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# ABOUT GALATIANS, APOCALYPTIC AND THE SWITCHING OF PARADIGMS

## ABSTRACT

The article indicates that although apocalyptic is probably not the hermeneutical key par excellence to Pauline theology, it does lie at the heart of Pauline theology and should be thoroughly accounted for in Galatians. Paul employs apocalyptic in Galatians to stress the radical soteriological and ethical change brought about by the advent of Christ and his Spirit. He wished to reframe his readers' thought world, making abundant use of apocalyptic innuendo carried by terminology akin to Jewish apocalyptic theology and piety. Written against the background of modern day Christianity still grappling with law and the old paradigm two thousand years into new creation, this article hopes to share some of Paul's vigour toward understanding the time we live in as post-law.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Is there evidence enough that Paul provides an apocalyptic perspective on the gospel and its ethic in Galatians? If so, why did he follow that route? What did he hope to achieve? J.C. Beker was convinced that Paul's theology was apocalyptic to the core. His thesis, however, seemed flawed by Galatians' lack of reference to the *parousia.* His solution was that Galatians was meant to address a *contingent situation* and that Paul did not draw from his *coherent theological core* in addressing it (1980:58). Paul, however, clearly did not regard the Galatian situation as peripheral. The *truth of the gospel* was at stake (Gal. 2:5, 14). His rhetoric alone reflects extreme urgency and utmost disgust at the Galatians' misunderstanding of the time since the advent of Christ and his Spirit (Loubser 2004:18-24). It is inconceivable that he would

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deal with something as fundamental as the *truth of the gospel* with anything less than his core theology!

J.L. Martyn's most valuable solution to Beker's dilemma was not to focus exclusively on the *parousia* in search of an apocalyptic turning point, but rather, in Galatians, on the *advent* of Christ (1985:420). According to him, the main apocalyptic indicator in Galatians is its use of antinomies (1985:412-420). There are two worlds since Christ's crucifixion: the *present evil age* (Gal. 1:4) dominated by flesh (σάρξ), and *new creation* (καινή κτίσις – Gal. 6:15) dominated by the Spirit (πνεῦμα – Gal. 5:22-25). Life in the old fleshly world is characterised by pairs of opposites like law and non-law observance; or those of the baptismal formula (Gal. 3:28); to which he adds non-circumcision and circumcision. New creation is characterised by anthropological unity in Christ (1985:414-415) and absolute opposition to flesh (Gal. 5:16-18; 6:13). Because of the apocalyptic advent of Christ and his Spirit the space in which human beings now live is a newly invaded space, and that means that its structures cannot remain unchanged (Martyn 1985:417).

Galatians abounds with apocalyptic allusions. It is thoroughly justified to accept that apocalyptic lies at the heart of Pauline theology, especially in Galatians. It will be indicated that Paul employed apocalyptic innuendo to stress both the soteriological and the ethical change brought about by the advent of Christ and his Spirit. He wanted to reframe his readers' minds, using something much more effective than an overt apocalyptic genre or style, or even references to future apocalyptic events, unsuitable for his purpose. *Apocalyptic innuendo* would do the trick.

## 2. APOCALYPTIC: MOSTLY ABOUT DISCLOSURE, DISJUNCTION AND THE SPIRIT

The first aspect of profound importance in Jewish apocalyptic that will be discussed in greater detail, is that of *disclosure* of divine secrets (Bornkamm 1967:815). The second characteristic of major importance in apocalyptic theology is the belief in two aeons in *total disjunction* to each other (Dunn 1990:312-317). The present age was regarded with pessimism and the age to come with hope. The expected eschatological climax would see God's enemies judged and his people saved. It would be accompanied by the resurrection of the dead and the end of the then known cosmos. God would reign sovereign, fulfilling the hope of his people. The two ages would be radically different, having hardly anything in common.

The third extremely important aspect of Jewish and Early Christian apocalyptic is the *Spirit.* Already in the Old Testament (Ezk. 36:24-32; Jl. 2:28-29) and contemporary extra-canonical literature (Tengström & Fabry 1993:419-424) reference is made to a future in which God's Spirit would work wondrously, endowing man with a new sense of service to God. The early Christians' experience of the Spirit's wondrous works signified the arrival of the last aeon in the same way Christ's resurrection did. Regarding their apocalyptic-mindedness, Marshall stresses Jesus' resurrection and the gift of the Spirit as foundational (1987:39). The early Christians' experiences were inexplicable in terms of their known world order. Their only explanation for these experiences was that the last days, in which the Spirit would be operative according to prophecy, had arrived (Ac. 2:17-18).

## 2.1 The motif of disclosure in Galatians

### 2.1.1 Disclosure in the *salutatio*

Regarding divine disclosure, Meeks correctly sees it as a form of appeal, a rhetorical device or strategy (1983:115-116). Strikingly, already in the *salutatio* (Gal. 1:1-5) Paul gives a distinct apocalyptic ring to his letter. His authority was not from men or through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father (Gal. 1:1). If God did not mediate it to him through man, He must have given it directly or via a heavenly being. Whichever, Paul's apostleship was divinely authorised – revelation in any language.

Referring to both Jesus and the Father he speaks on the highest authority (Dunn 1993a:26-27). Placing Christ chronologically before the Father in his prepositional clause, usually doing the reverse (Rm. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Phlp. 1:2; 1 Thess.1:1), he probably alludes to the Christophany (Ac. 9) as his actual ordination (Longenecker 1990:5). He received it from Christ in union with the Father. No higher authority could be called upon (Kertelge 1992:340; Lategan 1988:425-426). If Galatians 1:12 refers to the Christophany (Betz 1979:39), it sets Paul in league with the prophets.

### 2.1.2 Disclosure in Galatians 1:11-2:21[1]

Paul makes subtle use of apocalyptic innuendo in his autobiographical section, saying he did not receive the gospel from man (κατὰ ἄνθρωπον), nor

1 The double assertion to authority could allude to a similar situation in Am. 7:14-15. Amos' authority is questioned. He regards himself a prophet of non-human lineage, divinely called in a context of visions (Am. 7-9). This backdrop hints to revelation of some kind in Galatians (Dunn 1994:407-32).

was he taught it, but it came by revelation (δι' ἀποκαλύψεως) of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:12). He stresses the matter, introducing it with: For I would have you know (Γνωρίζω γὰρ ὑμῖν – Gal. 1:11), a disclosure formula (Hansen 1994:207) introducing the more apocalyptic terminology to follow. He says: God, who had set me apart (εὐδόκησεν) and had called me (καλέσας), was pleased to reveal (ἀποκαλύψαι) his Son to me (Gal. 1:15-16). One is reminded of the callings of Jeremiah (Jr. 1:5) and the Servant of Yahweh (Is. 49:1-6); suggesting Paul regarded himself as truly in line with the prophets.[2]

However, he alone could authenticate this revelation, so he stresses the undisputable radical change the event had on his life (Meeks 1983:176-7) in which he violently persecuted the church (Gal. 1:13) and advanced beyond many in his zeal for his fathers' traditions (Gal. 1:14). It had been diametrically turned around by God's gracious revelation – a profoundly existential antithesis as emphasised by the churches in Judea: He who *once* (ποτε) persecuted us is *now* (νῦν) preaching the faith he *once* (ποτε) tried to destroy (Gal. 1:23). A temporal switch had occurred, dramatically changing both his vocation and life – revealing in itself. Witherington states: Paul underwent a thorough resocialisation. His symbolic universe was not merely altered; in some respects it was turned upside down (1998:111).[3]

Even Gaventa, wary of taking Paul's Damascus experience at face-value, acknowledges, whatever the details and nature of the experience, Paul underwent an abrupt, unexplained change, which he interprets christologically (1986:22-28, 37-39): indicative of some divine experience. According to Du Toit, ἀποκαλύπτω in Gal. 1:16 indicates a divine revelation, resulting in an inner enlightenment (1996:81). He argues that ἐν in ἐν ἐμοί is a local dative (*in me*) (1989:321), referring to the revelation as having taken place in him. However, he urges that this transformation was not merely an inner experience. It included an audition through which vital information regarding his Gentile commission was revealed (1996:81-82). He enhances this with: Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed; thus the law was our custodian until Christ came. He parallels: Until faith should be revealed (εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι – Gal. 3:23) with until Christ (εἰς Χριστόν – Gal. 3:24), referring to the same event. Dunn regards this as technical apocalyptic terminology …

2 Newman (1992:196-207) views the Christophany as the defining moment of God's glorification in Paul, who viewed it as his being written into God's story.

3 These radical changes are also indicative of the disjunction between the aeons to be discussed below.

having the sense both of heavenly unveiling and a climactic turning point in the divine purpose (1993b:48).[4]

Paul states that he went up to Jerusalem fourteen years after God's revelation to him for no reason save revelation (κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν) (Gal. 2:2), presenting the decision to go to Jerusalem as divinely ordained.[5]

Paul's elaborate use of εὐαγγέλιον (7 times) and εὐαγγελίζεται (5 times) in Gal. 1-2, and then an almost total silence on these words in the rest of Galatians, counts for something. Amid the heavy emphasis on revelation in this section, he emphasises that his gospel was based on this revelation. It was divine, true, unblemished and independent from human tradition. In reaction (the pillars) *saw* (τοὐναντίον ἰδόντες) that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised (Gal. 2:7) and *they perceived* (γνόντες) the grace that was given to me (Gal. 2:9). Paul could be hinting at the possibility that the conveying of his understanding of the gospel amongst the uncircumcised was to them a revelation, subsequently accepting it as divine authorisation for his comprehension of the gospel. Paul would probably have informed them of both the content of his gospel (Gal. 2:2) and the Gentiles' reaction, including signs of the Spirit's presence (Gal. 3:2, 5). [Ἀλλὰ] τοὐναντίον ἰδόντες (Gal. 2:7) should be read with καὶ γνόντες τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι (Gal. 2:9) – everything between being an elaboration of what they saw and perceived. The aorist participles ἰδόντες (Gal. 2:7) and γνόντες (Gal. 2:9) are paralleled: ἰδόντες referring to the evidence of Paul's success and γνόντες to the resulting insight on the part of the pillars (Longenecker 1990:55). It *dawned* on them that Paul's comprehension of the gospel was divinely authorised (Ridderbos 1976a:88). This is not dramatically apocalyptic, but indicative of disclosure of divine grace in both Paul and the pillars.

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4 Hansen (1994:208-209) states: Paul's participation in that apocalyptic event occurred when 'God was pleased to reveal (ἀποκαλύψαι) his son' in him (1.16). The revelation Paul received was more than the revelation received by the prophets of old. They were given the promise; Paul was given the revelation of the Son "in the fullness of time" (4:4). They looked forward to the end of the world and the new creation – the eschatological climax of God's purpose in history. He became a paradigm of the apocalypse for the church to follow.

5 It is possible to connect this revelation to Agabus' revelation of a coming famine (Acts 11:27-30). He was among Jerusalem prophets visiting Antioch at the time Paul ministered there. Antioch reacted to the prophecy by sending Barnabas and Paul to Jerusalem with their collection. Very likely, this visit, and not the council visit (Ac. 15), presented Paul with the opportunity to share his understanding of the gospel with the pillars. It is possible that Paul retrospectively interpreted this revelation to Agabus also as an opportunity to speak to the pillars, stressing the allusion to divine intervention.

### 2.1.3 Disclosure in Galatians 3:1-5

Paul is dismayed by the Galatians' consideration of another gospel (Gal. 3:1). He describes their initial hearing and acceptance of the gospel as the receiving of the Spirit (Gal. 3:2, 5). Apparently this profound experience was accompanied by miracles (Gal. 3:5) (Dunn 1993b:157-158). It was experiential and a vivid landmark in their spiritual beginnings as Christians.[6] Paul refers to the Galatians as: You, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed (προεγράφη) as crucified (Gal. 3:1). It seems Paul wanted to stress the clarity with which the gospel was presented to them: as if Christ was crucified right in front of them, as well as the vividness of the Spirit's disclosure of Christ, profoundly enhancing the revelatory character of the event.

Miracles were regarded as profoundly apocalyptic. Though the New Testament mostly reflects Jesus' miracles one can assume they had the same function in the early church's ministries. They were performed exclusively to serve God's purpose in a given situation (Ridderbos 1976b:115); authenticated Him as the One in whom the Kingdom had come; signified God's promised eschatological salvation recognised only by faith (Goppelt 1978:196-198); authenticated the witness as operating on God's behalf; attested to the work of the Spirit amongst them (Hofius 1976:626-633); and, in fact, confirmed God's presence (Dunn 1993b:158).

Apocalyptic is also enhanced by the formula: Who has bewitched you? There was a profound belief in the evil eye in first century Mediterranean society (Derrett 1995:65-68). One could attain power over another by casting an eye upon the other and imparting evil from within, believing the eyes were the windows to the spirit (Derrett 1995:66-68). The implication is probably that Christ portrayed before their eyes had the positive effect on them of faith and reception of the Spirit. Subsequently, they reasoned differently from what was expected and, consequently, Paul reasons someone bewitched or cast an evil eye upon them (Witherington 1998:203). In Galatians 4:12-17 Paul recalls how he met them whilst he had a bodily ailment. People with bodily ailments were often considered to possess an evil eye. Yet Paul, carrier of the true gospel, did not have an evil effect on them (Gal. 4:15). This stresses another point of apocalyptic, i.e., when God is at work, forces of evil are also revealed as operative.

6 Bruce (1990:122) adds that it was no mere matter of logical conviction or of an inner glow: it was accompanied by more substantial evidences. Not only were there the tokens of divine power which attended their response to the preaching ... but there were the more durable tokens of changed lives, lives in which the fruit of the Spirit, a harvest of ethical graces, had begun to manifest itself.

### 2.1.4 Disclosure in Gal. 3:23-29

Paul clearly states that the Galatians' faith in Christ (Gal. 3:23) radically changed their status from being under law's custodianship to being sons of God. Even entrenched social, cultural and gender fundamentals (Gal. 3:28) were repealed. This radical change was not through human endeavour, but by revelation (ἀποκαλυφθῆναι) of a kind formerly unknown (Morris 1996:118). Martyn notes the combined effect of ἀποκαλυφθῆναι and the instances of ἔρχομαι (Gal. 3:23 – aorist infinitive; Gal. 3:25 – aorist participle) focus on an invasive movement from beyond. While the opponents were concerned with the conditions by which Gentiles could partake in the people of God, Paul emphasised that the gospel was not about how one could change one's position, but about God's movement (apocalypse) into the present, to deliver (2000:254-255; De Boer 2002:21-33; Duff 1989:281).

> The advent of the Son and of his Spirit is also the coming of faith, an event that Paul explicitly calls an apocalypse (note the parallel expressions 'to come' and 'to be apocalypsed' in 3:23) (Martyn 1985:417).

Eschatological revelation is enhanced by the preceding abundant use of ἐπαγγελία (promise – Gal. 3:16-19, 21-22, 29) with its apocalyptic overtones, both as noun and verb. It is revisited at Gal. 3:29. Add to this the use of διαθήκη (will – Gal. 3:15; covenant – Gal. 3:17). Clearly, this promise had been fulfilled in the advent of Christ and his Spirit. The eschatological time had fully come (Gal. 4:4).

## 2.2 The motif of disjunction in Galatians

Martyn's (1985:410-424) excellent and influential article on the elaborate use of opposites in Galatians indicates that Paul harbours no middle ground between the *present evil age* and *new creation*. They are in total disjunction – no resemblence at all! His use of apocalyptic indicators in the *pre-* and *postscripts* confirms this disjunction.

### 2.2.1 Disjunction in the *salutatio*

- Present evil age

Jewish apocalyptic distinguished between the *present age* and *the age to come*. The end of the former is often depicted in vivid, cosmologically catastrophic metaphors and misinterpreted as literal predictions, pessimistic about present life. Not without reason, because the present evil age was depicted as the time of Satan's rule, an age dominated by an ethically evil

power – one which, far from being "according to the will of our God and Father," is totally opposed to it (Bruce 1982:76). Wright (1992:299-301) remarks that this temporal distinction was aimed at enhancing Israel's hope and expectations in troubled times. It focussed on the future, the time of salvation: liberation from Rome, restoration of the Temple and the free enjoyment of their own land. It would be the time of forgiveness of sins, living under the guidance of the Spirit, and with a circumcised heart.

- Raised from the dead

Returning to Gal. 1:1, given the symbolic universe of early Christianity, Paul's reference to Christ being raised from the dead by God (τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν) would set all ears on edge. Jewish apocalyptic accepted the time to come would be inaugurated by the resurrection of the dead (Bruce 1982:73).[7] Dunn (1993a:29) draws attention to the fact that Paul implies a disjunction between the present age ending in death and the new age inaugurating new life. It was not simply a chronologically smooth move from one age to another at a given point, the old disappearing and the new taking the reigns. Something very decisive happened. God raised Jesus from the dead. The new creation had been inaugurated.[8]

Paul reinterprets the apocalyptic of his day, *firstly* by linking Christ's resurrection to the advent of the eschatological age (Gal. 1:1). Believers had been crucified with Christ, Him now living in them by faith (Gal. 2:20). They had received the Spirit (Gal. 3:2; also Spirit of the Son – Gal. 4:6), notably expected by Judaism as an eschatological gift (Ezk. 37:14; Jl. 2:28 30). Jesus' coming death and resurrection was the turning point of the aeons. *Secondly*, he redefines the eschatological turning point in terms of Christ's advent, death and resurrection (Marshall 1997:49). Though the *present evil age* had not vanished and believers still lived in it, they had been delivered from it: rescued, not removed, from the present dispensation. It no longer had power over them. The *parousia* would bring about the consummation of the eschatological age already irreversibly inaugurated by Christ. One should not think in terms of dying and merely being resuscitated into the same pitiful age and life (e.g., Lazarus). In Jesus' case the new age broke into man's plight. His resurrection was not merely a redemptive-historical milepost, but the life-changing event of the inauguration of

7 Dn. 12:2; 1 Enoch 51:1-2; Apoc. Mos. 13:3; 28:4; 41:3; 63:2; 2 Bar. 1:2; and Mt. 27:52-53 attest to this. The first Christian communities had already accepted this as a fundamental belief as reflected in formulaic language (Ac. 3:15; 4:10; Rm. 8:11; 10:9; 1 Th. 1:10; 1 Pt. 1:10) (Dunn 1993a:28).

8 Koperski (2002:269) includes reference to eternal life from the Spirit (Gal. 6:8), and, possibly, new creation (Gal. 6:15) and Christ's living in Paul (Gal. 2:19-20) as resurrection terminology.

the eschatological new order, the creation of a new aeon in anticipation of the general resurrection that was now irrevocable. The whole issue of eschatological life is enhanced when one considers that in both the Old Testament and the New Testament *physical* and *spiritual* death are inextricably bound up with each other (Schmithals 1975:436). Schmithals (1975:436-439) states that by dying with Christ (Gal. 6:14) one dies to this world in which one has to seek life while enslaved to law, sin and worldly powers. This mode of existence, continually having to justify oneself in the ever-presence of death actually makes one partake in death, in this life.

- To deliver

Christ gave himself (τοῦ δόντος ἑαυτόν) to deliver (ἐξέληται) us from the present evil age (Gal. 1:4). Gal. 4:4-5 states: When the time had fully come (ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου), God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem (ἐξαγοράσῃ) those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons, all according to the will of our God and Father (κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν – Gal. 1:4). Paul was sure of an ordained time for Christ's advent. Clearly the acts of deliverance (ἐξέληται – Gal. 1:4) and redemption (Gal. 4:5) are the same. Consequently the time to come is the time that arrived in the advent of Christ. The new creation in Christ had decidedly arrived (Witherington 1998:288). This is eschatological terminology akin to the early faith (Betz 1979:206). According to Ridderbos, the eschatological impact is enhanced by there being no earthly reason according to which one could calculate or decide why it was the best time or why that time had run full. God alone decided on this (1976a:154-155; Morris 1996:129).

## 2.2.2 Disjunction in the postscript (Gal. 6:11-17)

- End of the world and new creation

Once again, Paul does not harbour the notion of piecemeal change in the advent of Christ. He and the κόσμος had been crucified to each other (Gal. 6:14). Separation from this world or the present evil age did not involve its gradual denunciation. It could only be attained by the so-called triple crucifixion of Jesus, the world, and Paul himself. In Christ's death Paul and the world with its enslaving power died. Paul's apocalyptic approach makes no provision for piecemeal revivification of human life to come in step with God's will. A radically new creation was needed (Martyn 2000:255).

Paul's reference to circumcision and non-circumcision being replaced by new creation reminds one of Martyn's notion that opposites were regarded as the building-blocks of the present world (1985:410-24). Paul's negation of these opposites, especially those of circumcision and the

baptismal formula (Gal. 3:28), in favour of a *new creation* (καινὴ κτίσις), is profound. The old world has fallen to pieces. The old view of law as the antidote or remedial opposite of sin had also come to an end. The new creation, in which God recreates through the faithfulness of Christ and the presence of the Spirit, provides man with freedom from the present evil age. The advent of Christ and his Spirit became the true and potent opposite of the present age, originating from outside this realm and therefore truly divine (Martyn 2000:258-259).

Both Jewish apocalyptic and Old Testament prophecy reflect a great expectation of a new creation. Sea and wilderness, symbolic of the threat of the chaos and desolation of the present age, would be transformed and God would personally and immediately appear to Israel (Gowan 1986:109-111). Zion would be glorified by the triumphant return of the exiles (Is. 35, 40-42, 65-66 [Gowan 1986:113-114]), giving life and prosperity even to the Dead Sea (Ezk. 47; Zch. 8, 9, 13 and Jl. 3:16-21. Enough! New creation was a typically Jewish idea regarded by Paul as inaugurated by Christ's advent.

- Israel of God

*Israel of God* is clearly apocalyptic. It is widely accepted that it does not refer to Israel as historical people, because they do not feature as a group in the rest of the letter. The letter is also clearly not a nationalistic revivification. It is also unlikely that Paul would be referring to either Jewish-Christians or non-Jewish Christians, having refuted such distinctions all along. It seems to refer to all believers aligning with the gospel through faith (Matera 2007:166), thus indicating the people of the new creation in Christ: those who have faith in the promise given to Abraham and fulfilled in the advent of Christ and his Spirit – a promise specifically including Gentiles (Hays 2005:140). One is reminded of Moltmann's distinction between eschatology and apocalyptic (1967:124-138). Eschatologically speaking, the prophets largely limited themselves to prophesying God's promises and hope and Israel itself's need for repentance. Apocalyptic broadens the scope to include the cosmos. The focus moves from God and Israel in opposition to the nations, to God and the world in the grip of sin (1967:124-138). The prophet operated in the midst of the people of Israel, the apocalypticist in the midst of the post-exilic congregation of the righteous of Yahweh (Moltmann 1967:134; Westermann 1969:423-429; Martyn 2006:178-182). In view of Paul's emphasis on apocalyptic, Moltmann's notion that universalisation usually accompanies apocalyptic, and Paul's opponents' emphasis on ethnicity, *Israel of God* should be regarded as a Pauline apocalyptic allusion.

- A letter enveloped in apocalyptic

Russell (1997:20-21) points to the pre- and postscript reflecting similar topics: Paul's authority in service of God and his Son (Gal. 1:1; 6:17); the Fatherhood of God (Gal. 1:1, 3-4; 6:16); and deliverance from the present evil age to new creation (Gal. 1:4; 6:15). Weima (1993:90-107) adds Paul's profound emphasis on the cross, explicitly in the postscript (Gal. 6:12, 14) and implicitly in the prescript, referring to Christ being raised from the dead (Gal. 1:1) after giving himself up (Gal. 1:4), and the triple crucifixion (Gal. 6:14). This not only resulted in the death of the world, but especially in a new creation (καινὴ κτίσις – Gal. 6:15). He also alludes to the eschatological theme of opposition between flesh and Spirit, mentioning persecution for those sharing the cross of Christ as opposed to those showing off in the flesh. Clearly, *the pre- and postscript of Galatians serve as an envelope enfolding the whole letter in apocalyptic*.

## 2.2.3 From slave to son

The believer's radical transformation from slave to son should not be read apart from heirship (Gal. 3:29; 4:1, 6), inheritance (Gal. 3:15-18; 4:30) and promise (Gal. 3:18, 29; 4:23, 28) deriving from the Abrahamic covenant (Gal. 3:15-18; 4:21-31) – eschatologically laden terminology. Paul states: If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise (Gal. 3:29). Christ having arrived in God's good time (Gal. 4:4), inaugurated the fulfilment of the promise that slaves would become God's sons. Obviously, a fuller inheritance awaits the offspring, but important at this juncture is the disjunction between the status of a slave and a son.

## 2.2.4 Two Jerusalems

Jewish apocalyptic unquestionably holds the notion of two Jerusalems. Obviously, the earthly city, the venue for Yahweh's eschatological victory, was in the forefront. However, there was a development of the notion of a heavenly, pre-existent city where God reigned supreme and his will was flawlessly done (Witherington 1998:334-335), descending to earth at the end of the age. Paul adds to this, associating Hagar, the slave, and Sarah, the free woman, with the two Jerusalems (Gal. 4:24-26). He associates faith and freedom with the Jerusalem above in contrast to the earthly Jerusalem, irking him at the time. He definitely built on and alluded to Jewish apocalyptic thought and the disjunction between the two.

> Since, therefore, the Jerusalem that is above is an eschatological term expressing a reality that will exist in the future, Paul's use of it here for the experience of the Galatian believers implies that, as

> Paul understood matters, the Galatian believers had come into the eschatological situation of already participating in that future reality, in that the promise that was made to Abraham was fulfilled in Christ (cf. 3:16; 5:1) (Longenecker 1990:216).

## 2.3 The Spirit in Galatians

There is a very prominent occurrence of πνεῦμα in Galatians, a definite apocalyptic enhancer, especially in its interplay with its antithetical partner, σάρξ. The abundant use of σάρξ; πνεῦμα's alignment with the promise (Gal. 3:14), faith (Gal. 3:2, 5, 14; 5:5) and Christ and his advent (Gal. 4:6); portraying Him as the One through whom believers came to life (Gal. 3:3; 3:5; 4:29) and sonship of God (Gal. 4:6-7), and knew how to live (Gal. 5:16-19, 22-23, 6:8), emphasise the new aeon's presence (Hays 1989:210; 2005:140-141).

Importantly, He is referred to as the Spirit of the Son (Gal. 4:6-7) through whom believers call to God: Abba! Father! Paul emphatically refers to the Galatians' coming to faith in Christ as their [h]aving begun in the Spirit (Gal. 3:3). He strongly alludes to the idea of adoption as regeneration (Gal. 4:28-29). He refers to Abraham's two sons as born according to flesh and Spirit respectively. The one persecuted the other. He meaningfully adds: So it is now. All other implications of ridicule set aside, Paul aligns those of faith today, therefore sons of Abraham (Gal. 3:29), with the one born according to the Spirit (Gal. 4:29) in Abraham's day. Paul certainly insists that Christian life begins with the Spirit. He regards the Spirit as part and parcel of the realisation of Christ's advent in the life of the believer (Lee 2010:177-179). The arrival of the new aeon was as recognisable in the work of the Spirit of God's Son as in the advent, death and resurrection of Christ.[9] It rings even clearer when the reference to the Spirit (Gal. 4:6) is read against the backdrop of Gal. 4:4 (when the time had fully come), refering to Jewish apocalyptic's expected eschatological time.

The ethical section proper (Gal. 5:25-6:10) reflects three similar sounding expressions describing the connection between the Spirit and new life in Christ, i.e. πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε (Gal. 5:16), ζῶμεν πνεύματι (Gal. 5:25) and πνεύματι στοιχῶμεν (Gal. 5:25). ζῶμεν πνεύματι (*live* by the Spirit – Gal. 5:16) is a soteriological expression reminiscent of Gal. 3:3-5 where Paul refers to the Galatians' coming to faith as an act of the Spirit. Their new life began with the Spirit. Through the Spirit the Galatians became sons of God, calling: Abba! Father! (Gal. 4:5-7). ζῶμεν πνεύματι is a pneumatological-soteriological

9 Dunn (1993a:221) emphasises experiential and existential elements associated with the Spirit.

reference signifying new life through Christ as existentially realised in the believer through the activity of the Spirit. It emphasises the new status (soteriological indicative) of the believer (Morris 1996:176).

Πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε has a different nuance. It expresses the view that human life is essentially a "way of life" (Betz 1979:277). It is not only about one's disposition, but equally about a way of life according to the Spirit's guidance, being governed by Him in enacting the faith. For this reason one could equate πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε with its chiastic double πνεύματι ἄγεσθε (to be led by the Spirit – Gal. 5:18) (Bruce 1982:245). It is about allowing the Spirit to determine one's conduct (Bruce 1982:243) and denotes progress along a road determined by the Spirit.

Although πνεύματι στοιχῶμεν and πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε are essentially synonomous, Paul probably intented a nuance (Betz 1979:293). Once again he emphasises the indicative and imperative of faith. What makes it more significant is that they are combined in one sentence. He thus says that the indicative to live by the Spirit is inseparable from the imperative to be obedient to the Spirit. Christian life is not an idle waiting on the Spirit to provide the fruit, but an active struggle in which the Christian makes manifest the fruit He provides (Loubser 2009:358-361).

The notion that ethical conduct in the new era was the *fruit of the Spirit* (Gal. 5:22) emphasises the above and reflects the Jewish eschatological notion that ethical conduct will not be driven from outside by a regulatory law, but will be born from a heart set right with God through his indwelling Spirit.

> [T]hose who had been given the Spirit thus also knew the eschatological experience looked for in Jer. xxxi. 33-34 – an immediate knowledge of God, an enabling to know what God's will was in particular instances. This is the basis of a charismatic ethic, depending more on inward apprehension of what is the appropriate conduct than on rule book or tradition (Dunn 1993a:296).

## 2.4 Some more apocalyptic vocabulary in Gal. 6:1-10

From the above discussion on the Spirit, especially in the ethical section, it should be clear Galatians' ethics is portrayed as typical of the new era. Importantly, the rest of the ethical section with its different maxims is equally drenched in apocalyptic innuendo. The combined effect rather than the constitutive admonitions interest us. Undoubtedly, these admonitions remind one of Jesus' eschatological sayings.

*Firstly*, there are references to *bearing of burdens* (Gal. 6:2, 5). We read of trials and tribulations and a wide range of woes associated with the new era already in Jesus' eschatological sayings. His prophecy on the untruthful falling away and betrayal of one another (Mt. 24:10) is in stark contrast to Gal. 6 where Paul insists on the Galatians supporting one another, even restoring sinners in their relationship with God and the community. Ons is reminded of Jesus' reference to the eschatological judgement where the bearers of other's burdens are the inheritors of the kingdom (Mt. 25:31-40). Equally, it is about taking responsibility for one's own life (Gal. 6:3-5), like the maidens in the eschatological parable (Mt. 25:1-13). Paul also reflects this (Gal. 6:9), using the subjunctive mood of ἐγκακέω (grow weary) and the passive participle of ἐκλύομαι (dishearten), admonishing them not to grow weary in doing good, because they would reap eternal life if they did not loose heart or faith.

*Secondly*, *sowing and reaping* is profoundly apocalyptic. Noteworthy is Jesus' very central parable of the sower (Mt. 13:1-9, 18-23), and his appeal to the listeners to react in faith. Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43 relates the parable of the weeds among the wheat, emphasising the reaping as the time when the weeds and the harvest are separated – those intended for *corruption*, and those for *eternal life* at the close of the age (Mt. 13:40). Paul clearly alludes to this occasion in Gal. 6:7-9. In fact, using the word καιρός (Gal. 6:9, 10) he actually enhances the notion. Although it also has a more general meaning, such as *appropriate time* (Gal. 6:9) or merely *opportunity* (Gal. 6:10), contextually it has an eschatological bearing.

*Thirdly*, the call *not to be deceived* introduces the warning that *God is not mocked* (Gal. 6:7). The NT uses the active form of (ἀπο)πλανάω almost exclusively in an apocalyptic sense (Günther 1976:459; Betz 1979:306). Unsurprisingly, given the rest of the context, the very same applies here, although the passive is used.

Clearly, the whole ethical section is profoundly apocalyptic. From the intense role of the Spirit as the driving and guiding force to the specific maxims Paul finds it necessary to admonish the Galatians with, it is clear that a new situation had arisen and that its accompanying ethic would be radically different from its predecessor.

## 3. DRENCHED IN APOCALYPTIC FOR GOOD REASON

Moving from Galatians' prescript to its postscript, there is a profound shift from the old to the eschatologically new. The fullness of time left nothing unchanged. The gospel of Christ and its accompanying ethic of the Spirit, the indicative of salvation, as well as its imperative to live according to the

faithfulness of Christ, was new. A new paradigm had arrived and had to be introduced to people struggling to understand the full implications of the switch. Paul's rhetoric of apocalyptic innuendo reflects his hope to help his readers to make this change in their own lives.

## 3.1 Apocalyptic innuendo to reframe a symbolic universe

Why did Paul opt for apocalyptic?[10] He could have taken a salvation-historical approach, stressing the continuity between the two eras, especially since he makes abundant use of Abraham and the covenant. Paul probably wanted to emphasise the *discontinuity* between the eras. His theology was undoubtedly motivated by the revealed knowledge that God, in the advent of Christ and his Spirit, had decisively brought about the advent of the eschatological time to which Judaism looked forward and in which all believers in Christ, Jew and Gentile alike, shared. It is probably safe to assume that amongst the believers in Galatia there were former Gentiles well read in, or at least knowledgeable of the Old Testament and Judaism. The fact that they were so quickly (Gal. 1:6) misled to desert the gospel implies their earlier genuine acceptance of Paul's gospel. Unfortunately, the Jewish symbolic universe with which they were familiar was still lurking beneath the surface without effective reinterpretation. The Judaisers could convince them that Judaism's law-dominated symbolic universe had not fundamentally changed. Christ had been added and it had been re-oriented towards Him, but, for instance, Jewish ethics remained intact.

Donaldson (1997:43-47; 1989:655-682) introduces Thomas Kuhn's insight from natural science that scientific progress is seldom development-by-accumulation. It does not necessarily build onto previously discovered premises. It is much more revolutionary. Given the right impetus, one set of premises by which the world is ordered and made sense of, is replaced by another. It is about paradigm shifts from one worldview to another. When the existing paradigm cannot explain anomalies arising and challenging the paradigm beyond its limits, a new set of tools is needed. Is this what happened to Paul?

When he experienced the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, he became aware that something radically different had come over his

10 Dunn (2005:30, 250-258) argues that Paul did not opt for either the apocalyptic or salvation-historical approach to the detriment of the other. The tension between the two should always be upheld. Granted, but in Galatians apocalyptic is the dominant one.

Jewish path. He could no longer explain everything in terms of his old paradigm and had to rethink his entire theology. Although the detailed implications were probably filled in on a continual basis, in the long run it would prove to be a radical switch. Although the switch took place with his Christophany, the articulation of the new paradigm took shape whilst serving the Gentiles. By the time Paul wrote his Letter to the Galatians he had already thought things through thoroughly and was convinced that a new creation had come about. He wanted to convey this radical change. In that difficult time for Paul, one of emotional, pastoral and theological turmoil and crisis, nothing less than a total reframing of their symbolic universe could solve the issue. For this Paul employed the available and effective metaphor of apocalyptic with its emphasis on discontinuity.

## 3.2 Apocalyptic innuendo to stress a radically new era and ethic

Martyn (2000:253) observes that the apocalyptically loaded *present evil age* is at the opening of the letter, whilst the equally apocalyptic opposite, *new creation* is central to the closing, illustrating the motif of apocalyptic discontinuity central to Paul's view of the gospel … Paul probably wanted to emphasise that the advent of Christ and his Spirit had radically changed life itself. A radically new approach would have to be taken in reviewing the time in which they lived, the community of faith and their ethic. The change brought about by this revelation of God irrevocably transformed allegiances (Gal. 1:10), status (slave to son), being (crucified with Christ – Gal. 2:20) and ethics (walk by the Spirit – Gal. 5:25). It was not a piecemeal change, but a radical and encompassing one in which the way things were earlier perceived was no longer valid – let alone the idea that it could merely be adapted.[11] Paul feared the Galatians would, under influence of the Judaisers, think of their new status after faith in Christ as mere adoption into Judaism with its exclusivism and law-observant ethic. It has been indicated that Paul's use of apocalyptic language is not restricted to his soteriology, but equally functional in his ethical section. Using apocalyptic metaphors and language he stresses that those in Christ have died to the world and have been resurrected into a new creation inconceivably different from anything formerly known in or outside Judaism. Life itself had changed from multi-faceted, overall bondage to radical freedom in Christ; from an ethic externally dominated by and under constant threat of

11 Malan (1992:425-440) stresses that the two women of the allegory represent two contrasting, mutually exclusive symbolic universes (431), one of bondage, the other of freedom (435). Martyn (2005:126) speaks of this new creation as allocation accenting the motif of radical, uncompromising newness ...

law, to one motivated from the heart newly created; from death to life; from being part and parcel of the evil age, to being part and parcel of the new creation. Galatians emphasises the discontinuity between the age from where believers come and the new creation of which they are now part. What was certain and acceptable in the old dispensation could no longer be taken for granted (Witherington 1998:74).

> Paul's moral vision is intelligible only when his apocalyptic perspective is kept clearly in mind: the church is to find its identity and vocation by recognizing its role within the cosmic drama of God's reconciliation of the world to himself (Hays 1996:19).

Paul's introduction of the Spirit, both soteriologically and ethically, is profoundly important. The Spirit, the long awaited solution to the Jewish ethical plight, had arrived. The new ethic would be born from a life and walk in Him. No longer would ethics be determined by an exterior, enslaving law, and its quality by a human endeavour to hold true to law. The new ethical freedom would be determined from the heart set free and guided by the Spirit living in believers (Hays 1996:24).

## 3.3 Apocalyptic innuendo to stress a radically new community

In the old dispensation membership of God's people was determined by law. Those outside Israel could become part of it by allegiance to the law. Now, in the new dispensation it is determined by allegiance to Christ alone. Paul could not, in terms of this paradigm switch, tolerate anything in between. To expect someone to become Jewish in order to be fully Christian would be tantamount to severance from Christ (Gal. 5:4). In fact, he not only denounces religious and ethnic distinctions between believers, but equally radically denounces sexual and social distinctions (Gal. 3:28). Allegiance to Christ was now the defining criterion. There could no longer be any comparing of and boasting in observance of the law between fellow believers. All believers would have Christ in them and would be led by the Spirit endowed to them in equal measure. In fact, boasting had to make way for supporting, serving and loving one another in exemplifying Christ crucified (Gal. 6:12-14) (Duff 1989:283).

Martyn (2005:128) refers to this new community as the new creation continually being conformed to Christ crucified. They are the new liberated and liberating society in the midst of the old. He also refers to this new community as God's new human agent and the only one that can be effectively addressed with hortatory and imperative verbs; for … it is into the heart of this agent that God has sent the Spirit of his Son (2006:180).

## 3.4 Apocalyptic innuendo to stress our freedom

All too often the subject of freedom in Galatians is restricted to freedom from law. In view of the above, we must think of freedom as freedom from a total symbolic universe encapsulating humankind's whole being in bondage, slavery, tutelage and immaturity. We must think of freedom as freedom from an outdated age which was without Christ and his Spirit – so radically different and bent into itself that a new life and way of living had to be revealed into it by God's Son. It was something of such tremendous impact that the result was not a mutation of the old, but its replacement by a new creation. We must understand Paul's view of freedom as eschatological freedom – the freedom of the time inaugurated by the advent of Christ and his Spirit!

> It is this apocalyptic vision, then, that has given Paul his perception of the nature of the human plight. God has invaded the world in order to bring it under his liberating control. From that deed of God a conclusion is to be drawn, and the conclusion is decidedly apocalyptic: God would not have to carry out an invasion in order merely to forgive erring human beings. The root trouble lies deeper than human guilt, and it is more sinister. The whole of humanity – indeed the whole of creation (3:22) – is, in fact, trapped, enslaved under the power of the present evil age. That is the background of God's invasive action in his sending of Christ, in his declaration of war, and in his striking the decisive and liberating blow against the power of the present evil age (Martyn 1997:105).

# 4. STILL RELEVANT

The Galatians had to grasp that they were eschatological people living in eschatological times, and that they had to *live* equally eschatologically. The letter is concerned with their understanding of and aligning with the gospel in this life. It is about choices for daily living; about understanding the time they live in, and living by the good news that set them free, and not in terms of previous orientations.

Paul's concerns then are no less relevant today as believers still fall prey to, and are lured into an ethic not born from their identity in Christ, but from domination by biblical literalism, theological traditionalism, or a new form of nomism dictating from outside their being in Christ. Two millennia after the advent of Christ and into the new creation believers still often tend to make ethical choices on the grounds of casuistic deduction, whilst Paul took pains to emphasise that since the invasion of Christ and his Spirit into this world we live simply in the faithfulness of Christ through the inner

persuasion of the Spirit. After all this time, believers, faith communities and church denominations still grapple with what their freedom entails, living by human dictates and decontextualised so-called scriptural maxims.

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