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# RESEARCH ON THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS: 2000-2010

## ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to an overview of research published on the Letter to the Galatians from 2000 to 2010. An attempt is made to paint as detailed a picture as possible of the research on the letter, but in such a way that the gist of the contributions that have been selected is also communicated, albeit very briefly. Research on Galatians in the following five areas is discussed: introductory issues (e.g., authorship, opponents and recipients), the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the letter, interpretative approaches to the letter, studies of particular verses/passages in the letter and the theology of the letter.

The aim of this study is to present an overview of the research published on the Letter to the Galatians from 2000 to 2010. The large number of studies falling within this period (more or less 450 articles and books!) makes it impossible to discuss – or even to mention in passing – all the work that has been done in this regard, in a brief overview such as this. A possible way out of this dilemma would be to restrict this overview to only those contributions that have brought fundamentally new insights to bear on the interpretation of the letter. However, such an approach also has a disadvantage, since one would be constrained to omit many valuable contributions which are indeed based on sound scholarship, but which have not really brought about major changes in the interpretation of the letter, for example, in cases where such contributions have clarified only a minute detail of the text, or have merely added another possibility to an already large range of existing interpretations of a particular issue. A further disadvantage of such an approach is that it would not really provide an overall picture of developments pertaining to the research on the letter. Accordingly, I have opted for another approach, namely to paint as detailed

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a picture as possible of the research on the letter, but in such a way that the gist of the contributions that I have selected is also communicated, albeit very briefly. I will thus refrain from entering into detailed discussions and evaluations of these studies. Instead, the aim of this overview is to offer the reader a broad orientation of the research conducted on this letter.

I have divided the overview into five main areas (with subdivisions). I have attempted to place studies according to the area which received the most emphasis in each case; but in some instances it was difficult to decide on the category under which a particular study should be discussed. Furthermore, in some instances so many studies have been devoted to a particular issue that I had no other option than to restrict the overview to representative examples of the type of research that has been done. Lastly, I have decided not to discuss any commentaries in this overview, since it is impossible to summarise the contribution of a commentary in a few sentences.

## 1. INTRODUCTORY ISSUES

Of the introductory issues normally considered by scholars when New Testament writings are investigated, the *authorship* of the Letter to the Galatians received the least attention. As far as I could determine, only two scholars raised doubts about the authenticity of the letter: Building on work previously published in 1967-1968, *Frank McGuire* (2003:1-22) (again) proposed that the letter was not written by Paul; and *Harold Hoehner* (2006:150-169) (who accepts Pauline authorship) pointed out how arguments normally used in attempts to demonstrate the inauthenticity of the disputed Pauline letters may also be used to call the authenticity of Galatians into question.

The issue of the *recipients* of the letter received a little more attention, with arguments for and against the North/South-Galatian hypotheses continually being raised. A noteworthy development in the period under consideration is that there were indications that the South Galatian hypothesis, which traditionally did not meet with widespread acceptance in German scholarship, had begun to make inroads in this area.<sup>1</sup> As examples in this regard, the work of *Thomas Witulski* (2000) and *Dieter Sänger* (2010) may be cited. Witulski, for instance, supports the South Galatian hypothesis, and also argues that Galatians actually consists of two independent letters (which have been passed down to us as Galatians 4:8-20 and the rest of the letter respectively), which were both sent by Paul to Christians in the southern parts of the province of Galatia. At a

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1 See the study already conducted by Breytenbach (1996) at an earlier stage.

later stage, according to Witulski, these two letters were found by a post-Pauline editor in the archives of these congregations and combined into one letter. For scholars favouring the North Galatian hypothesis, two important studies on the Keltic background of the Galatians warrant attention. Although neither of them focuses on the Letter to the Galatians as such, they provide important insights into the language and culture of this group: *Philip Freeman* (2001) collected all the words of the ancient Galatian language that are known to modern scholarship – about 120 words of what was still a living language in Paul’s time. *Karl Strobel* (2009:117-144) traced the process of ethnogenesis and acculturation of the Galatian peoples in Central Anatolia. He explains how the three Galatian groups originated and how the Galatian elite was shaped by an early Hellenisation process. According to him, the most prominent feature that distinguished the Galatians from other groups in Asia Minor was their common use of the Keltic language, which continued until Late Antiquity. Two more studies should be mentioned here: *Clinton Arnold* (2005:429-449) links the willingness of the Galatians to receive the gospel of Paul’s opponents to the Galatians’ pre-Christian religious experiences – in particular to the fact that they were accustomed to fulfilling cultic requirements and performing good works to maintain a positive standing with deities; and *Bas van Os* (2008:51-64) argues that a close reading of the letter shows that it was addressed to a mixed audience of Jews and Gentiles, rather than only to Gentiles – as generally accepted by scholars.

With regard to *Paul’s opponents in Galatia*, interesting developments can be noted. At the one extreme is the viewpoint of *Lauri Thurén* (2005:268-288), who claims that Paul had no opponents – or “antagonists” as Thurén prefers to call them – in Galatia. Thurén concedes that there are references to antagonists in the letter, but argues that they are only “textual”; not real people. According to him, some people (or something) in Galatia did in fact trigger the massive theological process reflected in Galatians, but they were not “antagonists” in the real sense of the word; rather, these “antagonists” were created by Paul in order to discuss complex theological matters in a way that would interest his audience.

Not unexpectedly, however, most of the attention devoted by scholars to the issue of Paul’s opponents in Galatia was focused on making an attempt to describe the opponents more accurately. Some examples in this regard: According to *Mark Nanos* (2002a),<sup>2</sup> who views Galatians as a letter of ironic rebuke, the Galatian “influencers” were not believers, did not come from outside and thus did not form an inter-Christian opposition

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2 See also the other important studies in this regard by Nanos: 2002b:282-318, 2005a:59-97, and 2005b:255-269.

to Paul; rather, they formed part of Jewish communities in Galatia who had become involved with Paul's Gentile converts, because they regarded them as possible proselytes who could be integrated into the larger Jewish communities.<sup>3</sup> *Richard Cook* (2002:182-191) has a different theory: In Galatia Paul was confronted by some of the victims of his earlier persecution, possibly from Jerusalem. They had moved or relocated to Galatia, where they began to denounce him to his converts. Yet another interpretation of the situation is offered by *Bern Wander* (2007:53-70): The opponents in Galatia were Jewish Christians, who were under pressure as a result of the growing radicalism in the Jewish community in the fifties and sixties of the first century AD, which explains their behaviour.

In the period considered in this article, several scholars also attempted to link Paul's opponents in Galatia to what had happened in other Christian congregations, with different scenarios being offered. For example, *John Hurd* (2005:125-148) argues that Paul's opponents in Galatia and those in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 were the same people, whereas *Jerry Sumney* (2007:57-80) believes that they were not. In this regard the study of *Ian Elmer* (2009) should also be mentioned: He situates the crisis in Galatia within the context of a much broader conflict in Christianity, which had its earliest origins in the Jesus movement in Jerusalem. He detects echoes of events in the Letters to the Romans, Corinthians and Philippians that are reminiscent of those found in Galatians, from which he concludes that the conflict in Galatia was but one chapter in a much larger scenario in which Jerusalem and its leadership constituted the primary source of Paul's problems.

With regard to the *purpose* of the letter, two studies need to be mentioned: According to *Dieter Mitternacht* (2003:31-41), the purpose of the letter was to persuade the readers not to join the Jewish community in an attempt to avoid suffering.<sup>4</sup> *Todd Wilson* (2007) argues that Paul's primary aim in the letter is to confront the Galatians with a choice between blessing and curse; and to explain to them how they can obtain the blessing and avoid the curse, namely through the Spirit.

*Historical issues underlying Galatians*, in particular how the letter and Acts may be used as sources for historical information on Paul's career, continued to receive attention. Quite a number of studies were devoted to this issue. To illustrate the kind of research that was conducted, I will provide three examples: *Niels Hyldahl* (2000:425-444) reconstructs the

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3 For some responses to Nanos's thesis, see McDonald (2003:161-163) and Bachmann (2004:97-103).

4 I am not able to read the language in which this article was written; this summary is based on the abstract in *New Testament Abstracts*.

events pertaining to Galatians as follows: formation of the congregations in Galatia – appearance of the opponents (“Eindringlinge”) – Jerusalem conference – Antioch episode – Letter to the Galatians – decision of Christians in Galatia to take Paul’s side. He also believes that Paul only learnt of the problems in Galatia during his visit to Jerusalem, and that these problems were caused by the “false brethren” (2:4) who had the support of the “pillars” in Jerusalem (2:6, 9). However, during his visit to Jerusalem Paul succeeded in persuading the “pillars” to discontinue their support. *Michael Winger* (2002:548-567) tries to reconstruct Paul’s preaching during “Act One”, i.e. during his ministry in Galatia when the congregations were formed. He also indicates what he believes Paul did *not* preach about, namely the law and the flesh – which left a gap which the “Teachers” tried to fill during “Act Two”. *Ruth Schäfer* (2004) offers a detailed reconstruction of the biography of Paul, with the emphasis on the period from his Damascus Road experience until the Jerusalem Conference. Two of the many features of this work are the combination of an early date for the founding of the congregations in Galatia with a later date for the writing of the letter, and the positive evaluation of the historical value of Acts.

In terms of *possible backgrounds* for interpreting Galatians, quite a variety of suggestions were made. It is not possible to mention all of them, but the following may serve as an indication of the nature of the issues that were raised: *Troels Engberg-Pedersen* (2000) detects a similar basic thought structure underlying both Stoic ethics and Pauline literature, which he summarises as  $I \rightarrow X \rightarrow S$ , where I stands for the initial involvement of the addressees, X for the conversion and S for the new state of communality. According to *Nikolaus Walter* (2000:275-306), the concept “pillars” (used by Paul in 2:9), if interpreted from a Jewish background, refers not so much to their leadership in the Jerusalem congregation, but rather to their outstanding commitment to the law (“hervorragende Gesetzesfromme” p. 88). With regard to the Antioch incident, *Stephen Cummins* (2001) proposes that the central point of disagreement (the question as to what distinguishes those who belong to the people of God) should be interpreted against the background of a Maccabean martyr model in Judaism which was Christologically reconfigured and also applied by Paul to his own ministry. *Susan Elliott* (2003) reads Galatians against the Anatolian cultic background and argues that Paul’s concern about circumcision was primarily motivated by an aversion to the cult of the Mother of the gods and the similarity between circumcision and the self-castration performed by her followers, the *galli*. *Matthias Konradt* (2005:25-48) links Paul’s view of Abraham in Galatians to a tendency in Hellenistic Judaism to interpret Abraham in a more inclusive sense; e.g., Philo regarded Abraham as an example for Gentiles of how to come to faith. *Ullrich Mell* (2006:353-373)

also links Galatians to Judaism. According to him, in terms of genre, the letter is an example of a “Gemeindeleitungsbrief” and Paul is following early Jewish conventions in this regard. In terms of *archaeology*, the contribution of *Timothy Lim* (2004:361-376) may be mentioned. He explains Paul’s statement in 3:15 that a διαθήκη may not be annulled or added to once it has been ratified by referring to P. Yadin 19, in which a certain Judah transfers all that he owns to his daughter – half of it immediately and the other half after his death.

Paul’s *use of the Old Testament* also attracted attention. The issue was addressed from various perspectives. Of the many studies published on this issue, I will mention only a few representative examples. Some scholars investigated the letter as a whole. For example, *Moisés Silva* (2007:785-810) discusses two of the allusions to the Old Testament (1:15-16; 2:6) and all of the quotations from the Old Testament in the letter. His study is based on the premise that Paul not only depended on the Old Testament when pressed, but that it was fundamental to his theology. Other scholars focused only on a particular passage/quotation in the letter, or on the relationship between a particular book in the Old Testament and Galatians. The passage in the letter that received the most attention is 3:1-14. For example, in a detailed study of this passage, *Andrew Wakefield* (2003) argues that Paul’s use of the Hebrew Bible reflects an interest or matrix which Wakefield describes as “where to live”, i.e. that Paul urged the Galatians to live in the new age rather than the old age. Particular quotations in the letter that received attention were those in 3:12 (e.g., *Nicole Chibici-Revneanu* [2008:105-119]: Paul focused on the ἐν in ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς in Lev. 18:5, using it to contrast a life *in* the law and a life *from* [ἐκ] faith) and 4:27 (e.g., *Martin de Boer* [2004:370-389]: Paul reflected on Isaiah 54:1 in the light of the crisis in Galatia and this prompted his allegorical interpretation of the story in Genesis, in that the two women who are contrasted in Isa 54:1 provided him with an apocalyptic antinomy which helped him to find other pairs in the Genesis story which he could interpret within a Christological and apocalyptic eschatology). Some scholars focused on the way in which a particular Old Testament book was quoted, or alluded to, in Galatians, or the way in which it had influenced Paul’s thought, e.g., Deuteronomy (Ciampa 2007:99-117), Isaiah (Harmon 2010) and the Psalms (Keesmaat 2004:139-161). Other scholars focused on the way in which Old Testament/Jewish traditions were used in Galatians. Of these, the Abraham tradition (as it was reinterpreted in Judaism) received a fair amount of attention. For example, *Nancy Calvert-Koyzis* (2004) argues that the most prevalent tradition about Abraham, namely his rejection of idolatry in favour of monotheistic faith, formed the background of Paul’s argument on Abraham, in that Paul regarded obedience to the law as a

form of idolatry that was to be rejected in favour of faith in the one God, whereas *Oda Wischmeyer* (2010:119-163) proposes that Paul did not link Abraham primarily to the history of Israel, but rather viewed him as an exemplary figure in a general anthropological sense: *the* human being whose relationship to God was constituted by faith. Other traditions that received attention were the exodus-wilderness tradition [*Wilson* 2004:550-571]: Paul regarded the Galatians as being in the wilderness and on the verge of apostasy; and *Wilder* [2001]: The Exodus Narrative and the Exodus interpretation of Ps 143:10 formed the background of Galatians 5:18); the motifs of blessing for the nations and the curse of the covenant (*Wisdom* [2001]: In contrast to the contemporary interpretation, Paul regarded blessing for the nations as a central part of the covenant with Abraham; since the troublemakers were against this gospel, they were under a curse); and restoration eschatology (*Morales* [2010]: Careful analysis of passages referring to the Spirit in Galatians 3 and 4 reveals the importance of restoration eschatology in the letter).

Text-critical, linguistic, stylistic and translation issues continued to receive attention, albeit to a relatively small extent. Two studies on *text-critical* issues may be mentioned: According to *William Walker* (2003:568-587), Galatians 2:7b-8 should be regarded as a non-Pauline interpolation; and according to *Enno Eduard Popkes* (2004:253-264), P<sup>46</sup> represents the original reading of 2:12 (τινα instead of τινας), which means that the Antioch incident was caused by the arrival of a single person and not a group of people. *Grammatical issues* that received attention were Paul's use of the locative ἐν in Galatians (Fee 2007a:170-185); the two conditional clauses in 1:8-9 (*Armitage* [2007:365-392] illustrates the advantages of an integrative approach – i.e. utilising syntactics, semantics and speech act theory – in this instance); ἐὰν μή in 2:16 (according to *Das* [2000:529-539], the expression ἐὰν μή was ambiguous, and Paul's opponents would have interpreted it as a confirmation of their views, whereas Paul would have interpreted it as implying justification by faith alone; *Huhn* [2007:281-290] argues that the expression should not necessarily be interpreted as indicating an exception to the entire preceding sentence); and the two grammatical oddities in 3:28 – the use of the verb ἐνεπιμι and the gender of the adjectives (*Walden* 2008:45-50). With regard to *stylistic issues*, *Marius Reiser* (2001:151-165) claims that Paul's style (e.g., in 2:1-10) was representative of his spoken language, and that, in fact, he was the first person on record to have written a Greek text as if he were speaking it (“... gesprochene Sprache eines kompetenten Sprechers mit den typischen Erscheinungen der spontanen Rede” – p. 157). Furthermore, *Terrence Callahan* (2007:496-516) offers a detailed exposition of stylistic elements in Galatians (in terms of vocabulary and syntax) and then discusses the



presence of plain, middle and grand styles in the letter. He argues that the letter was mostly written in the plain style, and also draws attention to the large number of metaphors in the letter. Paul's *use of metaphors* was also the subject of several other studies. The metaphor that received the most attention was the παιδαγωγός metaphor in 3:24-25 (O'Neill 2001:50-64; Sanger 2006:236-260 and Smith 2006:197-214). Susan Eastman (2007) focuses on the maternal images used in Galatians, and refers to them as Paul's "mother tongue", demonstrating the "staying power" of the gospel. Some of the other metaphors that received attention are the slavery metaphors in the letter (Byron 2003); amatory motifs (Fredrickson 2000:257-264); the *toga virilis* ceremony and the putting on of Christ in 3:27 (Harrill 2002:252-277); the "elements" of the world in 4:3, 9 (De Boer 2007:204-224; Woyke 2008:221-234); the contest metaphor in 5:7 (Poplutz 2004); and metaphorical kinship (Rhoads 2004:282-297). With regard to the *translation* of Galatians, a few articles addressed the challenges faced by translators: Zeba Crook (2008:25-38) proposes that χαρις in 2:9 (and elsewhere in Pauline literature) should be translated as "benefaction" or "favour"; Daryl Schmidt (2002:127-147) draws attention to the effect that the New Perspective on Paul and new rhetorical insights should have on the translation of Galatians; and Francois Tolmie (2009:161-177) offers a survey of the most important translation problems posed by the letter.

## 2. WIRKUNGSGESCHICHTE

The person whose interpretation of Galatians attracted the most attention in the period considered in this article, is *Martin Luther*. About ten studies were devoted to his interpretation of Galatians. Of these, I will mention two examples: Jorg Kailus (2004) highlights the relationship between law and gospel in Luther's commentary on Galatians, and argues that this distinction was primarily a spiritual concept ("seelsorgerliche Grosse"), which was aimed at overcoming afflictions ("Anfechtungen"). According to Stephen Chester (2009:315-337), contrary to what is often claimed, the failure of traditional Protestant interpretations of Pauline theology to relate justification by faith to participatory categories does not stem from Luther; in Luther's exegesis of Galatians, he integrated the two effectively.

Strangely enough, Calvin's interpretation of Galatians did not attract nearly as much attention as that of Luther. I could find only one study in which Calvin's exegesis of Galatians was considered extensively, namely that of Juha Mikkonen (2007), who offers a comparison of substantial concepts in Luther's and Calvin's commentaries on Galatians. He concludes that, although Calvin's commentary is not dependent on that of Luther, the two commentaries basically arrive at similar positions. He



also indicates several differences between the two commentaries, e.g., the fact that one's suffering as a Christian and the scandal of the cross are significant themes only in Luther's commentary.

Significant progress was made in the study of the interpretation of Galatians in the patristical era and beyond, with several noteworthy studies being published: Three important commentaries on Galatians were translated for the first time into English, namely that of Augustine by *Eric Plumer* (2003), that of Marius Victorinus by *Stephen A. Cooper* (2005), and that of Jerome by *Thomas P. Scheck* (2010) and by *Andrew Cain* (2010).

With regard to Augustine, two other important publications also need to be mentioned: *Alfons Fürst* (2002) collected 18 of the 26 letters forming part of the correspondence between Augustine and Jerome, translated them into German and commented on them. For Galatian scholars, the correspondence between the two on Galatians 2:11-14 is of particular interest. *Ludwig Fladerer's* (2010) primary aim was to study Augustine's interpretation of Genesis, but he begins his study with a comparison of Augustine's commentary on Galatians with those of Victorinus, Ambrose and Jerome. He shows, *inter alia*, that in Augustine's commentary the original text played a more important role, that his comments were driven by a pastoral concern (the salvation of his readers), and that he emphasised the correct predisposition of the exegete. Two other studies had a broader aim: *Martin Meiser* (2007) offers a detailed study of the reception of Galatians, spanning the period from the Church Fathers until Bede, and *John Riches* (2008) provides an overview of the way in which Galatians was interpreted through the ages, focusing on important commentators from Marcion to Lightfoot (including more recent scholars). A last important resource for the study of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Galatians that warrants mention is *Heino Gaese's* publication of Bengel's commentary (both in Latin and German) on Romans, Galatians, James and the Sermon on the Mount (his main writings on justification), from his well-known *Gnomon* (Bengel 2003).

### 3. INTERPRETATIVE APPROACHES

The variety of interpretative approaches to Galatians that were followed during the time-span under consideration is truly astonishing. To present a detailed overview of all of these would not be possible. Instead, I will attempt to give an overview of the different kinds of approaches that were followed, beginning with approaches that did not receive much attention (i.e. which were followed by only one or a small number of scholars), and then moving on to approaches that were more popular.

*Logical analysis* was the focus of one study: *Ian W. Scott* (2006) asks the question as to what kind of epistemology Paul employed when he tried to lead people to greater knowledge. According to him, the answer to this question is partly found in Galatians. On this basis, he goes on to argue that Paul basically tried to “emplot” his readers within a theological narrative which he believed to be better than that of the opponents. The continuing interest in *epistolographical issues* can be illustrated by two studies: *Rainer Dillman* (2007:111-131) compares the salutations in Galatians and Romans, and indicates how the relationship with Paul’s readers was constituted in different ways in the two letters. *Robert E. van Voorst* (2010:153-172) proposes that the lack of a thanksgiving in Galatians should not be linked primarily to the rebuke in 1:6ff., but rather to the form and content of the first five verses. *Dieter Mitternacht* applied no fewer than three different approaches to the letter. In one contribution (2002:480-433), he shows how a *recipient-oriented approach* could be used, arguing that Paul attempted to persuade the Galatians to accept persecution. In another contribution (2007a:53-98) he demonstrates how one can read Galatians in an *aural setting*, focusing on questions such as what the first readers would have remembered after having listened to the letter, and the structural elements in the letter which would have aided its reception. In a third contribution (2007b:157-182), he follows a *psychological* approach, applying insights from psychological studies by H.H. Kelley (on human perception of causal schemes) and Hjalmar Sundén (a religion-psychological theory on the importance of roles – “Rollentheorie”) to Galatians. Another example of a psychological approach was the study of *James A. Kelhoffer* (2007:307-325), who draws attention to pronouncements of anger in the Pauline letters (e.g., Galatians 5:19-20), and then indicates that the anger that Paul expressed toward Peter in Antioch was not consistent with Paul’s own expectations of others, but that he probably would have regarded his anger as justified. The application of *speech-act theory* to Galatians was illustrated by *Pieter Verster* (2007:142-161), in particular in terms of a classification of non-authentic questions in the letter. The way in which life in the context of *the Roman Empire* can be used as interpretative grid for understanding Galatians is demonstrated by the following studies: *Leonor Ossa* (2004) detects a counter-programme against contemporary Roman views of urbanity in Galatians. Taking the two cities in 4:21-31 as a point of departure, she discusses the urban theology in the letter, and concludes that the letter shows that the classical experiences of a democratic city were never really extinguished. *Justin K. Hardin* (2008) proposes that Galatians should be interpreted against the background of the imperial cult, and that it should be assumed, for example, that Galatians 4:10 refers to the imperial cult calendar. This would imply that the Galatians were participating in the imperial cult at the time that Paul wrote the letter.

*Brigitte Kahl* (2010) argues that Galatians is not correctly interpreted in terms of a model contrasting Christianity with Judaism; according to her, the real target of the letter was the imperial gospel, an ideology of universal law and order.

*Sociological approaches* continued to be popular, as evidenced by the following five studies: In one study, *Philip Esler* (2000:145-184) argues that in both 1 Thessalonians and Galatians, Paul tried to develop a group identity based on the model of the family, the most prominent model of relationships in his time,<sup>5</sup> and in a second study (2006:23-34) he applies social theories on ethnicity, social identity and collective memory to clarify the way in which Abraham was used as an argument by Paul's opponents and the way in which Paul reacted to this. *Christfried Böttrich* (2002:224-239) applies insights from modern conflict theory to Paul's version of the Antioch incident. Two other studies focused on issues of identity construction: *Atsuhiko Asano* (2005) describes community identity-construction in Galatians (in particular, the recreation of a world view), citing Kanzo Uchimura and his Mukyokai in Japan as an analogical case. *Bernard Ukwuegbu* (2008:538-559) offers an interpretation of Galatians 5:13-6:10 in terms of Social Identity Theory, arguing that the normative prescriptions in the letter should be understood as part of an attempt by Paul to foster group identity.

Several studies based on *narrative approaches* were published. Some followed a *narrative critical approach*, e.g., *Edward Adams* (2000b:205-254 – ideology and point of view), *Timothy Wiarda* (2004:231-252 – plot and character) and *Alain Gignac* (2006:5-22 – various narratological concepts), all focusing on Galatians 1-2.<sup>6</sup> Other scholars continued along the lines of the research initiated by Richard Hays (1983). As an example of such an approach, a collection of studies by *Bruce W. Longenecker* (2002) may be cited. In this volume a number of Pauline specialists compare five “stories” in Galatians and Romans, i.e. the stories on God and creation, Israel, Jesus, Paul, and on predecessors and inheritors (followed by responses of several other leading scholars).

The *hermeneutical perspective* from which one interprets Galatians received considerable attention. Once again the variety of approaches

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5 Cf. also the critical response by *Jan Willem van Henten* (2000:185-191): “The family is not all that matters.” According to Van Henten, there are at least three other models that should also be considered: The Christians as a holy community, as a group of special philosophers and as a unique people.

6 Cf. also the article by *Martin Ebner* (2006:109-116), which is not a narrative-critical analysis itself, but which recounts the way a congregation in Galatia may have reacted after Paul's letter had been read to them for the first time.

is noteworthy. To distinguish clearly between all the approaches is not always possible, but the following examples may serve as an illustration of the work that has been done in this regard: *G. Daan Cloete* (2003:268-283) reads the letter in the *new, post-apartheid South Africa* by means of “rainbow hermeneutics”, in particular as a document of transformation. *Alio Cissé Niang* (2009) reads it through the lens of the experiences of colonialism as undergone by the Diola people in Senegal, West Africa, i.e. by means of *sociopostcolonial hermeneutics*: The colonial objectification of the Diola is compared to what the Galatians experienced, with emphasis on Paul’s role in bringing about change in this regard. *Brad R. Braxton*<sup>7</sup> (2002) interprets the letter in terms of *African American experience*: Although slavery has been outlawed for a long time in the US, an ideological form of slavery continues, from which the letter can liberate one. *Sze-Kar Wan* (2000:107-131; cf. also Wan 2009:246-264) offers an interpretation of the letter *from an Asian-American perspective*, specifically in terms of a *diaspora hermeneutics* which, according to him, implies a kind of universality that should operate by means of dialogue and cooperation. *Khiok-khn Yeo* published several articles in which Galatians was interpreted from a *Chinese perspective*. For example, in one study Yeo (2006:25-51) compares the concepts of *xin* (trust) in Confucius and *pistis* in Paul, demonstrating how Confucius might help one to interpret Paul. *Jeremy W. Barrier* (2008:336-362) interprets the *stigmata* that Paul mentions in Galatians 6:17 from a postcolonial perspective: These demonstrate Paul’s self-identity as a slave and his longing for a master worthy of his loyalty – a factor which, according to Barrier, makes the slavery metaphor undesirable and emphasises the necessity for Christians to look for better metaphors in our times. Several studies from a *gender perspective* were also published. Some scholars were critical of Paul. For example, according to *Willi Braun* (2002:108-117), early Christianity was wholly an androcentric project; even “women-friendly” texts such as Galatians 3:28 are based on a masculinised gender ideology. *Dale Martin* (2006:77-90) makes a similar point: Galatians 3:28 does not address equality; rather, it states that the inferior female form has been taken up in the perfected male form – a notion that is best to be avoided. Instead, Martin argues that the opposite should take place: What is masculine should be taken up in the feminine. Other scholars emphasised the positive value that the letter could have for gender issues, e.g., *Pamela Eisenbaum* (2000:522):

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7 Cf. also his contribution on Galatians to the *African American New Testament Commentary* (Braxton 2007:333-347).

Gal. 3:28 encapsulates the message that people who are different can, if they choose, come to understand themselves as meaningfully related to each other...

Other examples: *Beverly Gaventa* (2000:278): “Galatians emerges as a powerful voice articulating God’s new creation that liberates both women and men...”; and *Tatha Wiley* (2005:11), who reads the letter from the perspective of Gentile women in the Galatian congregations: It addressed the question as to “whether the membership of Gentile believers in the Galatian assemblies would be differentiated by gender.” Issues of *race and ethnicity* were examined by *Denise Kimber Buell* and *Caroline Johnson Hodge* (2004:235-251), who argue that one should use a dynamic model to read Galatians in such a way that one steers clear of modern forms of racism.

Finally, *rhetorical analysis* remained one of the most popular approaches to Galatians. Since I have published a detailed overview of tendencies in the rhetorical analysis of Galatians from 1995 to 2005 elsewhere (Tolmie 2007:1-28), I will not do so again here. Suffice it to say that the tendencies indicated for 1995-2005 can also be demonstrated in the research published from 2006 to 2010, e.g., the fact that the rigid application of ancient rhetorical categories seems to be on the decline; that there is more interest in function than in rhetorical categories as such; and that there is a growing interest in alternative approaches. In this regard, see, e.g., the studies by *Christopher Stanley* (2004), *Mika Hietanen* (2007), *Johan Vos* (2007:29-52), *Sze-Kar Wan* (2008:67-81), *Carl Joachim Classen* (2009:145-172) and *David V. Urban* (2010:28-42).

#### 4. STUDIES ON PARTICULAR VERSES/PASSAGES

The verse in the letter that received the most attention is Galatians 3:28. I am aware of no fewer than 29 studies that were devoted to this verse in the period from 2000 until 2010! Some of these have already been discussed above (Eisenbaum, Braun, Buelle and Hodge, Martin, and Walden), and as can be inferred on the basis thereof, the issues that dominated the interpretation of this verse were gender, equality, race and ethnicity. Of the many other remaining studies on this verse, I have selected a further three as an illustration of the type of research that has been conducted: *Douglas A. Campbell* (2005:95-111) argues that Galatians 3:28 may be viewed as a compact articulation of the PPME model (Pneumatologically Participatory Martyrological Eschatology) which characterises Paul’s gospel. *Pauline Nigh Hogan* (2008) offers a detailed study of the interpretation of this verse in the first four centuries of Christianity, showing that almost all

commentators understood the verse as referring to Christian perfection, but that this notion was interpreted in different ways, depending on the interest of the particular commentator who cited it. *Bruce Hansen* investigated the social vision of this verse (together with 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Colossians 3:11), and concludes that Galatians 3:28

is a vigorous case against the dominance of any particular alternate cultural identity within the church while it embraces the presence of people of various identities within the new community (Hansen 2010:195).<sup>8</sup>

Other verses that drew considerable attention (although not nearly as much as Galatians 3:28) were Galatians 2:16 and 6:16. In the case of the latter, the issue under consideration was that of how the expression “the Israel of God” should be interpreted, e.g., as referring to all believers (Köstenberger 2001:3-24), to unbelieving Israel (Eastman 2010:367-395), or to Jewish Christians/Jews (Bachmann 2010:95-118). In the case of Galatians 2:16, a variety of issues were investigated, e.g., the meaning of the expression πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Ellingworth 2005:109-110; Hunn 2006:23-33), and to what extent this verse represented common ground between Paul and his opponents (Murphy-O’Connor 2001:376-385; Scott 2007:425-435).

The *passage* that received the most attention from scholars is Galatians 4:21-5:1. I am aware of 15 studies on this passage. The issues that received the most attention were gender, power and ideology. Examples include: *Angela Standhartinger* (2002:288-303: In Paul’s interpretation of the Old Testament narrative, he “blurs” the two women, and calls for mutual freedom of Jews and all other people); *Brigitte Kahl* (2004:219-232: For Paul, Hagar represents the hostile dichotomy that turns people into enemies); *Jeremy Punt* (2006:87-100; 101-118: Punt emphasises the counter-conventional force of Paul’s reinterpretation of the Old Testament narrative, and his ambivalent position regarding issues of gender and power); *Troy A. Miller* (2009:138-154: Paul subverts the traditional negative Jewish interpretation of Hagar) and *Angelika Magnes* (2010:110-127: The text is an expression of an actual conflict and does not say anything about the relationship between Judaism and Christianity). Another issue that received attention in this regard, is the type of allegory that was used by Paul, as is illustrated by the studies of *Anne Davis* (2004:161-174: It was an ancient type of argument that used literary devices to draw attention to important concepts in the Hebrew Bible) and *Steven Di Mattei*

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8 Cf. also the study of *Miroslav Kocúr* (2003), who investigated Paul’s views of national and religious identity as expressed in Galatians 3:23-29 and Romans 10:12-21.

(2006:102-122; Paul's allegory was more akin to Jewish reading practices). Galatians 3:10-14 also drew a fair amount of attention. In this instance, the focus fell mainly on attempting to explain the logic of this section – something that is not easy to do. Some of the scholars who published studies in this regard are *Sigurd Grindheim* (2007:545-565), *Timothy G. Gombis* (2007:81-93), *Michael Bachmann* (2007:524-544) and *R. Barry Matlock* (2009:154-179).

## 5. THEOLOGY OF THE LETTER

### 5.1 General

A number of scholars published outlines or summaries of the theology of the letter. Since it will not be possible to discuss each presentation in detail, I will concentrate on the broad outline followed in each case: The issues selected by *N. Tom Wright* (2000:205-236) were determined by the question as to what the theology of the letter could contribute in an interdisciplinary dialogue with Systematic Theology. From this perspective, what the letter says about God and Christ thus received the most emphasis. For example, in the first instance Wright emphasises that Paul speaks about the one God of Israel, and that Paul believes that this God has a purpose for the created world; that he is revealed through the Jewish Scriptures; and that he acts within history, which had its climax in the coming of the Messiah.<sup>9</sup> *Udo Schnelle* (2003:287ff.) describes what happened between Paul and the Galatians as “Erkenntnis im Konflikt” and focuses on Paul's teaching on the law and justification in the letter. He takes 2:16 as his point of departure (“Von Gott gerechtfertigte Existenz kann für Paulus nicht aus Werken des Gesetz resultieren” – p. 304) and then follows the logic of the letter. *Ulrich Wilckens* (2005) highlights the theological focus (“Profilierung”) that occurred in Galatians as a response to Paul's opponents. For Wilckens, the doctrine of justification is the central concept in the letter. He begins by tracing its development prior to Galatians and then discusses the way in which it features in the letter itself, concluding with the concept of living in the Spirit as liberty from the law. *Frank Matera* (2007:151-167) summarises the theology of Galatians as a “theology of righteousness”, emphasising the following issues: the relationship between Paul's apostleship and the truth of the gospel, the law in the light of the gospel, the gospel and moral life, and Israel, the church and the truth of the gospel.

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9 Take note that Wright's outline is based on the presupposition of the importance of the covenant for understanding Paul's theology (Wright 2000:231). He has already discussed this in detail in earlier studies (e.g., 1992).



*Frank Thielman* (2005:262-275) presents what he calls “a canonical and synthetic approach”, and highlights three important aspects of the gospel in Galatians: its chronological, anthropological and ethical dimensions. *I. Howard Marshall* (2004:209-235) identifies several important themes in the theology of Galatians: salvation history, justification, the cross and its effects, Paul’s message and the Jewish Scriptures (Abraham, the law) and the Holy Spirit. *Detlev Dormeyer* (2010:49-60) discusses the theology of Galatians and Romans together, highlighting issues such as justification and sonship of God through faith, Jesus’ atoning death, freedom from the law and Israel as God’s people.

## 5.2 Theo-logy (God)

*Richard B. Hays* (2002:123-143) outlines the depiction of God in Galatians in terms of the narrative substructure of the letter. For him, the central notion in this letter is God as “a merciful paternal figure who embraces Gentiles and Jews together within his covenantal family” (2002:126), i.e. the emphasis falls upon God as the Father who rescues people from the present evil age. *John Suggit* (2003:97-103) argues that Galatians 1:3 indicates that Paul regarded God as the Father of Jesus, and also as the Father of the believers because of their baptism and unity with Christ. According to *Jerome H. Neyrey* (2004:191-211), in Galatians one finds “theologies in conflict”, and the most significant aspect of Paul’s view of God in this letter is the portrayal of God as Someone-in-relationships, i.e. as Patron and Benefactor (e.g., in his imparting of the Spirit), the appropriate response being faith, obedience and praise.

## 5.3 Christology

This issue was approached from a variety of angles, as the following five studies illustrate: *Klaus Scholtissek* (2000:194-219) highlights the relationship between the earthly Jesus and Paul’s gospel. Taking Galatians 4:4 as a point of departure, he argues that Paul did not lose sight of the earthly Jesus, but presented him from a post-resurrection perspective. *Robert A. Bryant* (2001) emphasises the importance of Galatians 1:1-10 for understanding the letter, and identifies three important “cords” in this section (the risen Christ, the crucified Christ and God who calls people into the grace of Christ), which he then traces in the rest of the letter. *Jerome Murphy O’Connor* (2003:113-142) draws attention to the differences between the Christology in the Thessalonian correspondence and that which is encountered in Galatians (emphasis on the modality of the death of Christ, and on the corporate Christ), and links this development to the

crisis in Galatia. In his analysis of the Christology of Galatians, *Gordon D. Fee* (2007b:207-236) approaches the issue from two perspectives: Jesus as the Christ, God's Messianic Son (pre-existent and incarnate), and Jesus as Christ with divine prerogatives (such as being the agent of Paul's apostleship and the one who reveals). *Roji T. George* (2008:65-85) focuses on the incarnate Christ in Paul's epistles (as in Galatians 4:4), and links Paul's idea of the incarnation of Christ to the Hebrew Bible, Second-Temple Judaism and the Jesus tradition, rather than to Hellenism.

The next three issues do not seem to have attracted much interest:

## 5.4 Pneumatology

According to *Peter Dschulnigg* (2001:15-32), if the length of Galatians is taken into consideration, it contains more references to this concept than any other Pauline letter. He offers a detailed discussion of all 18 instances, in terms of four categories: 3:2, 3 and 5: the Spirit as the dimension of experiencing ("Erfahrungsdimension") justification by faith; 3:14, 4:6, 29 and 5:5: further theological development of the notion of the Spirit in the light of the cross, promise, childhood of God and justification; 5:16-18, 22, 25: the Spirit as the moving force ("Grundkraft") behind ethical behaviour; and 6:1, 8:  $\pi\nu\epsilon\delta\mu\acute{\alpha}$  in an anthropological sense. *Leonard T. Witkamp* (2008:100-115) draws attention to the fact that Paul places much emphasis on experiencing the Holy Spirit in Galatians. In his discussion of the Spirit, *Gordon Fee* (2009:369-469) emphasises the following four points: a person cannot become a believer without the Spirit; the Spirit's primary role is linked to the ongoing life of the believing community; it is the main eschatological reality; and it is depicted as God's personal presence.

## 5.5 Cosmology

According to *Edward Adams* (2000a:221-231), the term "world" in Galatians is used primarily in a negative sense, although not to the same extent as in the case of 1 Corinthians. In his view, there are two differences between Galatians and 1 Corinthians: In 1 Corinthians, "world" is the dominant negative term, but in Galatians "flesh" plays this role; in 1 Corinthians the boundary between the Christian community and the Greco-Roman world is stressed, whereas in Galatians it is the boundary between the Christians and the Jews that is emphasised. *Joel White* (2008:90-106) discusses the cosmology of Romans, the Corinthian letters and Galatians together. He summarises Paul's cosmology in these letters in terms of nine statements, broadly moving from the idea of God as creator of a hierarchically

structured universe (God – humanity – world), to the disruption brought about by sin, and then to the restoration of the world which was initiated by the resurrection of Christ, and which will be completed when he returns.

## 5.6 Anthropology

*Hermut Löhr* (2007:165-188) draws attention to Paul's notion of the human will, as expressed in Galatians 5:13-6:10 and Romans 6:1-8:17. He argues that Paul developed a notion of the relative freedom of the human will, which was placed within the broader theological framework of God's actions.

## 5.7 Law

Paul's view on the law, as expressed in Galatians, remained a popular topic amongst scholars. Some of the studies were carried out from a more general perspective, whereas others focused only on a particular issue in the letter. Three examples of studies of a more general nature: *Jens Schröter* (2007:171-201) offers a detailed analysis of Paul's views on the law in Galatians, arguing that in the writing of this letter, Paul was confronted for the first time with the problem of defining the position of the Gentiles within the Christian community from a theological perspective. He did this in a creative way by distinguishing between promise and law in order to link the particularity of the Jewish law with the universality of the Christ event. *Nicole Chibici-Revneanu* (2009:425-439) compares the views on the law in Galatians and Romans, and detects a specific development in Romans: In Galatians, the law is depicted as the oppressor, but in Romans it is depicted as itself being governed by sin and in need of liberation by the Spirit. *Peter Oakes* (2009:143-153) highlights the relationship between theology and law in the letter, arguing that any optimistic reading of the law in this letter is misguided, since, according to Paul, the law had an important role historically, but that role ended with the coming of Christ.

In those cases where scholars focused on particular aspects of the law in Galatians, a variety of issues were investigated, as illustrated by the following: *Friedrich Avemarie* (2005:125-148): Paul used Leviticus 18:5 in different ways in Romans and Galatians: In Galatians it was used to show that the law had nothing to do with faith, whereas in Romans the "doing" of the law was interpreted in a Christian sense; *Fabian E. Udoh* (2000:214-237): Paul's negative views on the law were caused by the crisis in Galatia; *Roland Bergmeier* (2003:35-48): The law was not about justification, but about transgression; furthermore, its role was viewed as

that of a caretaker (“Betreuerin”) of Jewish sinners; *Wolfgang Reinbold* (2000:91-106): Paul did not presuppose that it was impossible to fulfil the law; *Joel Marcus* (2001:72-83): The expression “under the law” was first used by Paul’s opponents, but he adapted it and used it against them; *Todd A. Wilson* (2005:362-392): The expression “under the law” was a rhetorical abbreviation for “under the curse of the law”; and *Michael Winger* (2000:537-546): The expression “law of Christ” did not refer to any legal instruction, but to the lordship of Christ.

## 5.8 Soteriology

Most of the studies published on theological themes in Galatians were devoted to issues relating to soteriology. In a sense this can be regarded as a continuing result of the “New Perspective on Paul” that gained prominence in the 80s and 90s of the previous century. *James D.G. Dunn*, who was the first to use this particular expression (in 1983), recently published a detailed overview of his own academic journey in this regard (Dunn 2005:1-88). In this study, Dunn emphasises that he does not regard the New Perspective as a replacement of other, earlier perspectives on Paul, but that it should rather be seen as complementing other perspectives. He also provides a brief summary of what he means by the concept of a New Perspective on Paul: 1. It is based on Sander’s new view on Second-Temple Judaism, in particular the notion of covenantal nomism; 2. It stresses that the law always had a social function: being holy required separateness from other nations; 3. It emphasises that Paul’s teaching on justification focused to a large extent on overcoming the barrier between Jews and Gentiles; 4. It presupposes that “works of the law” was a key term in Pauline thinking, mainly because many Jewish believers insisted that certain works were needed for staying within the covenant, and thus for salvation; 5. It argues that failure to realise the importance of this aspect of Paul’s view on justification might have had a negative influence on efforts to combat racialism and nationalism in the past (Dunn 2005:15).

As a result of the New Perspective on Paul, the concept “works of the law” received much attention. Of the numerous studies published on this theme, I will mention the following five representative examples: *Robert Keith Rapa* (2001) interprets the expression as referring to legalistic observances of the Jewish law, which were mistakenly believed by Paul’s opponents to be salvific. *William D. Barrick* (2005:277-292) rejects the interpretation of “works of the law” by proponents of the New Perspective. Instead, he understands the concept as referring to human deeds meant to earn merit with God. *Jacqueline de Roo* (2007) compared the expression “works of the law” at Qumran and in Paul. According to her, at Qumran it

referred to deeds that were obedient to God's law, which were regarded as a means of atonement. In Galatians, however, "works of the law" referred to the works of Abraham, which could not bring about atonement. *Paul L. Owen* (2007:553-577) interprets the genitive ("works of the law") as a subjective genitive, i.e. as referring to the works brought about by the law (which failed to produce righteousness). *Michael Bachmann* (2010:98-108) argues (in opposition to scholars such as Hofius) that "works of the law" in Galatians refers primarily to works that distinguish between Jews and non-Jews.

Another issue that received much attention was the expression "the faith of Jesus Christ". The debate on this issue already began long before 2000 (and was not directly related to the New Perspective as such), but continued during the time-span considered in this study. Scholars argued in favour of, or against a subjective/objective interpretation of the expression. Two such studies were already mentioned earlier on in this article, namely those of Ellingworth and Hunn. In addition, the following studies are of particular interest: *R. Barry Matlock* (2003:433-439); *Karl Friedrich Ulrichs* (2007), as well as a number of essays in a book on the topic edited by *Michael F. Bird* and *Preston M. Sprinkle* (2009).

To conclude this section on soteriology, I will briefly mention some other studies, in order to show that there were also other soteriological issues that received attention: *C. Marvin Pate* (2000) argues that Paul viewed Christ as the Wisdom of God who removed the Deuteronomic curses through his death on the cross. According to *Basil S. Davis* (2002), Paul's reference to Christ becoming a curse (in Galatians 3:13) contains an allusion to Roman *devotio*, i.e. a human sacrifice who died in order to break a curse. *Martin de Boer* (2005:189-205) outlines the way in which Paul interpreted a tradition of justification in Galatians 2:15-21: Paul dissociated justification from the "works of the law" and associated it fully with the faith of Jesus Christ. *Thomas Söding* (2006:1003-1020) provides an overview of the conflicting interpretations of Paul's views on justification in Galatians through the centuries, and then goes on to outline the critical importance of this issue in determining the truth of the gospel. *Douglas A. Campbell* (2009) tries to move beyond Lutheran and New Perspectives on Paul by offering a non-contractual apocalyptic interpretation of Pauline texts on justification, i.e. based on the view that God unconditionally delivers humanity from enslavement to sin in order to enable them to participate in a new liberated existence in Christ. In the case of Galatians, he argues that all the texts are actually ambiguous and do not necessarily support a traditional approach (i.e., a retributive view of God with a correlating view of atonement), and that these texts may be read fruitfully from the apocalyptic perspective that he proposes. *Jens-Christians Maschmeier* (2010) also attempts to move

beyond Lutheran and New Perspective views. According to him, Paul is not arguing in anthropological terms, but from a redemptive-historical point of view: Only after the eschatological judgement had been passed on humanity as sinners, and only after Christ's death had opened a new way of escaping this judgement, observance of the Law could not lead to justification any more.

## 5.9 Ethics

In the studies devoted to the ethics of Galatians, the importance of the concept *freedom* was regularly emphasised, as the following three examples illustrate: According to *Thomas Söding* (2003:113-134), freedom is a soteriological keyword in Galatians. Söding presents an overview of the way in which the concept developed in Paul's thinking, and goes on to outline the structure of the theology of freedom in the letter in terms of three categories: the freedom of the Spirit, of the congregation, and of love. The implications for modern issues are also indicated. *Wayne Coppins* (2009) offers an interpretation of freedom as conceptualised in Paul's letters. In the case of Galatians, rather than describing the content of this freedom as freedom from the law, he argues that a more comprehensive type of freedom is in view in texts such as Galatians 2:4, 5:1, 13, namely a freedom from the elements of the world. *Matthias Konradt* (2010:60-81) summarises the ethical section in the letter (Galatians 5:13-6:10) as "Die Christonomie der Freiheit", and discusses the characteristics of freedom in Christ as referred to in the letter; the relationship between freedom and mutual service through the power of the Spirit; and the pragmatic function of Galatians 5:13-6:10. Other issues with regard to the ethics of the letter that received attention were the notions of conflict and peace in the letter (Lattke 2004:155-180); the importance of the Holy Spirit in ethics (Loubser 2006:614-640; 2009:354-371); the relationship between justification and ethics (Brawley 2007:107-122; Söding 2010:165-206) and the relationship between paraenesis and theology (Hoppe 2010:207-230).

## 5.10 Ecclesiology

Not much was published on this subject. In fact, I am aware of only two studies. According to *David W. Odell-Scott* (2003), an investigation of texts on theocracy in Corinthians and Galatians shows that Paul criticised any notion of a structure of authority in the church and opposed such an idea by means of the metaphors of the church as the body of Christ and as the family of God. *Thomas A. Rand* (2001:453-468) argues that in Galatians, Paul invoked rituals such as baptism and communion to signify the

movement from the old age to the new age of the Spirit, and to inculcate the gospel in the communal life of the readers.

## 5.11 Eschatology

A variety of issues were discussed, with “new creation” receiving the most attention. The following three examples of studies on “new creation” in Galatians may be mentioned: *Moyer V. Hubbard* (2002:131-232): In Galatians the concept is used in an anthropological sense, with the emphasis on God’s creative work in the individual, which makes one’s outer state irrelevant. *Douglas J. Moo* (2010:39-60): The expression should be understood as referring to the new state of affairs that was inaugurated through Christ’s coming and which is to be consummated when he returns, and the concept also includes cosmic renewal. *T. Ryan Jackson* (2010:84-114): The Galatians would have understood the term in a cosmological sense and would not have restricted it to private individual experiences. Finally, two examples of other studies on the eschatology of Galatians: *Stanley P. Saunders* (2002:155-167) shows how eschatological rhetoric had a formative function in the spirituality of early Christianity. In the case of Galatians, the relationship between apocalyptic eschatology and a spirituality of freedom is of particular note in this regard. *Yon-Gyong Kwon* (2004) rejects the notion that the eschatology of Galatians is dominated by realised eschatology, and argues, instead, that Paul’s argument was set within a futuristic eschatology.

## 6. CONCLUSION

From this survey it has become clear that research on the Letter to the Galatians is flourishing. Although it is true that much of what has been published is not new, and that well-known arguments and insights have often been repeated, it is also true that progress has been made. To my mind, significant advances have been made in three areas, without which our knowledge of Galatians would have been the poorer. First, there was a significant increase in the sources made available to scholars. In this regard, I refer in particular to the studies and new translations of interpretations of the letter noted in the section on the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the letter. All of these will be valuable resources for adding depth to future attempts at interpreting the letter. Secondly, the broadening of the variety of interpretative approaches applied to the letter should be applauded. In particular, the growth in non-traditional readings of the letter should be regarded as a positive development. This may also serve as an indication that there is still much more to come as far as this aspect is concerned.



Thirdly, in several instances small but significant advances have been made in terms of detailed exegetical issues or, in a broader sense, in terms of the way in which theological issues in the letter should be interpreted. In our continuing endeavour to arrive at a better understanding of this letter, this should serve as encouragement to keep on trying and to investigate as many new angles as possible.

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