the doctrine of justification by faith--that is, *by faith*-- as participation in the crucifixion of Christ as what he calls "co-crucifixion."¹¹⁸ The "faith" that Gorman refers to is simultaneously the faith of the believers *and* the faithfulness of Christ because those who believe are the ones "who have responded affirmatively to the gospel with faith and thus moved from outside Christ into Christ."¹¹⁹ Therefore, "faith is, for Paul, a death experience, a death *to* the Law... and a death *with* Christ."¹²⁰ Those who participate in the faithful death of Christ now share his faithfulness, which justifies them in him. Furthermore,

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 98.

¹¹⁸ Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 67. His definition of Paul's idea of justification is worth quoting here: "the establishment or restoration of right covenantal relations--**fidelity** to God and **love** for neighbor--with the certain **hope** of acquittal/vindication on the day of judgment" (ibid., 53; his emphasis).

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid. Emphasis his.

participation in Christ's crucifixion inevitably entails "life," the antithesis of death, in the life that the "I" experiences in justification. This life is to God and Christ who lives within ("... that I might live to God" [19a] and "... Christ who lives in me" [20b]). If this is beyond some "private religious experience," what can it be? Since justification is connected to the resurrection of the dead by Paul, the missing link between death and new life is found in the resurrection.¹²¹ Thus, "[j]ustification by faith means resurrection from the dead; justifying faith is inherently both participatory and transformative."¹²² This is a significant observation -- if justification is connected to the resurrection of the dead (plural in Greek), it cannot be considered as an individual phenomenon! By participating in Christ's death, the believers, Jews and Gentiles, are connected to God's eschatological community that will be raised from the dead.¹²³ It is clear that Paul's idea of justification is not individual but communal.

As Paul continues in 2.20, he says, "... and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faithfulness of the Son of God (ἐν πίστει... τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ), who loved me and gave himself for me." "I"'s experience of crucifixion with Christ is explicated in the last phrase, "the faithfulness of the Son of God" who loved and gave himself (παραδόντος ἑαυτὸν) for "I." This is what he means by "it is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me" in the present life. He now has a different mode of life, imitating the pattern of life that the Son of God showed in his love and sacrifice on behalf of others. Earlier in his letter Paul testifies that God was pleased "to reveal his Son in me (ἐν ἐμοί)" so that Paul might preach him among the Gentiles (1:16). The ἐν here is instrumental so that it can even be translated as "through me," through Paul's life, the life

¹²¹ Ibid., 67-8.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ See Daniel G. Powers, *Salvation Through Participation: An Examination of the Notion of the Believers' Corporate Unity with Christ in Early Christian Soteriology* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 119-25.

in conformity to the death of Jesus. The same expression ἐν ἐμοί in 2:20 then means Christ lives in the “activity” of Paul the apostle.¹²⁴ As Christ loved and gave himself for Paul, Paul confesses that he now lives his life, in loving and giving his life on behalf of others.

Gal 2.21 is the conclusion that wraps up what Paul argues in 2.11ff: “I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification (δικαιοσύνη) comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.” This clarifies the source of justification -- not the law but Christ’s death. If Gentiles can only be justified by the works of the law, the death of Christ was pointless. In fact, it would nullify the grace of God, the gift that is found in the death of Christ.¹²⁵ What Christ achieved on the cross was the breakdown of the barrier that separated Jews and Gentiles and create one people of God without distinction in him, while the law was powerless for such a task. The Son of God gave himself as a gift, which Paul cannot nullify or set aside (ἀθετῶ) as if for nothing. The old identity marker for the people of God, the works of the law, is void now because of the faithful death of Christ. Those who participate in that death cannot return to the old habit of separating the Jews and Gentiles in Christ.

Gal 4.12-20 and the Community in Galatia

Now let us turn to Gal 4.12-20, in which Paul uses the first imperative in the letter (“Brothers, become as I am”). There have been debates among scholars where Paul’s ethical section really begins since 5:1-12 also begins with the imperative. The Bultmannian division

¹²⁴ Richard Hays, “Christology and Ethics in Galatians: The Law of Christ,” *CBQ* 49 (1987): 281; John M. G. Barclay, “Paul’s Story: Theology as Testimony,” in *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (ed. Bruce Longenecker; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 141; Martinus C. de Boer, “Paul, Theologian of God’s Apocalypse,” *Int* 56 (2002): 32; David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul’s Ethics* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 229.

¹²⁵ For Paul’s opponents, it was not the death of Christ but the Law. See J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 59-60.

between the indicative and the imperative has driven such debates and to complicate the matter further, scholars have not been able to find concrete connections between the theological section and the ethical section of the letter. I perceive that 4:12-20 and 5:1-12 function as what Greco-Roman rhetoricians called *transitus*¹²⁶ or *transitio*,¹²⁷ connecting Paul's arguments from 1:10-4:11 to the sustained exhortation in 5:13-6:11.¹²⁸ Paul's rhetorical strategy is such that by reminding the Galatians of the original encounters with Paul's message (4:12-20) and their gaining of the freedom in Christ (5:1, 13), he appeals to them to return to their former convictions and complete their journey with the gospel.¹²⁹ Then, the so-called ethical sections of the letter should not be regarded as an appendix at the end of the theological section but as an integral portion of the letter, having deeper connections with the previous chapters.¹³⁰

When this is not seen, many scholars express uneasiness of the sudden appearance of the passionate and personal charge of Paul in the middle of the sustained profound theological argument.¹³¹ I also think that the concentration on the individualized doctrine of justification has caused such embarrassment among scholars. Once again, however, when we approach the justification issue from dual focuses of the vertical and horizontal dimensions with community in mind, this section can be seen as a natural progression of Paul's argument concerning the

¹²⁶ Quint. *Inst.* 4.1.77. Quintilian also use the term *transgressio* in 4.1.78.

¹²⁷ *Rhet. Her.* 4.26.35.

¹²⁸ James Thompson, *Pastoral Ministry According to Paul: A Biblical Vision* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 67.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹³⁰ Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, *passim*.

¹³¹ Burton, *Galatians*, 235, thinks that Paul here dropped his argument and begins emotional "begging" the Galatians. H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 208, charges that Paul's train of thought is "erratic."

Galatian crisis. The exclusive behavior of the Galatian believers was the major concern that Paul now appeals to them from his personal experience in the past.

Galatians 4.12-20 in Context

In Gal 4.8-11, Paul reminds them of their former situation when they did not know God: they were enslaved to “the elemental spirits.” When they had received Paul and his message, however, they became a different people, welcoming him as “an angel of God, as Christ Jesus” (4.14), although they could have regarded Paul in his physical ailment as a demonically possessed man.¹³² In fact, Paul says that they would have been willing to tear out their own eyes and give to him (4.15). The gospel of God had made a transformative change in them that they had become “self-giving” and inclusive in the fashion of the Son of God (2.20) as well as Paul himself (1.16). Ironically, this is exactly what Paul exhorts them to recover among them when he says “through love become slaves to one another” (5.13) and “[b]ear one another’s burdens” (6.2).¹³³ The Missionaries’ gospel of the works of the law turned them into the exclusive, barrier erecting people who would exclude the Gentiles who did not follow the Torah requirements. In 4.16, Paul laments his situation: “Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?” The “truth” that Paul refers to here is without doubt “the truth of the gospel” (2.5, 14) for which he argued in chapter 2 vehemently: the unity of the Jews and Gentiles as the people of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.¹³⁴ Paul argues that the Missionaries’ true

¹³² H. Schlier, “ἐκπτύω” *TDNT* II, 448-9.

¹³³ See Bruce W. Longenecker, “‘Until Christ Is Formed in You’: Suprahuman Forces and Moral Character in Galatians,” *CBQ* 61 (1999): 104, who puts well: “In Paul’s view, this posture of responsible self-giving and loving service to others should be one of the defining marks of the Christian community enlivened by the Spirit of the Son of God.”

¹³⁴ Cf. Dunn’s description: “God’s blessing was open to the Gentile as Gentile” (*Galatians*, 237).

motivation to teach another gospel is actually to “exclude” (ἐκκλεῖσαι) the Galatians because re-erecting the wall of Torah barriers between the Jews and the Gentiles eventually shut the Gentiles out from the eschatological community of God. This description has a strong connection to the incident at Antioch from chapter 2. When Peter and others withdrew themselves from table-fellowship “they effectively excluded the Christian Gentiles from the one covenant community (2.11-14).”¹³⁵ In this context, Paul now directly appeals to the Galatians in 4.19.

Galatians 4.19 and the Formation of Community

Gal 4.19 itself poses a considerable difficulty for any interpreter. The imagery Paul uses here is unusual, one in which Paul describes himself as a mother who is experiencing the pain of child-birth. However, Paul had already given birth to them because he is still calling them his “children” (τέκνα). From 4.12ff, Paul reminds the Galatians that he is the founder of the community. Now that he is going through a birth-pangs “again” (πάλιν), should we suppose that the original birth was in vain because they turned to “another gospel”? There are two possibilities here. 1) they had never been born into new life in Christ or 2) they were in the process of new birth but it was not complete.¹³⁶ Since Paul already calls them his children, it is not possible to see that Paul believed that their new birth had been in complete vain. For Paul, the process of spiritual birth is “long-drawn-out” affair (Dunn’s phrase),¹³⁷ because the process of salvation for him is “a life-long process of ‘transformation.’”¹³⁸ 2 Cor 3:18 illustrates this point well: “we are

¹³⁵ Dunn, *Galatians*, 238.

¹³⁶ Hays, *Galatians*, 296.

¹³⁷ Dunn, *Galatians*, 240.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

being transformed (μεταμορφούμεθα) into his likeness from one degree of glory to another.” The Galatian community was in the extended birth process until the Missionaries came in and it was in danger of being aborted.¹³⁹ But Paul intervened and was laboring painfully “again” to put the process back in motion.

It was Beverly Gaventa who shows that the verb ὠδίνω is used in metaphors in situations of agony or pain in LXX, yet it “never refers to to the mere *fact* of a birth, but always to the accompanying anguish.”¹⁴⁰ Also, the verb is used not in the situation of an individual but in the contexts of forming the new community, as the formation process is compared to a mother giving birth to new life in Qumran literature (1 QH 3.7-10).¹⁴¹ The formation of new community is as difficult as a mother giving birth to a baby! This is exactly what Paul experiences again (!) with the Galatians. Further, Gaventa argues that Paul sees his experience as part of “the anguish of the whole created order as it awaits the fulfillment of God’s action in Jesus Christ” because his struggle reflects the cosmic travail at the turn of the ages.¹⁴² The cosmic struggle between the ages (the present evil age vs the age to come)¹⁴³ pulls and pushes the Galatians who are in the middle of the birth process in Christ. Paul is travailing again for the completion of their birth into the new age like a mother.

¹³⁹ Cf. Susan Eastman G., *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue: Language and Theology in Galatians* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2007), 97n.22.

¹⁴⁰ Beverly Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 32-3.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁴² Hays, *Galatians*, 296.

¹⁴³ See Eastman, *Mother Tongue*, 97-8.

Then, it is natural for us to expect for Paul to say something like “until you are born anew in Christ.”¹⁴⁴ But what Paul says is “until Christ is formed in you.” What does Paul mean by the expression? There have been numerous suggestions but we can consider only a few. It has been suggested that it means “the spiritual maturation of the Galatians” (Burton), “moral formation” (Lietzmann), or “the formation of the right image or understanding of Christ,” thus Christological formation (Hermann and Müssner). These suggestions have some merit, but in the end they are not satisfactory because they all stem from the individualistic understanding of “the formation of Christ.” Sam Williams points out that the plural “you” dominates in 4.12-20, occurring twenty-three times in verbal and pronominal forms.¹⁴⁵ It is difficult to imagine that Paul has in mind the individual indwelling of Christ with the expression ἐν ὑμῖν, yet some commentators still cling to the individualistic interpretation. Let us consider Ben Witherington’s commentary as an example. Witherington acknowledges that Paul has both individuals and a Christian community in his mind here but he insists that the emphasis is on the individual’s formation.¹⁴⁶ Three reasons are given: 1) it “comports” better with Gal 2.20¹⁴⁷ and with “the call to imitation which requires an individual response;” 2) the “apostasy” that Paul deals with is also an individual matter; 3) Since Paul is not addressing one but several assemblies in Galatia, the audience would not assume the formation of Christ in “one particular unified community.”¹⁴⁸

We may respond in the following. First, as we saw already, what Paul says in Gal 2.20 actually “comports” better with a communitarian understanding of formation of Christ, rather

¹⁴⁴ Hays, *Galatians*, 296.

¹⁴⁵ Sam Williams, *Galatians* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 119.

¹⁴⁶ Witherington, *Grace*, 315-6.

¹⁴⁷ The commentary says 1.20, a clear typological error.

¹⁴⁸ Witherington, *Grace*, 316.

than an individualistic one. The life that Paul lives now in Christ is the life for others, giving himself on behalf of others because of the love and sacrifice that he was shown by Christ. This is what he means when says “become as I am, for I have become as you are” in 4.12. Paul has become like a Gentile “as one without the law,” so he now asks them to be like him as he has followed Christ in his self-sacrifice to become like them.¹⁴⁹ As Paul followed the pattern of self-giving life that was shown to him by Christ, he wants the Galatians to follow in the same pattern to have Christ formed among them. The irony here is that when Paul first preached the gospel to them and thus founded the community in Christ, they showed this pattern of self-giving for Paul (4:13-15)! When they departed from Paul’s gospel, they have also abandoned the truth of the gospel by following the gospel of the works of the law that re-erects a wall between Jews and Gentiles. In 4.19, then, the formation of Christ among Galatians should best be understood as the formation of mode of life imitating what Christ did for them. Second, the “apostasy” that Paul concerns among the Galatians is not simply a doctrinal matter for the individual but more relational matter in the Galatian community as many verses in the letter show. For example, 5:15 states “If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.” Then, Paul proceeds to show that when the Galatians depart from the gospel of Christ and turn to another gospel, the works of the flesh dominate their community (5:19-21). We don’t have space here to analyze the list of vices that Paul had here but they are predominantly relational problems in the community. In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit Paul lists is again powerfully relational (5:22-23), which becomes clear by how Paul concludes the section in 5:26: “Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” The “apostasy” that

¹⁴⁹ Horrell, *Solidarity*, 229-30; Hays, “Christology,” 281, cites Phil 3.7-8 as evidence that Paul regards becoming one like a Gentile as a loss or a sacrificial action.

Paul had to counter was not really an individual problem but the community's problem! The third reason provided by Witherington is the weakest one. I don't know why Witherington thinks it is not possible for the believers in Galatia to be united in Christ among several congregations even if they were separated in different locations. Christ can live in the community just as he lives in Paul; just as Paul lives by the faithfulness of Christ who loved and gave himself for Paul, the believers in Galatia can live their lives by loving and giving themselves on behalf of others. Through Paul's apocalyptic gospel, Christ can be formed among the Galatians, in the pattern of relationship between Paul and Christ, Paul and the Galatians (at least initially), and now between the Galatian believers, "characterized by the sacrificial, proactive and boundary-crossing love of" Christ.¹⁵⁰

If this kind of community formation cannot be accomplished by humans in Paul's thinking, then the unspecified subject of $\mu\omicron\rho\phi\omega\theta\eta\tilde{\nu}$ should be God as Williams notes: "It is rather *God* who is doing the 'forming,' the One who sent his son in the first place (4:6)."¹⁵¹ "[t]he formation of Christ occurs as a gift, not as an achievement."¹⁵²

But what is the content of this formation? What does Paul want to see among Galatians as the form of Christ in their lives? By using a social-scientific method, Philip Esler shows that throughout Galatians, Paul establishes a group identity for the Galatians as the adult children of Abraham (3:6-26), who can now address God as Father (4:1-6), and as the children of the free woman, Sarah (4:21-31).¹⁵³ The corporate identity of the Galatians was challenged by the

¹⁵⁰ Eastman, *Mother Tongue*, 126.

¹⁵¹ Williams, *Galatians*, 123.

¹⁵² Gaventa, *Our Mother*, 37.

¹⁵³ Philip Esler, "Group Boundaries and Intergroup Conflict in Galatians: A New Reading of Galatians 5:13-6:10," in *Ethnicity and the Bible* (M.G. Brett, ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 228; see also Thompson, *Pastoral Ministry*, 65-6.

Missionaries who taught that they needed to fulfill the Torah requirement on top of their faith in Christ. What Paul is doing in this letter is to reassure the Galatians that the Jewish boundary marker is not needed in order to be children of God, because they can already call God “Abba! Father” with His son (4:6).¹⁵⁴ The Galatian believers were on the verge of giving up this new identity by accepting the Torah-observing gospel of the Missionaries but Paul’s letter is attempting to revert the process and complete it by forming Christ among them. The verb μορφόω occurs here only in Paul’s letters but related verbs μεταμορφόω (Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18) and συμμορφίζω (Phil 3:10) help us to understand how Paul uses the concept of “formation” in his thought. In 2 Cor 3:18, Paul connects transformation of the community of believers to the likeness of Christ with the result that there is “a tight connection between Christ’s form and the corporate life of the church of God.”¹⁵⁵ In Phil 3:10, Paul identifies the form of Christ as his suffering and death. And finally, in Rom 12:2, Paul specifies the transformation as the opposite of “being conformed to this age,” the present evil age from which the Lord Jesus Christ delivered the Galatians by giving himself for their sins. Considering these verses together, the formation of Christ in Gal 4.19 can be understood as the conformation to the sacrificial death of Christ as the corporate body of Christ, having the new pattern of life demonstrated by Christ in his faithfulness.¹⁵⁶

Conclusions

Paul’s letter to the Galatians was his urgent response to the situation in the churches in Galatia. In Paul’s view, they were in crisis, on the verge of being cut off from Christ, falling

¹⁵⁴ Thompson, *Pastoral Ministry*, 66.

¹⁵⁵ Martyn, *Galatians*, 430.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Martyn, *Galatians*, 431.

away from grace (5.4). The root cause of this crisis is the Galatians' attempt to "be justified by the law" (5.4). As a result, they were prevented from "obeying the truth" (5.7). In the typical individualistic interpretations, the crisis is understood as the individual's problem of being justified apart from Christ but as we have seen, the "truth" for Paul is "the truth of the gospel" which is the unity of the Jews and Gentiles as the people of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. Therefore, this crisis was not an individual theological crisis but a communal one because what the Galatian churches were going through was the breakdown of the communal life once they were "cut off from Christ" and "have fallen away from grace." In Paul's view, when the Galatians wanted to be justified by the law, they pursued a different mode of life from the one that Christ showed in his death (2.19-20): a life of faith and love. Paul asserts: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision the only thing that counts is faith working through love" (5.6).¹⁵⁷ The pattern of "faith and love" that Christ showed them should be the pattern of the Galatian lifestyle in their community but pursuing the law as the means of justification prevented them from obeying the truth of the gospel. To Paul, the central issue is not circumcision or uncircumcision *per se*, but what entails by following the pattern of making the law the means of obtaining justification. It is not congruent with the faithfulness of Christ shown in his sacrificial "self-giving" on behalf of not only Jews but Gentiles. In this sense, those who pursue the law for the justification cut themselves from Christ.

We have seen that Paul's argument in Gal 2.11-21 makes clear that the exclusion of Gentile believers from the table fellowship was the denial of the truth of the gospel. It had been compromised by Peter and other Jewish Christians with various excuses, but to Paul it was inconceivable to go back to the old age. The old age was dominated by the law, but with the

¹⁵⁷ Hung-Sik Choi, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ," 479-90, rightly argues that both πίστις in 5.5-6 refers to the "faithfulness of Christ."

arrival of the new age, the eschatological age, believing in what God had done through Christ's faithful death on the cross is the only way to set things right with God -- both vertically and horizontally. If there is another way, then surely "Christ died for nothing" (2.21). Surely, there is no place for the works of the law in the new age. At the same time, in the new age, anyone in Christ can join the apocalyptic celebration, the table-fellowship. Exclusion of Gentile believers with any reason is a direct denial of justification that God established through the faithfulness of Christ. Paul sees that, through the justification, God declares, "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (3.28). The central issue in the incident at Antioch is whether this truth can be sustained or not. Inclusion of Gentile believers into the table fellowship is the heart of the matter. That is the praxis of the truth of the gospel.

An individualized form of "the doctrine of justification" has no place for communal relevance in it. But the context of 2.11-21 inevitably demands us to see the communal dimension; the justification that God establishes cannot be taken only as an individual remedy for personal sins but as a message for the community where the relationship is to be restored. If Christ makes justification available to all, he makes it available without any other requirement but believing. Thus, God opens the way for all to participate in his righteousness through the faithfulness of Christ. In δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ Gentiles and Jews are created as one new humanity, forming a new community. When this truth, the truth of the gospel, was endangered, Paul stood up for its defense in Antioch and now in Galatia.

What we have seen in these passages is a paradigm shift in one's social relationship, which holds the key to connecting Paul's so-called theological section to the ethical section. The wrong theology of justification (justified by the works of the law) leads one to nullify the grace

of God (2.16, 21), leading to the destruction of community, illustrated in various parts of the letter (5.15; 19-21; 6.3, 7, 12-13). From Paul's point of view, the law-observant gospel that the Missionaries preached brought "conflict and disunity" within the Galatian community (5.15),¹⁵⁸ not simply because it was antithetical to the gospel they had accepted earlier but the theology behind the justification by works of the law presupposes a different paradigm of life, still belonging to the present evil age of old cosmos, signified by the flesh, the opposite of the Spirit, which is the sign of the new age. This old pattern of life does not have power to overcome the desire of the flesh whose works are evidently anti-social and immoral behaviors (5.19-21) that tear apart the community because of its self-seeking and exclusive nature. In contrast, the right theology of justification (justified by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ) leads one to be conformed with Christ in his death ("I have been crucified with Christ"; 2.16-20) resulting in following the pattern of Christ's life by giving of oneself up for the sake of others in love (1.4; 2.20). What Paul wants to see in the lives of the Galatian believers is this formation in their community. With the power of the Spirit they would use their freedom in Christ to become slaves of one another (5.13), to bear one another's burden (6.2), to bear the fruit of the Spirit (5.22-23), to complete the law of Christ (6.2). Therefore, they are able to fulfill the whole law, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (5.14). The law of Christ, which summarizes the pattern of loving and self-giving life of Jesus Christ,¹⁵⁹ will be enacted within the community where Christ is formed as a living entity.

¹⁵⁸ Hays, "Christology," 289.

¹⁵⁹ See Hays, "Christology," 289-30.

As an apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul is convinced that “his own life manifested a conformity to the normative pattern of Christ’s obedient self-sacrifice.”¹⁶⁰ With this conviction, Paul goes through self-sacrifice again because he believed that the Galatians’ salvation was in danger of being lost and that the recovery of their salvation hinged on the formation of Christ in the community, which should be demonstrated by fulfilling the “law of Christ” among them (6.2). Therefore, the formation of Christ for which Paul experiences the pain of childbirth should be demonstrated in their social relations in the community, following Christ’s obedient self-sacrifice. Furthermore, Paul’s language of birth-pangs indicates that this new community in Christ is really God’s eschatological “new creation” in which old cultural boundaries and exclusivity are overcome by the work of Christ on the cross.¹⁶¹ The new human community grounded in love and self-sacrifice becomes a reality when the life-pattern of Christ is manifested in the lives of the community members. Paul obviously does not mind suffering the pain of childbirth again for the formation of such community, for Paul confesses that he lives his life by the faithfulness of the Son of God who loved him and gave himself for him.

It is evident that the individualistic approach to the letter does not adequately account for the thrust of Paul’s argument in the letter, especially the theological questions of justification and community formation. Paul’s letters were written so that they were read communally. Otherwise, it would be impossible to understand his argument properly. Galatians is no exception.

I often wonder what if the Reformers like Luther and Calvin emphasized on the horizontal dimension of the justification as well as the vertical one. What kind of world could we have since the Reformation? Could there be less racism, bigotry, and more social justice in the

¹⁶⁰ Hays, “Christology,” 281.

¹⁶¹ Hays, *Galatians*, 298.

western world? Paul's theology of justification in Galatians powerfully puts forth both dimensions without discount. Yet individualistic interpretations have not paid proper attention to the horizontal dimension so that later chapters like 5 and 6 may not be well connected with earlier chapters. The social and communal relevance of the justification by faith cannot be relegated as a side issue, secondarily of importance to the primary importance of individual salvation by faith.¹⁶² Surveying the history of Asian Americans in America, Ronald Takaki describes them as "strangers from a different shore"¹⁶³ who have had to fight against European ethnocentric exclusivism since their arrival in 1849 (the Chinese workers during the California gold rush).¹⁶⁴ Takaki points out it actually predated the arrival of most "Jewish, Italian, Hungarian and Polish" immigrations.¹⁶⁵ Yet Asian Americans have been excluded from the so-called "mainstream" American society and have been forced to remain strangers in America. Paul's argument in Galatians concerning justification and community formation defies such discrimination and exclusionism. Takaki envisions a future of America where Asian Americans will not be "viewed and treated not as 'strangers,' but as Americans 'from a different shore.'"¹⁶⁶ Paul in Galatians envisioned a community where there is no ethnic boundary that prohibits the unity between Jews and Gentiles in Christ who "loved and gave himself up" for both of them.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² No matter who may have written it, I consider Ephesians as the best summary of Paul's theology, especially, justification. Ephesians 2.1-22 evenly emphasizes both dimensions so eloquently: 2.1-10 (vertical) and 2.11-22 (horizontal).

¹⁶³ Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Updated and Revised Edition ed.; New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1998).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 31ff.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, xii.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 509.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. John Zizioulas, "The Church As Communion," *SVTQ* 38 (1994): 6, who writes, "...we must stop thinking of Christ in individualistic terms and understand Him as a 'corporate person,' an inclusive being. The 'head' without the 'body' is inconceivable."

We are still being urged to walk straight with “the truth of the gospel” as followers of this Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ cannot be individualized selfishly but be believed and practiced from the perspective of community. The justification of God is given to everyone who ceases to hope to save him/herself by his/her own deed of making boundary to exclude others but trust in the divine deed powerfully manifested through the faithful death of Jesus Christ. And in this justification everyone is invited to join in the fellowship where no one is excluded and all become one in Christ.