Acta Theologica
2013 Suppl 17: 156-171
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/actat.v32i2S.10
ISSN 1015-8758

<http://www.ufs.ac.za/ActaTheologica>

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DISCERNMENT IN THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

ABSTRACT

Although discernment is not the primary focus of the Letter to the Galatians, a few references to this issue are found in the letter. These references are the focus of this study. After a brief overview of some approaches to discernment, three core elements of discernment are identified, namely reflection, choice and one's relationship to God. Taking these elements as a point of departure, references to discernment in the following passages in the letter are investigated: 2:1-10; 2:11-21; 3:1-5 and 5:12-6:10.

When one wishes to determine what the New Testament has to say on the subject of discernment, the Letter to the Galatians is perhaps not the logical place to begin. After all, is it not "red-hot rhetoric"? (Cosby 2002) Perhaps the section on the fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh in Galatians 5 would qualify for such an investigation? And then there is the singular occurrence of the verb δοκιμαζέιν in the letter, namely in Galatians 6:4. But is this all? Does the letter contain anything else that can contribute to our understanding of discernment? This is the issue that will receive attention in this study.

First of all, a very basic question should be considered, namely that of what is meant by the concept of discernment. A cursory perusal of the literature in this regard soon brings to light that there is no agreement among scholars as to what discernment entails. As examples, the following may be cited:

Kees Waaijman (2002:484) explains discernment as follows:

> *Diakrisis* is the process of assembling and sorting out knowledge with respect to the way toward God. It tests the end and the means and creates a critical center. With a contemplative eye it looks at a

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Produced by SUN MeDIA Bloemfontein

> person's life journey and envisions its perfection… *Diakrisis* is the critical-reflective moment of transformation in God.

Elizabeth Liebert (2008a:341)[1] understands it as follows:

> By the term 'discernment', I mean making a discriminating choice between two or more good options, seeking in a spirit of faith the better option for this moment, and moving toward the call of God as it comes to us in concrete situations of life. Discernment is a gift of God and simultaneously a habit of faith; although all is grace, there is also, in the mysterious economy of God's plan, a crucial role for human action. We choose to notice where God is at work, choose to believe in a larger plan than we can grasp at the moment, choose to hope in the goodness of the future promised by God, choose to align ourselves with God's preferred future as it becomes clear to us.

According to David Lonsdale (2005:247), discernment entails the following:

> Discernment of spirits is a form of critical reflection on human and specifically religious experience, either of individuals or of a group or community. Its purpose is to ensure that, within a context of a living relationship with God, religious experience, subjected to critical reflection, may be a basis for right choice and action. The need for discernment, as a process of critical reflection, is rooted in fundamental ambiguities inherent in human moral and religious experience as such.

André Munziger's (2007:11) definition is brief:

> … the process of reflective thought leading to decision and choice on the 'correctness, meaning, truth, or value of something or someone'.[2]

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1 See also the way in which she describes discernment elsewhere (Liebert 2008b:8):

> Thus, in the Christian spiritual tradition, discernment refers to the process of sifting out what is of God, discriminating between that which expresses God's call and anything that runs counter to it … Discernment, then, is the process of intentionally becoming aware of how God is present, active, and calling us as individuals and communities so that we can respond with increasingly greater faithfulness.

2 Munzinger bases this definition on the Greek-English lexicon of Louw and Nida (1988), in particular the explanation of κρίνω (30.108; forming part of the semantic subdomain G: "To distinguish, to evaluate, to judge") – a description with which he broadly agrees. He disagrees with Louw and Nida on one minor point, namely their contention that discernment should be restricted to the

When one compares the definitions of discernment provided above, there are obvious differences. For example, Waaijman specifically highlights "the way toward God", Liebert limits the options to a choice between two or more good alternatives and also emphasises God's larger plan, whereas Lonsdale regards it as important to point out the ambiguities in moral and religious experience at the outset. Interestingly, though, in spite of the differences and individual emphases, there are certain elements that seem to surface recurrently in the selection of the definitions provided above. From these definitions, it seems as if the following three elements regularly turn up when scholars explain the notion of discernment, namely, reflection, choice and one's relationship to God. For the purpose of this study, I will thus take these three elements as a broad indication of what to look for in Galatians when investigating what this letter can contribute to our understanding of discernment.

One final remark is warranted before particular passages in the letter are discussed. It should be pointed out that, in a certain sense, the whole letter is the result of a process of discernment on Paul's part. What is recorded now in written form in Galatians is the result of his decision on how to react to the news that he had received from Galatia. There was more than one way open to him. For example, in some cases, he disagreed with rivalling preachers, but chose the option of tolerating the differences, as one can see from the Letter to the Philippians (cf. Phil. 1:15-18). In the case of Galatians, however, he evaluated the situation totally differently: The "gospel" of his opponents was no gospel at all (1:6-7), it did not carry God's blessing, and the people proclaiming it were cursed (1:8, 9; 5:10). The outcome of his (reflective?) thought on the news from Galatia was thus decidedly negative.

1. GALATIANS 2:1-10

In this part of the letter, Paul recounts (his version of) his second visit to Jerusalem. As I have argued elsewhere (Tolmie 2005:69-82), he is not merely reporting what happened there, but is also using the events as the basis for his argument proving the divine origin of his gospel. If one views this section from the perspective of the issue addressed in this study, one could say that Paul focuses on a particular "discernment" reached by the "pillars" in Jerusalem. He uses this within the situation that he addresses in his letter as an argument to demonstrate why his gospel is true, and why that of his opponents should be rejected.

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final result of this process of thinking, since, according to him, this excludes reflective thought as such.

In verse 2, he begins by describing the purpose of his visit to Jerusalem as "setting the gospel that I preach before them[3]" (ἀνεθέμην αὐτοῖς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον...). The word ἀνεθέμην may be interpreted in one of two ways, namely as (merely) communicating/sharing his gospel with them (e.g., Louw & Nida 1988:33.151 and Martyn 1997:190), or as laying it before them for their consideration and opinion (e.g., BDAG ἀνατίθημι and Longenecker 1990:47). The fact that Paul explains the reason for his action as "lest somehow I should run or had run in vain" leads me to interpret the term in the second sense,[4] which would mean that he set the gospel before the "pillars" because he wanted them to reach a decision on his gospel; or, in our terms, that he wanted them to exercise discernment.

That the circumcision of Gentile Christians was a crucial aspect of the issue that Paul recounts here is clear from the fact that he specifically points out in verse 3 that Titus, a Gentile, accompanied him, but that Titus was not forced to be circumcised; and, furthermore, that the "false brethren" (who apparently did not hesitate to decide that Paul was wrong) wanted Titus to be circumcised. For Paul, however, it was not merely a matter of whether to have a Gentile believer circumcised or not. In his view, there were deeper, more fundamental, aspects to the matter. It was essentially a decision about the liberty that believers had in Christ (v. 4); and about the "truth of the gospel". By this last expression he refers to the authenticity of his gospel (e.g., Vouga 1998:46), or as Lightfoot (1921:107) puts it, to "the Gospel in its integrity".

In verses 7-9 Paul describes the outcome of the matter. For the issue investigated in this article, three factors are important. First, the verbs that he uses to describe what happened should be noted: The three "pillars" in Jerusalem (James, Cephas and John) "saw" (ἰδόντες) and "recognised" (γνόντες) something. To my mind, the two words are used here to express more or less the same concept, which may be described in terms of the semantic domain "understand" in the lexicon of Louw and Nida, where "understanding" is explained as "a process by which information is used in order to arrive at a correct comprehension or evaluation" (Louw & Nida 1988:380 n. 381). Accordingly, this would mean that, when the "pillars"

3 At this stage the identity of αὐτοῖς is still unclear. It may refer to the Jerusalem congregation in general, or to the leaders who are mentioned further on.

4 Even if one interprets it in the first sense ("to communicate"), this does not necessarily exclude the notion that Paul wanted them to recognise his gospel. Cf. De Boer (2011:110):

> Paul shared his gospel with the church … and then privately with the pillars … so that they would come to see that God had entrusted him with the gospel to the Gentiles and would come to recognize God's grace in his present manner of life (Gal 2:7, 9).

"saw" and "recognised", they had reached a correct evaluation of the matter. Secondly, the content of what was "seen" and "recognised" is specifically mentioned by Paul. The "pillars" saw that he had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, as Peter was entrusted with the gospel of the circumcision (v. 7), because the same God who worked with Peter, also worked with Paul. The "pillars" thus recognised the grace given to him (v. 9). It is significant that in both instances a divine passive is used, highlighting the fact that the discernment that was reached by the "pillars" concerned the relationship between the gospel that Paul was preaching and God. They realised that Paul's gospel and apostleship were of divine origin. Thirdly, Paul unfortunately does not provide any details about the process whereby the discernment was reached by the "pillars"; he only reports its result. We may speculate that "the pillars" probably did not take this decision lightly, and that it needed time and reflection, because it was a decision that seemed to be in conflict with "clear scriptural teaching and historic practice" (Dunn 1995:104). Martyn (1997:201) may thus be right in interpreting the use of the aorist as inceptive, "they came to see and to recognise." One may even surmise that this only happened after heated debates, as Betz (1979:96) believes. All of this, however, is not stated explicitly.

If we formulate what has been highlighted so far in terms of the three elements outlined at the beginning of this study, it is clear that two of them feature quite prominently in this section, namely that of *choice* and that of *relationship to God.* A *choice* had to be made concerning the issue of whether Gentile believers should have to be circumcised or not. From Paul's perspective, in more fundamental terms, it concerned a choice between spiritual liberty and spiritual slavery, between the true gospel and a false gospel. For Paul, the criterion of spiritual liberty/the truth of the gospel was decisive in making the right choice. The notion of *relationship to God* also features prominently in the way in which Paul describes the content of the discernment reached by the pillars, highlighting the fact that his gospel and apostleship were of divine origin. The third element, *reflection*, is not mentioned explicitly and, although one might argue that it would definitely have played a role in the process, it does not receive any emphasis in Paul's account of what happened.

2. GALATIANS 2:11-21

In the previous instance the subjects of discernment were the three "pillars" in Jerusalem; in the case of the Antioch incident, Paul himself is portrayed as the subject of discernment. Interestingly enough, the verb that he uses is the same one that was used in the previous instance,

namely "see" (ἀλλ' ὅτε εἶδον…). Furthermore, the concept "truth of the gospel" again plays a significant role in his version of the events. In fact, his argumentative strategy in this section may be summarised as "recounting his version of the incident at Antioch in order to show how he stood firmly for the 'truth of the gospel'". (Cf. Tolmie 2005:83-99.)

In verse 11, Paul begins with a short summary of what happened: He opposed Cephas to his face, because Cephas "stood condemned" (κατεγνωσμένος ἦν). This expression can be interpreted in more than one way. It could denote that Cephas was self-condemned by his actions (Schlier 1971:82-83); that he stood condemned before God (Mussner 1977:138-139); that all right-thinking people would have realised that he had acted wrongly (Dunn 1995:117); or that he should have known that his own conscience condemned him (Dunn 1995:117). As Wechseler (1991:314–315) points out, the earlier use of a divine passive (2:7, 9) seems to tip the scale in the direction of the second interpretation. If this is correct, then the notion of *relationship to God* already plays an important role at the beginning of this section.

In verses 12-13, Paul goes on to provide more information: Cephas had been eating regularly with the non-Jewish members of the Christian community in Antioch, but withdrew and separated himself when certain individuals from James arrived, because he feared "those of the circumcision". The disputed issue – the *choice* in terms of the aspects singled out for this study – was that of whether table-fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers should be practised or not; or as Betz (1979:107) quite correctly puts it, the difference in opinion had to do with the issue of κοινοφαγία: the Jewish purity requirements that had to be observed irrespective of which meals were involved.

In verse 14 Paul then describes his own reaction: He "saw", or as I interpreted this verb in the previous section, he reached a specific evaluation of the situation. Once again, the process by means of which this happened is not discussed. As Longenecker (1990:77) correctly points out, the use of the aorist εἶδον together with the imperfect verbs in verse 12, could be interpreted as an indication that it took a while before Paul actually intervened. The reason for this is not clear. Perhaps Paul had been away when the Jewish Christians started to withdraw (c.f. Vouga 1998:55), or perhaps it took some time before he realised the implications of what was going on (c.f. Longenecker 1990:77). The text does not provide us with any direct answers. Thus, we cannot draw any conclusion as to whether the process of discernment took a while or whether Paul immediately realised that the practice was wrong when he became aware of it for the first time. What Paul does indicate, however, is what was wrong: οὐκ ὀρθοποδοῦσιν

πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου: They were not walking on the right road[5] towards[6] the truth of the gospel. Once again the truth of the gospel is highlighted by Paul as the criterion for making the particular choice that he made. That the truth of the gospel is inherently linked to what God has done, is clear from what follows further on in the passage: God[7] justifies those who believe in Jesus Christ, and this is the criterion which Paul applied in this instance.

To summarise: Of the three elements outlined at the beginning of this study, two have again been found to be prominent in the way in which Paul describes his discernment, namely *choice* and *the relationship to God.* In one instance, a particular criterion is cited by Paul, namely "the truth of the gospel". The notion of *reflection* is not emphasised.

3. GALATIANS 3:1-5

In this section, the focus differs from that of the previous sections, since Paul now emphasises a *lack* of discernment, and in particular the lack of discernment displayed by the Galatians. The focal term in this regard is ἀνοήτος, which is used twice in this section (3:1, 3). The semantic domain under which this word resorts is the same as that of the verbs which were discussed in the previous two sections ("understand"; cf. Louw & Nida 1988:380-388), and its use in Galatians 3:5 is explained as follows (Louw & Nida 1988:386):

> … pertaining to unwillingness to use one's mental faculties in order to understand … the meaning of ἀνοήτος is that people presumably would not use their capacity for understanding and as a result, thought and behaved foolishly.

5 It is difficult to pinpoint the exact meaning of the word. Three possible meanings have been suggested: "to walk straight or upright", "to make straight for the goal" or "to be on the right road". Each of these interpretations is accepted by some scholars, but most scholars seem to prefer either the second or the third option. For example, the second option is preferred by Mussner (1977:144), while G. D. Kilpatrick (1954:274) favours the third option. Wechseler (1991:343-348) provides a very good interpretation of the word:

> Sie befanden sich nicht nur auf einem Umweg und sie ‚erwischten' nicht nur die falsche Abzweigung (um etwa auf anderem Wege wieder zurückzukommen), sondern sie bewegten sich im Endeffekt in Gegenrichtung.

6 πρός may also be interpreted as "with respect to". Cf., amongst others, De Boer (2011:136).

7 The passive should be read as a divine passive. Cf. De Boer (2011:151).

The word thus refers to a lack of (theological) insight,[8] or, in our terms, a lack of discernment. Longenecker (1990:100) points out that the closest parallel to the way in which Paul uses this word here, is found in Luke 24:25 ("you foolish and slow of heart"), where it is used to emphasise "lack of discernment regarding the prophetic word". For Paul, the Galatians' decision to accept the other "gospel" was foolish. He believed that they would easily come to realise the extent of their folly if they were to consider how they had received the Spirit. This is the first time the Spirit is mentioned in this letter, and the issue that is highlighted is not the role of the Spirit in assisting one to exercise discernment, but rather reflection on one's experience of the Spirit as a way to help one to distinguish between the true gospel and a false gospel. The choice that the Galatians had to make is phrased by Paul in terms of an "either-or": Either they had received the Spirit through works of the law, or they had received it through the "hearing of faith"[9]. There can only be one possible answer to this: they had received it through faith. According to Paul, the implications of the wrong choice made by the Galatians are appalling: Having begun with the Spirit, they are now looking to the flesh in order to attain their goal of perfection (v. 3). In verse 5 he continues: The renewed choice that the Galatians have to make is not only a choice in terms of the way in which they received the Spirit; it is also a choice about God: Does he, who provides the Spirit and works miracles in their midst, do so through works of the law or through the "hearing of faith"?

For the purposes of this study: All three of the elements identified at the beginning of this study play a role in this section. The notion of *choice* comes to the fore in two ways: Paul reproaches the Galatians for having made a foolish choice. Furthermore, in terms of content, the choice is reduced to an "either-or": faith or works of the law. *Relationship to God* is important in the sense that God is depicted here as the provider of the Spirit. Accordingly, the "either-or" choice also reflects a particular interpretation of one's relationship to God. By choosing works of the law, the Galatians would be making a choice in conflict with a fundamental truth about God; choosing faith would be in line with God's identity; i.e., who he is and what he does through the Spirit. The notion of *reflection* receives more attention than in the previous two instances, in the sense that the Galatians are called upon by Paul to reconsider their position. In particular, the series of rhetorical questions is used by him to remind them of earlier experiences: how he preached to them, how they came to believe in Christ, and, as a result, how they received the Spirit. His aim in reminding

8 Thus, most exegetes. Cf. Eckstein (1996:82 n. 85) for a list in this regard.

9 This expression may be interpreted in more than one way, but the best interpretation seems to be "hearing with/of faith". Cf. Tolmie (2005:107).

them of all of this is to motivate them to reflect on their experiences, and to make a better choice.

4. GALATIANS 5:13-6:10

For our purposes, two issues deserve attention in this part of the letter,[10] namely, the contrast between the fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-22, and the call to discernment in 6:4. I will restrict the discussion to the issue addressed in this study, and will not move into the more general issue of the ethics of the letter.[11]

In the first instance (the contrast between the fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh), one again finds the two elements that have been highlighted several times so far in this study, namely the importance of *choice* and of the *relationship to God* (in this instance, the importance of the role of the Spirit). The two lists serve as a vivid illustration of practical choices to which discernment should lead. As has often been noted before, such lists were well-known in antiquity, and the phenomenon is thus not a Pauline invention.[12] What is important to note in relation to our theme is that the concrete choices that believers have to make, are placed within a particular theological framework. It is not merely a case of avoiding certain types of behaviour (the works of the flesh) because they are wrong, and striving towards other types of behaviour (the fruit of the Spirit) because they are right. The choice between right and wrong behaviour is placed within a theological framework which may be summarised, in terms of three (interrelated) aspects, as "liberty – love – Spirit":[13] "Liberty" is not only a liberation *from* (e.g. from the current evil age – 1:4; the curse of the law – 3:13-14; and the "elements of the law" – 4:6), but also a liberation *towards*. As Konradt (2010:70) puts it:

> Durch den Glauben an Christus in das äonenwendende Geschehen des Anbruchs der neuen Schöpfung hineingezogen, ist der Glaubende vielmehr zugleich *zu* einem neuen Leben in Christus in der Kraft des Geistes befreit. (Konradt's emphasis.)

10 Elsewhere, I have summarized Paul's rhetorical strategy in Gal. 5:12-6:10 as "urging the Galatians to have their lives directed by the Spirit". This forms part of a larger section, beginning at Gal. 5:2, whose rhetorical objective I have summarised as "Convincing the audience to act as he wishes them to: not to succumb to the pressure to be circumcised, to avoid the opponents, and to live according to the Spirit." Cf. Tolmie (2005:239-240).

11 For good discussions of Paul's ethics in Galatians, cf. Barclay (1988), Dunn (1993), Söding (2010:165-206) and Konradt (2010:60-81).

12 Cf., for example, Easton (1932:1-12), Vögtle (1936) and Kamlah (1964).

13 For a more detailed discussion of this issue, cf. Tolmie (2006:241-256).

This liberty may be abused by the flesh, but this danger can be curbed in two ways: by realising that the liberty that one has in Christ actually constitutes a new form of slavery: becoming slaves of one another through *love* (Gal. 5:13), and, furthermore, by living through the *Spirit* (Gal. 5:16ff.). That these two aspects should not be regarded as two separate events or steps in the life of believers, is clear from the fact that love heads the list of the fruit of the Spirit further on.

If we formulate all of this in terms of the notion of discernment, the following seems to be the heart of the matter: Discernment is an activity practised by those who have been liberated by (and in) Christ, who have become slaves of love, and who live according to the Spirit. Such people will not merely follow their own inclinations (Gal. 5:17); rather their lives will express the fruit of the Spirit. To put it in another way: discernment practically implies bending one's will to that of the Spirit.

Before the call to self-discernment in Galatians 6:4 is considered in more detail, some brief remarks on its context are warranted: This verse falls within subsection 6:1-5, a passage of which the line of thought is unclear. In this regard, it seems wise to avoid two extremes, namely, on the one hand, the tendency to view the entire section as having no coherent argument, and, on the other hand, attempting to explain the underlying logic as making perfect sense. The truth lies somewhere in between:[14] In verse 1 Paul describes a situation that may arise, namely that of a believer being caught out in some kind of transgression. He calls upon the Galatians to act in a gentle way in such a case and to restore such a person to his/her former situation. This is followed by a strict warning: They themselves could be tempted to act in a similar way as the transgressor and they should therefore keep an eye on themselves, lest they should be tempted too. In verse 2 the focus again falls on the way in which believers should act towards one another ("Bear one another's burdens"), followed by a promise that in this way they will be fulfilling the "law of Christ" – which is probably an allusion to the Torah, as fulfilled in the sense that Christ fulfilled it, namely by love. A warning follows in verse 3: If anyone thinks she/he is something when in fact she/he is nothing, she/he deceives himself. This warning does not constitute an entirely new idea, but is related to the previous verse(s) in that it provides a reason for what has been said earlier. In verse 4 the individual believer is called upon to test his/her own "work". According to Paul, this could lead to grounds for boasting, but only in one's own work, and not by comparing it to that of the other believers. In verse 5, the reason for not making such comparisons

14 For what follows, cf. the more detailed discussion in Tolmie (2005:208ff.).

is then provided, namely that each one will receive proper recognition for her/his own work at the eschatological judgement.[15]

Two general remarks: First, it is important to keep in mind that the theme of living in accordance with the Spirit, which was introduced in 5:13, is still the focus of the discussion in 6:1ff. This is underlined by the fact that Paul addresses the Galatians in 6:1 as πνευματικοί, thereby referring to them as people who must live by the Spirit.[16] The call to self-discernment in verse 4 should thus not be regarded as something standing on its own; it forms part of the life under the guidance of the Spirit. Secondly, compared to the previous section, there is more emphasis on the individual in 6:1-5. It is true that the importance of mutual relationships is still emphasised (e.g., in 6:1 and 6:2), but there are also explicit references to the individual: verse 1: "watch yourself", verse 3: "if someone ...", verse 4: "one's own work", "in oneself", "not towards someone else", and verse 5: "one's own burden". The way in which mutual relationships and personal scrutiny are balanced here, can serve as a broad guideline for interpreting verse 4: Although self-discernment is essentially an individual, and – in a sense a private action, the individual believer continues to form part of a larger Christian community where believers carry each other's burdens and where mutual care is imperative (cf. Esler 1998:231 in this regard). Self-discernment should thus not become a practice focusing exclusively on one's personal situation, thereby leading to a practical isolation of oneself from the rest of the Christian community.

Let us now turn our attention to Galatians 6:4. For the purpose of this study, four issues need to be highlighted:

First, the meaning of the word δοκιμάζειν should be considered. According to Louw and Nida, when it is used in the New Testament, it can be categorised in either of two (closely related) semantic domains, namely "Learn" and "Think", the difference between these two domains being that Learn "involves the acquisition of information," whereas Think entails "the processing and manipulation of information, often leading to decision and choice" (Louw & Nida 1988:349). δοκιμάζειν in Galatians 6:4 falls within the semantic domain identified as "Learn" and specifically within the subdomain "Try to learn", with δοκιμάζειν being explained (in Louw & Nida 27.45) as follows: "to try to learn the genuineness of something by

15 It is possible to interpret verse 5 in a non-eschatological way, but here I follow those who interpret it in an eschatological sense. Cf., for example, Kuck (1994), Bruce (1982:263), Arzt (1992:181) and Synofzik (1977:44).

16 So, most interpreters. See, for example, Betz (1979:296), Barclay (1988:157) and Vouga (1998:145-146).

examination and testing".[17] This seems to be an appropriate definition of the concept in Galatians 6:4, which implies that the emphasis falls in this verse on the process of critical reflection during discernment,[18] an aspect which thus far has not received much attention in the letter.

Secondly, it should be noted how the object of discernment is described: τό ἔργον. This word is used here in the sense of deeds/actions.[19] Martyn (1997:550) restricts the definition to "gospel work", whereas Barclay (1988:161) interprets the term as referring to "the basic character of a person's existence". However, it seems better to understand it as referring to one's conduct in general (as most exegetes do). Within the particular context, it could then refer to the conduct mentioned in verses 1-3 (as Kuck 1994:293 believes), or, to my mind more probably, to all the types of behaviour mentioned from Galatians 5:13 onwards.

Thirdly, interestingly enough, the outcome of such a process of self-discernment is also mentioned by Paul: καὶ τότε εἰς ἑαυτὸν μόνον τὸ καύχημα ἕξει καὶ οὐκ εἰς τὸν ἕτερον. The word τὸ καύχημα refers to the basis for boasting (Longenecker 1990:277), and this implies that the outcome of such a process of discernment might be positive. This boasting, however, is a boasting *to oneself* (εἰς ἑαυτὸν), and not a boasting to others, which means that one should distinguish between two different types of boasting. Martyn (1997:550) aptly describes the former as "the joyous celebration of the Spirit's work through oneself" and the latter as "a celebration of comparative superiority to a neighbour".

Lastly, it should be noted that the self-discernment is placed within a broader eschatological framework in verse 5 ("Each one shall bear his own burden"). Whatever the outcome of one's self-discernment, the result remains provisional. God's future judgement will be "the final arbiter of status" (Kuck 1994:296).

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17 Cf. the more or less similar explanation in BDAG (δοκιμάζω): "to make a critical examination of someth. to determine genuineness, put to test, examine" (their emphasis). In English, good translation equivalents for δοκιμάζειν are "test", "examine" (e.g., Lightfoot 1921:213), "scrutinise" (De Boer 2011:382) and "evaluate" (Dunn 1995:324), but "consider" as Martyn (2000:549) translates it does not cover the meaning sufficiently. In German, "prüfen" (Vouga 1998:148) is a good translation equivalent. Furthermore, cf. Betz (1979:302-303) for a good discussion of the use of δοκιμάζειν by the Greek philosophers.

18 So, also Munzinger (2007:9).

19 Louw and Nida (1988:42.11) classify it in a semantic domain described as "Perform, Do". In BDAG (ἔργον) it is explained as "deed, action", and several other instances in the New Testament where the singular is also used in a collective sense are provided.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has shown that, although discernment is definitely not the focus of the Letter to the Galatians, the matter does receive attention; perhaps more than one may think at first. As indicated in the study, a variety of perspectives in this regard are encountered in the letter, pertaining to the discernment of the "pillars" in Jerusalem; Paul's discernment in Antioch; the poor discernment displayed by the Galatian Christians when they opted for justification by works; and, finally, the call to discernment flowing from a life under the guidance of the Spirit, which includes an emphasis on the importance of self-discernment.

Of the three aspects identified at the beginning of this study as core elements of discernment (reflection, choice and one's relationship to God) the last two receive the most emphasis, probably because in most cases, the outcome of the discernment was the central issue in terms of Paul's rhetorical strategy. The notion of reflection only received some attention for the first time in 3:1-5, where the Galatians were called to make a better choice than the one that they had made; and subsequently also in 6:4, with specific reference to self-discernment. However, in neither of these cases was there a detailed discussion of the issue of reflection. In fact, in all the instances that were discussed in this study, the choice that was made, or that was to be made, was presented by Paul as a rather straightforward matter – probably as a result of the rhetorical situation within which he found himself when writing the letter.

What has also become clear is that what is said with regard to discernment in the letter, is tied up with fundamental theological convictions that Paul holds, pertaining to matters such as the truth of the gospel, spiritual liberty, God's justification of humankind though faith, the bending of one's will to that of the Spirit, one's relationship with the rest of the Christian community, and, finally, the eschatological reality of God's judgement as the final arbiter of one's self-discernment. Viewed from this perspective, one can reach no other conclusion than that, for Paul, discernment is intimately linked to what he regards as the heart of the gospel.

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Keywords	*Trefwoorde*
Spirituality	Spiritualiteit
Discernment	Onderskeiding
Letter to the Galatians	Brief aan die Galasiërs