CHAD HARRINGTON

Justification by the Faithfulness of Jesus Christ

Abstract

This essay focuses on Paul's description of justification by faith in Galatians 2:16. Scholars such as J.D.G. Dunn and N.T. Wright have recently challenged more traditional perspectives on justification. This essay appropriates some of these challenges to Paul's letter to the Galatians. The problem for Paul is that some Christians are distorting the gospel (Gal 1:7) and excluding Gentiles Christians (2:12-13). Paul's solution is gospel reorientation. Instead of being a Torah-focused church, he instructs the Galatian church to be Christ-centered. This essay examines justification, works of law, and faithfulness to reveal Paul's rhetorical purposes by analyzing socio-rhetorical backgrounds and literary, grammatical, and theological issues. The thesis is that Paul's rhetoric in Galatians 2:16 is sociological, moving the church to unity. Pauline justification is not only forensic language but also ecclesial language. Paul's usage of works of law was not only about theology but also about church unity. His reference to the faith of Christ is not a description of how one receives final salvation but of how God justifies his people, through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. The implications of this thesis may have dramatic implications for Pauline studies and even contemporary church life.

Keywords: Justification, faith, faithfulness, Galatians, unity, new perspective, church, works of law, Paul, biblical studies

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Introduction

The doctrine of 'justification by faith' has been one of the most influential theological tenants in Western Christianity since the Protestant Reformation. Justification by faith has become core to the gospel in many circles. What many understand 'justification by faith' to mean is that salvation is not earned by merit but is a gift received by the faith of each believer. However, in recent years, scholars have challenged this Lutheran interpretation of what Paul meant by 'justification,' and for this they have received a lot of resistance.

Augustine has been credited as the first to initiate a doctrine of justification by faith alone, and from Augustine through the Reformation many influential theologians started with an Augustinian understanding. Thomas Aquinas saw justification as forensic and imparted upon the believer before Luther did. The doctrine of justification by 'faith alone' was a tenant for over a millennium. However, Martin Luther has made the most profound impact on Western Protestantism in this respect.

Luther said that justification was by faith alone and by 'faith' he meant a certain type of cognitive faith. The antithesis to faith, for Luther, was works of merit for justification. Following Luther and the Reformation, Western Protestantism has tended to retroject its own individualized, guilt-ridden consciousness back onto Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. Luther's theological efforts to reconcile his own intense and personal struggle to gain merit before God with the gospel set the tone for justification by faith for hundreds of years.

It was not until Ferdinand Christian Baur (b. 1792) challenged this 'traditional' Lutheran understanding of justification. He was the first notable theologian after Luther to purport more than just a forensic interpretation of justification by looking into Paul's sociological milieu. While maintaining faith as the grounds for justification and the forensic nature of justification, Baur emphasized the relational implications of justification. In so doing, he opened the gamut for the doctrine of 'justification by faith.' Following his writings, many theologians have challenged the long held Lutheran view of justification.

The most seismic shift after Baur in Pauline theology of justification came from E.P. Sanders in 1977 with his book Paul and Palestinian Judaism. This book has precipitated and the effects have been classified as the New Perspective on Paul with all its variations. Paul, in Sander's view, was not espousing justification by faith in a fight against legalism; instead, Paul was fighting against 'covenantal nomism.' Whether or not theologians over the last thirty-four years have agreed with Sanders, they have been influenced by his work, no doubt. Scholars who have shown utter "dissatisfaction with the Lutheran approach to Paul" include Stendahl, Davies, Raisanen, M. Barth, G. Howard, J. Dunn, N.T. Wright and U. Wilckens.
The debate over justification has largely centered on Paul's letters to the Galatian and Roman churches because 'justification' with all its cognates is integral in these letters. In the Pauline corpus the verb 'to justify' (δικαιώω) appears twenty-seven times. Grouping Galatians and Romans together, they account for twenty-three of the twenty-seven total New Testament usages. This means that in order to understand what Paul means by 'justification,' one must go to Galatians and Romans. However, Galatians stands out from Romans in at least one respect for our present study: it is the first extant letter of Paul, having been written in A.D. 49. The focus of this paper will be Galatians 2.16 because it contains the first occurrence of the verb 'to justify' (δικαίω) in Galatians. My thesis is that the primary thrust of Paul's 'justification' rhetoric in Galatians 2.16 is sociological, moving the church to unity. As a means of introduction to this important passage, I will provide the socio-rhetorical background surrounding Galatians. Then, I will pursue an exegesis of Galatians 2.16 focusing on the meaning of three major concepts: justification, works of law and faithfulness.

The Problem: Exclusion

In order to not miss the forest for the trees, one must ask, "What is the book of Galatians about in general?" The answer, of course, is not unanimous among scholars; it is variegated. Richard B. Hays claims that Galatians is not a "theological treatise" on how to be saved as many might presume. Instead, it is written to a church in crisis. J.D.G. Dunn says that the focus of Galatians is "primarily in the context of Paul the Jew wrestling with the question of how Jews and Gentiles stand in relation within the covenant purpose of God now that it has reached its climax in Jesus Christ." To him Galatians is about the covenantal promise. Clark H. Pinnock, writing in 1998, pins Galatians as a letter about soteriology. It was written to answer the question, "Are we saved by believing or achieving?" So why did Paul write Galatians? In what follows, I will argue for a sociological reason, more specifically that Paul wrote the letter of Galatians to admonish the church to be unified and resist the social pressure to exclude Gentiles from fellowship.

Paul saw that the church in Galatia was under immanent threat. Paul exhorts them with strong words like "I am astonished" (1.6) and "You foolish Galatians!" (3.1). The most surprising threat, perhaps, was received from the Jewish Christians who were faced with a mixed identity. Jews and Christians were both monotheistic. On the other hand, the first-century A.D. Jewish community had very distinct social boundaries. This made conversion and then new group identity challenging. Therefore, understanding the first century Jewish *Sitz im Leben* is important. Jews were divided into different sects, each with its own way of being faithful to the covenant through obedience to the law. When Jewish converts to Christianity faced the new idea of
Gentile inclusion, they were not prepared for that kind of sociological shift.\textsuperscript{14} The problem that Paul addresses in Galatians displays this tension. The agitators made the situation in Galatia even more difficult and divisive serving as active antagonists to the formation of a new Christocentric community.

Paul makes it clear that there were some ‘agitators’ in the Galatian church distorting the gospel (cf. 1.6). These people were not ‘Judaizers,’ as traditionally believed; rather, the Judaizers were the people being forced to adopt Jewish practices.\textsuperscript{15} The opponents to the gospel were agitators trying Judaize Gentile Christians.\textsuperscript{16} The agitators were forcing the Gentile Christian converts to adopt two specific Jewish customs of which we can be sure, namely circumcision (2.3; 5.6; 6.12) and food laws (2.11-14). Paul called this “turning away to a different gospel” (1.6). Paul sets the stage for his main arguments through narrating the climactic story that dominates the first half of chapter two, his conflict with Peter in Antioch. At first, this story might seem out of place, but it serves a pivotal point in Paul’s narratio. He has set the stage by describing his call as an apostle, putting him on the same level as Peter, a pillar (2.9). Then, he shames Peter both historically in Antioch and rhetorically through his letter to the Galatians by calling him a hypocrite. Peter started withdrawing from table fellowship with the Gentiles when certain men came to Antioch and Paul called him out on it (2.12).\textsuperscript{17} What is so important, then, about whom Peter ate with? Furthermore, what does it have to do with the doctrine of justification by faith? A look at first-century sociology surrounding table fellowship will prove helpful in answer these questions. The goal of the following section is to explore the social context for exegesis of Galatians 2.16.

In the first century Mediterranean world, as Jerome Neyrey describes it, meals held immense cultural significance.\textsuperscript{18} Those with whom a person shared food were considered equals. Meals had a significant role for group identity and affirmation of individuals within the social sphere. The Jews had a particularly exclusivistic mindset towards table fellowship because of dietary laws and traditions. So when Jews became Christians, it was difficult for some to loosen the restrictions of the law. This was not just a problem in Galatia but throughout the Roman Empire. Neyrey claims, “Christian unity was constantly threatened by problems of table-fellowship” (cf. 1 Cor. 8; 10 and Rom 14).\textsuperscript{19} Jesus set the tone for a new type of table fellowship—eating with both prominent Jews (i.e. Pharisees, cf. Luke 7:36-50; 11:37-44; 14:1-7) and ‘Gentile sinners’ (Luke 5:29-32; 15:1-2; 19:5-7). Therefore, such a radial social change was apparently difficult for Jewish Christians to readily adopt because they had come out from a deeply embedded and culturally distinctive tradition. This was true for Jewish Christians in the early church in general and Galatian Jewish Christians in particular. This type of prejudice in Galatia created a major problem for Paul, and he confronts it with veracity in the propositio of his letter (i.e. Galatians 2.15-21).
The Solution: Embrace

Galatians 2.15-21 binds the three major sections of Galatians together. In the past, George Howard says, many have struggled to reconcile the middle section (chapters three and four) with the beginning (chapters one and two) and the end of the letter (chapters five and six). He offers an oversimplified, yet helpful, outline of Galatians as follows: chapters one and two are apologetic, chapters three and four are theological and chapters five and six are hortatory. Howard notes that the middle section can seem disconnected to the rest of Galatians unless the sections are reinterpreted. The solution, he proposes, is that the letter as a whole, including the middle section, is a tightly knit unit held together by the theme of gentile inclusion. In summary, the doctrine of justification by faith and the ethical segment on table fellowship are connected which sheds light on the rest of the letter.

This fits the logic of Paul's argument as rhetorical criticism makes clear. Two notes should be made about rhetorical criticism as it pertains to the passage at hand (i.e. Gal. 2.15, 16). First, Paul's rhetoric in Galatians is probably best categorized as deliberative and not juridical or epideictic. This means that his language and arguments were written in such a way as to persuade the Galatians towards a specific action in the immediate future. Second, Galatians 2.15-21 is most properly categorized as the propositio, or proposition, of Paul's deliberative rhetorical argument. The main concept that Paul wants to communicate to the Galatians is contained in this passage. This rhetorical background provides the necessary understanding of Paul's literary context as one seeks to understand the meaning of justification in Galatians.

Paul deals with a lot in Galatians 2.16 but there are three major ideas that dominate this verse and each one has been the subject of considerable debate. They are justification, works of law and faithfulness. Countless pages have been written on each of these ideas, so I do not attempt to cover all of the material possible within this article. My purpose is not to extract a systematic theology of justification from this small section; rather, my purpose is simply to show Paul's overall thrust and purpose behind the deliberative rhetoric of 2.16. His primary thrust behind 'justification' is to persuade the Galatian church towards an embracive ecclesiology.

It is important to keep in mind the question that Paul is asking as he begins the propositio. The context of this passage is right in the middle of his rebuke pertaining to Peter's exclusive table fellowship practices. Thus, this is the issue as N.T. Wright says: "Is it right for Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians to eat together? Do they belong at the same table, or not? That is the question, in this, Paul's first and perhaps sharpest statement of 'justification by faith,' to which he regards that doctrine as the answer."

It is debated whether Paul's words in the propositio are addressed to Peter or to the Galatian church. These words we know were spoken directly to Peter.
in Antioch: “How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?” (Gal 2.15). But the words that directly follow may not have been part of Paul’s rebuke in Antioch; He offers no formal transition in the text, but it seems likely that Paul has changed from talking to Peter to addressing the church of Galatia as a whole. He writes, “We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’ ” The last phrase, ‘Gentile sinners’, was a catch-all phrase many Jews used in reference to Gentiles (Jub 23.23-24; 1 Macc 2.44; Ps Sol 1.1, 2.1, Isa 14.5; Matt 26.45; Luke 6.32, 33). Paul is surely not using it antagonistically; instead, he is using it ironically. This may have even been phraseology the agitators were using against the Gentile Christians in order to shame them and Judaize them, thus forcing them to adopt Jewish practices in addition to believing on Christ. However, it may not have had the same effect to the Jewish audience and may have simply been a term to refer to those outside of the covenant of Israel (Rom. 2.14; Ps. 9.17; Tobit 8.6; Jub. 13.23-4, Ps Sol. 2.1-2; Matt. 5.47/Lk. 6.33). Paul makes a clear point, whatever the nuance of ‘Gentile sinners’ may be, that racial tensions were high and he uses this phrase as a rhetorical device to draw attention to an ecclesial problem.

A. Justification

Paul continues by saying, “We who are Jews by birth know that a man is not justified by observing the law” (2.16). The majority of the times Paul uses the verb ‘to justify’ (δικαιοῦμαι) in the New Testament are in Galatians and Romans. The same arguments often surround this term in both Galatians and Romans (e.g. Gal. 2.16 and Rom. 3.22). However, for the purpose of this paper, I will focus on the verb ‘to justify’ in Galatians only and not in Romans.

Traditionally, the concept of justification has been limited to law court language with a type of forensic soteriology in which the believer is imputed the righteousness of Christ when justified. This is not entirely mistaken, but that limited view of justification distorts one’s understanding not only of justification but also of salvation. In modern Christian dialogue, people often refer to justification with these words: “Saved by faith alone and not by works.” The word ‘justification’ is virtually indistinguishable from the word ‘salvation’ in this sense. However, as Ben Witherington III notes, justification language here is not merely about salvation at the point of entry “into the body of Christ.” Justification is only part of the salvation process.

Wright argues for a three-fold understanding of justification in Paul’s general usage: covenantal, forensic and eschatological. Justification is covenantal in that Paul uses it within the context of God’s covenant to Abraham. It is forensic in that it connotes law court language (both Jewish and Hellenistic). And it is eschatological in that it cannot be understood apart from the new eschatological era inaugurated by Christ. That is how Wright
views justification in Pauline literature as a whole. My contribution, as will be displayed in the following dissertation, will demonstrate how this works out Paul's usage of justification in Galatians specifically.

Paul's main arguments in Galatians are found within chapters three and four. His first usage of δικαίωμα after Galatians 2.16 is in chapter three: "The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be bless through you'" (3.8). This gives some more context to determine what Paul means being a clear reference to the covenantal promises God made Genesis (cf. Gen 12.3, 18.18, 22.18). So then, justification is covenantal. James D.G. Dunn goes as far to say that "to be righteous was to live within the covenant and within the terms it laid down (the law); to be acquitted, recognized as righteous, was to be counted as one of God’s own people who had proved faithful to the covenant."36 One can also see an eschatological emphasis in Galatians.

Paul talks about Gentile inclusion in connection with justification: "The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith" (3.8). God made a promise to Abraham that would be fulfilled in the Jewish eschatology and it was being fulfilled in Christ.37 In regard to this aspect of eschatology, Wright notes that "justification, in Galatians, is the doctrine which insists that all who share faith in Christ belong at the same table, no matter the racial differences, as together they wait for the final new creation."38 This eschatological fulfillment must be understood within ‘justification’; already, one can see Paul using this idea to promote a new ecclesiology.

Finally, justification is forensic in Galatians 3.10, 11: "All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.' Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith.'" The language of ‘cursing’ also belongs to covenant faithfulness (cf. Deut 27:28); however, Paul is using law-court, forensic language here to talk about guilt and innocence. Richard N. Longenecker categorizes justification as forensic because the phrase "before God" (πρὸ τοῦ θεοῦ) is used contexts describing God's judgment.39 Thus, it is evident that Paul employs a variety of uses of ‘to justify’ throughout Galatians: covenantal, eschatological and forensic.40

Paul, writing his letter to Christians was not teaching them how to be saved. Instead, the church needed to be made right with each other because of division. This is what Paul is addressing when he talks about justification; he was not giving an helpful ordu salutis, path of salvation. But justification cannot be understood without understanding the terms ‘works of law’ and ‘faithfulness.’ They are both found in Galatians 2.16, the thesis statement of Paul's epistolary encapsulated rhetoric: "εἰδότες ὅτι οὗ δικαίωμα ἐνθρωπος εἰς ἐργαν νόμου ἐάν μὴ Διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ."
B. Works of Law

Paul's usage of 'we' ("we who are Jews by birth") most naturally implies that the audience already knew what Paul was about to say. This can be understood through rhetorical criticism as follows. The propositio could be divided into two different parts of the speech: first, the agreed upon facts, then, secondly, the disputable facts. This is likely what Paul is doing here. The first part of the propositio was information that the Galatian audience and he agreed on. This established communality before he addressed issues of disputation. They agreed on the content of 2.15, 16. Paul was not saying anything new; he was simply reminding them of the gospel that was preached to them before (cf. 1.6). They are, after all, Christians to whom Paul has already preached Christ. The problem was that they were still holding onto the Jewish notion that law placed them in a right standing with God. They were struggling to make Christ the center of their lifestyle instead of works of law.

This phrase 'works of law' has caused much debate among scholars and can only be given partial attention here. These are the four of the most common interpretations of 'works of law': 1) general moral principles, 2) the Jewish badges of Sabbath, circumcision and dietary laws, 3) all the practices associated with following the Torah and 4) a general attitude associated with the Torah that manifest itself through action. Immediately, the idea that Paul meant was dealing with morality in general apart from the Torah must be rejected. This seems to be the most common Western Protestant understanding of what Paul meant by 'works of law', but that is due largely to the fact that most do not see Paul in his historical and literary contexts. The word 'law' to Paul always always meant "the Jewish Law, the Torah." Thus, a better translation is 'Torah' because Paul as a Jew understood it this way. Dunn says, "Traditional interpretation of 'works of law' as self-achieved righteousness makes no sense against the background of classic Jewish theology." Without this understanding the phrase preceding it, 'works' of the law, is often skipped over. Paul does not just say 'law; he says 'works of law.' So even when the better translation of ὠφέλη is understood (i.e. Torah), the entire phrase must be dealt with. Wright gives a three-fold context for approaching Pauline terminology: Old Testament usage, intertestamental usage (Jewish and Greco-Roman) and the specific context of Paul himself. This poses an immediate problem: 'works of law' is not found in the Old Testament, the Septuagint or anywhere in the New Testament outside of the Pauline corpus. This leaves a limited context for Paul's phrase. The question, then, is whether Paul is referring to the entire Torah, just a few identity markers or an attitude about Torah.

In regard to identity markers, some have said that when Paul says 'works of Torah,' he means only Sabbath, circumcision and dietary laws. This is not
without reason—these three badges were the primary distinguishing traits of Jews in and around the first century A.D. We know this from both Greco-Roman and Jewish authors. In regard to Roman Hellenism, two excerpts are helpful. Firstly, in Saturae, Juvenal (c. A.D. 60-130) speaks of the spread of Judaism to Rome and the generation of Jews after their fathers in which he specifically singles out three customs of the Jews as distinguishing: Sabbath, abstention from pork and the practice of circumcision (XIV 96-106). These support a reading of ‘works of law’ that pertains to social identity markers. Secondly, Epictetus (c. A.D. 50-130) lists dietary laws and circumcision as well (Arrianus, Diss I, 22.4). Paul explicitly refers to these two issues as connected to Gentile exclusion in Galatians which supports the same interpretation of ‘works of law’ (cf. 2.11-14; 5.2).

A similar interpretation is supported by Jewish literature as well, most notably in three writings of Philo, Josephus and the Maccabean letters (Philo, Mos 1.278; Josephus, Ant 11.34647; e.g. 1 Macc 1.60-63). The identity makers of the Jews are contrasted with the Imperial antagonism of Antiochus Epiphanies IV: “According to the decree (of Antiochus), they put to death the women who had their children circumcised, and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers’ necks. But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die” (1 Macc 1.60-63). Circumcision and dietary laws were so important that people lost their lives on account of them. This very brief survey of some Greco-Roman and Jewish texts around the Second Temple era show that certain issues stood out in Jewish exclusionary sociology.

So when Paul says ‘works of Torah’ in Galatians, we know that he means badges of separation, but can this be applied more broadly to the Torah as a whole? He uses the word law (νόμος) 114 times throughout his writings and thirty-two times in Galatians. Every time, he means ‘Torah’. However, he only uses the phrase ‘works of law’ (ἐργα νόμου) six times in Galatians (2:16, 16, 16; 3:2, 5, 10). In 3.2, Paul says, “Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law (ἐξ ἐργῶν νόμου) or by believing what you heard?” Again, in the same line of argument: “Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law (ἐξ ἐργῶν νόμου) or because you believe what you heard?” The passage that separates them also sheds light on the meaning of ἐξ ἐργῶν νόμου: “After beginning by the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by effort (σκόπεῖτε)” (3.3). ‘Σκόπεῖ’ is sometimes translated ‘by effort’ (NIV), but the more natural translation is ‘in flesh’ denoting physical origins or lineage (e.g. Rom 1.3; 9.5). Therefore, in the context of the passage, Paul connects works of law with national heritage. So ‘works of law’ begins to be more than just a few boundary markers.
The last usage of ἔργῳν νόμον in Galatians can be found in 3.10. Here it connotes more than just boundary markers as well; rather, it refers to the Torah as a whole: “All who rely on observing the law (ἔργῳν νόμον) are under a curse, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not do everything written in the Book of the Law.’ Clearly no one is justified before God by law.” (3.10, 11a). This usage leaves room for both specific works of law (i.e. circumcision and dietary laws) and the Torah.

In the context of Galatians, therefore, it seems that Paul leaves the meaning of ἔργῳν νόμον broad. If he wanted to limit it to the boundary markers of circumcision and dietary laws, he would have been more explicit. Instead, Paul leaves the meaning broad in order to include at least both of the above meanings. The issues that were clearly dividing the church were dietary laws and circumcision that were part of the 613 commandments. This is evident from Paul’s rebuke of Peter in 2.11-14 and the eleven references to circumcision throughout Galatians. But there also seems to be a general attitude or mindset towards the Torah that was dominating the actions of the Jews. Ultimately this is what Paul was attacking—it was an attitude of loyalty to the Torah that threatened their ultimate loyalty to Jesus Christ. That is why he rebukes Peter for trying to ‘Judaize’ the Gentile Christians (2.14). If they adopted the customs specific only to Jews by birth, then their devotion to Christ would have been compromised. They would have been carried into the type of exclusionary attitude Tacitus observed:

Again, the Jews are extremely loyal toward one another, and always ready to show compassion, but toward every other people they feel only hate and enmity. They sit apart at meals and they sleep apart, and although as a race, they are prone to lust they abstain from intercourse with foreign women; yet among themselves nothing is unlawful. They adopt circumcision to distinguish themselves from other peoples by this difference. Those who are converted to their ways follow the same practice, and the earliest lesson they receive is to despise the gods, to disown their country, and to regard their parents, children, and brothers as of little account (Historiae V, 1, 2; emphases mine).

Tacitus says that the converts to Judaism adopt their practices and attitudes. Along with practices come the attitudes of exclusion Paul is warning against. Four observations can be made about this passage: 1) Jews often appeared as exclusive and hateful towards other ethnicities, 2) Jews separated themselves at meals to show this attitude, 3) circumcision was used as a distinguishing mark and 4) as already said, the proselytes to Judaism were taught to follow them in these ways of distinction. Although this was written in the early second century and not the first, it gives an example where the Jewish customs of circumcision and dietary laws were connect to a general attitude of exclusion.
Since these two issues, circumcision and dietary laws (i.e. table fellowship), were divisive in both Tacitus's context and in Galatia (as noted by Paul), it is likely that Jewish Christians in Galatia had the same attitude Tacitus describes. Paul's usage of 'works of law,' then is a conflation of the badges of distinction, the Torah as a whole and a general attitude of loyalty to the Torah—customs, teaching and attitude. Paul responds by saying that justification is only found through the faithfulness of Christ (2.16). The very heart of the Pauline gospel is not the law but Christ Jesus himself.

**Faithfulness**

Paul says, "A man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ (οὐ δικαιούται ἀνθρωπος ἐὰν μὴ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). The conjunction ἐὰν μὴ is best understood as adversative in the context of the rest of Galatians and should be translated “but only” 54. So Paul uses this adversative conjunction to show that the means of justification is not the law but Jesus Christ.

The phrase πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ or ‘faith/fulness of Jesus Christ’ or has been the intense subject of thought and debate in recent New Testament scholarship. 55 Besides Romans 4 and Hebrews 11, Galatians 3 discusses faith more intensely than any other segment of the New Testament. The subject of debate is whether πίστεως Χριστοῦ is a subjective or an objective genitive. If it is subjective, then the phrase should be translated ‘faithfulness of Christ’ with the faith being that of Jesus. But if it is objective, the phrase should be translated ‘faith in Christ’ with Jesus as the substance or person in whom faith is placed and faith being that of the believer. This has been hotly debated between scholars for the last twenty-five years or so. In North America, scholars are divided down the middle as to whether the phrase should be translated with a subjective or objective genitive, but the minority of scholars agree that it is a subjective genitive. 56 A number of scholars have rejected the subjective genitive to some degree in this context, Betz, Burton and Cranfield included. 57 However, a number of scholars recently have accepted the subjective genitive: J. Haussleiter, G. Kittel, K. Karth, E.C. Hoskyns, T.F. Torrance, P. Vallotton, R. Longenecker, H. Ljungmann, G.M. Taylor, K. Kertelge, J. Bligh, M. Barth, G.E. Howard, D.W.B. Robinson, H. Luhrmann, G.E. Howard, M.D. Hooker. 58 The debate focuses on two main issues for understanding Paul’s usage of the genitive here. These are grammatical and theological issues. 59

In regard to grammar, the case is strongest towards the subjective genitive interpretation despite current the majority opinion of scholars on an international level. This is the argument: Robinson states that there is no usage of πίστεος with an objective genitive next to a pronoun in the Septuagint. 60 Then, there is non-Septuagintal literature—every time a noun is followed by a genitival pronoun in Jewish literature during the Second Temple era, the
construction is subjective except once. See this chart below outlining these extrabiblical Greek Jewish sources:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Occurrence of πίστις</th>
<th>Occurrence of πίστις with the subjective personal genitive</th>
<th>Occurrence of πίστις with the objective personal genitive</th>
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<tr>
<td>Old Testament Apocrypha</td>
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<td>262</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greek Pseudepigrapha</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philo</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>263</td>
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<tr>
<td>Josephus</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>165</td>
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</table>

In the Pauline corpus, more importantly, Paul never uses πίστις, a proper noun and an objective genitive together. The twenty-four instances where πίστις is followed by a proper noun or pronoun in the Pauline corpus: twenty refer to the faith of Christians, two the faith of Abraham (Rom 4.12, 16), one to any believer (Rom 4.5) and one to God’s faithfulness (Rom. 3.3). Thus in every instance in which πίστις is followed by a proper noun or pronoun in the genitive case, the genitive is unmistakably subjective. In regard to Gal. 2.16, in particular, the Latin Vulgate and Syriac translations indicate a clear and explicit subjective understanding of the genitive in the phrase. The burden of proof, then, rests not on the minority of scholars who hold to a subjective interpretation here but on those who take the objective genitive.

In regard to theology, the concept that justification is through the faithfulness of Christ fits just as well if not better into Pauline thought. First of all, the Hebrew concept of faith differs from the Hellenistic concept of faith. The former is more holistic and the latter more dualistic. Dunn notes that the Hellenistic reader would have most naturally interpreted πίστις as ‘faith’ or ‘trust’, but he fails to bring out a Jewish understanding in Paul. Secondly, Paul’s theology is Christocentric. Before having gone down the Damascus road, Paul was totally devoted to the God of the Torah, and now he was totally devoted to the God who fulfilled the Torah in Jesus. Everything in Paul’s life gained deeper meaning because of that experience, and this is evident in his letter to the Galatians. Just like Wrede, Schweitzer and Sanders missed the covenantal emphasis in Paul’s use of ‘justification’, it seems that many have missed the covenantal aspect of the faithfulness of God in the doctrine of justification. God had been faithful to his promises and that were manifest through the faithfulness of Christ. Thus, “if [πίστις χριστοῦ] is taken as the divine faithfulness to the promise given to Abraham that in him
all the nations of the earth will be blessed, a number of Pauline passages become clear.\footnote{70} In light of that, Paul puts Christ as central locus of identity for the Galatians, both Jew and Gentile. Pauline Christology says that nothing compares to Christ in this regard, even devotion to the Torah.

This meant that the Gentile Christians do not have to become Jews in practice—they did not have to Judaize. Christ was all that was required of them to be covenant members “because out of works of law no flesh will be justified” (2.16).\footnote{71} He reminds the Galatian church that the faithfulness of Christ, not works of the Torah justify a person setting them in the “status-of being-right” with God.\footnote{72}

Conclusion

Paul, working to redeem a community with racial division and social conflict, uses a letter to bring unity to the church of Galatia. Paul utilizes deliberative rhetoric in an epistolary form to take on a threat of the gospel pervading the church in Galatia. The gospel was being distorted and the heart of the problem was the Jewish struggle to include Gentile Christians into their fellowship. The core of Paul’s message to the Galatians pervades the \textit{propositio}, Galatians 2.15-21. Having dealt with the first part of this section (2.15, 16), I have shown that at the heart of Paul’s talk about justification is church unity. For too long now, this passage has been used to promote an individualistic soteriology focusing on what each person receives in his or her heart only. It is time that this passage be used in the church for that which Paul intended—an ecclesiology that moves beyond an anthropocentric individualism and embraces people from all races based on their loyalty to Jesus Christ. Paul uses these words:

\begin{quote}
We who were born into the covenant as Jews, unlike those pagan ‘sinners,’ know that people do not become covenant members by a Torah-based lifestyle but only through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, and we have leaned on Christ Jesus in order that we might be covenant members by Christ’s faithfulness and not by our Torah-based lifestyle, because no human being is a covenant member because of a Torah-based lifestyle.
\end{quote}

- Galatians 2.15, 16

Bibliography


Footnotes

1 Those who credit Augustine with this are Cooper and Harnack (as noted by John Riches). Riches offers a comprehensive history of ‘justification by faith’ in: *Galatians Through the Centuries* (Malden: Blackwell, 2008) 114-143. What follows is a summary of his analyses.


3 Watson 13.

4 He was born towards the end of the Enlightenment era so his push towards a more historical Paul probably comes from an Enlightenment mindset. This is important for understanding why a shift from Luther might be warranted. However, even philosophical modernistic rationalism has its cautions of which to be aware.


6 Sanders 511.

7 This can be seen even into the present year in the recent “book debate” between N.T. Wright and John Piper. John Piper, a Reformed Calvinist pastor, wrote a book entitled *The Future of Justification: A Response to N.T. Wright* in regard to Wright’s analysis of the doctrine of justification. Wright wrote a book entitled *Justification* as a response to Piper’s critique of his previous work. This is a clash between the Lutheran understanding of a purely forensic view of justification with the New Perspective of a broader understanding of Paul as a Jew writing to the first century church.

8 Watson 8. A more in depth analysis of the influence of Sanders will be dealt with below.

9 Dating Galatians at A.D. 49 will be assumed throughout this paper. There is neither room nor necessity for a full discussion of the dating for the main purpose of this paper. For a full discussion see Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 8-13.


15 Hays makes the point that labeling the disrupters as ‘Judaizers’ is not only inaccurate but also distorts the problem in Galatia (cf. Hays, *Galatians* 185). This term has been the object of some repute in recent scholarship.
because of its propensity of false connotations. These agitators were more like missionaries than anything else trying to make Gentiles become add Jewish cultural and tradition to their Christian identity (cf. Dunn, Galatians 11). The term ‘Judaizer’ is not the best understanding because it implies that the conflict was between Jews. The term ‘Judaizer’ refers to the Gentiles who were being forced to adopt Jewish practices. Thus, ‘agitators’ will refer to those in Galatia who were in opposition to the gospel of freedom in Christ.

16 Ibid.

17 The imperfect active form, ἀφυρμιζεῖν in 2.12 indicates that Peter’s separation was a process and not a one time event. Peter was separating himself from the Gentiles during meals over a period of time.


19 Neyrey 382.


21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Rhetorical criticism has not been dominant in New Testament scholarship until recent years, so it is understandable that these sections have seemed disconnected to interpreters in the history of theological hermeneutics, not least of whom is Martin Luther.

24 Hans Dieter Betz argues that Galatians is juridical rhetoric (Galatians [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979] 28) and George A. Kennedy argues that it is best seen as deliberative rhetoric (New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism [Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984] 144-5). Kennedy notes that Betz seems to overemphasize the narrative portion of Galatians (chapters 1 and 2) to the neglect of the exhortative segment (chapters 5 and 6). For Kennedy, the argument that Galatians is deliberative can be sustained by at least three arguments: 1) the use of narrative does not detract from deliberative rhetoric (as some propose [Betz]); instead, as Quintilian (3.8.10-11), narrative can be used in deliberative oratory when it is talking of “external matters” (i.e. “alters which have bearing on the case and contribute to an understanding of the speaker, but are not directly at issue”), 2) the strong exhortative tones and explicit instructions towards future action included in Galatians five and six show the deliberative nature of this letter. Building on that, Kennedy describes that the principle of linearity shows that Paul uses the content of chapters one through four lead to the exhortations in chapters five and six, and 3), a defining characteristic of deliberative rhetoric is that “an action is in the self-interest of the audience or that it is simply ‘right’” (Quintillian 8.3.1-3). To summarize his argument: Whatever Paul does in chapters one through four only serves to emphasize what he exhorts
towards future action in chapters five and six, even though it contains narration. Thus, Galatians is best perceived as deliberative and not judicial in its rhetoric (Kennedy 144, 145).


28 Ibid. 83.

29 Ibid. 83.

30 Dunn, Galatians 131.

31 I am focusing on the verbal form of δικαίαω because this paper focuses on Gal. 2.15, 16 and neither the noun δικαίοσύνη nor any of the other cognates are used.

32 Or just as well, imparted the righteousness of Christ.

33 174.

34 Wright, Justification 80-108.


36 Galatians 134. The covenantal usage of justification is also evident in Galatians 3.24 and 5.4, the only other two times the verb is used in this letter.

37 The early church clearly views the period following Christ as the ‘last days’ (cf. Acts 2.17; 1 Tim 4.1; 2 Tim 3.1; Heb 1.2; 2 Pet 3:3).

38 Wright, What Saint Paul Really Said 122.

39 118.

40 The covenantal aspect dominates most of his uses of δικαίοω in Galatians (cf. 3.8, 3.24, 5.4).

41 See Longenecker, Galatians 81. He argues that Rhetorica ad Herennium "tells us that a propositio should have two parts, a statement of facts agreed on and a laying out of what remain contested" (1.10.17; cf. Cicero, De Inventione 1.22.31).

42 See Sanders (1977). This analysis will consist of understanding ‘works of law’ in the context of Galatians only. There is some overlap, especially with Romans, but there is not enough room to cover everything that can be said about ‘works of law’ in all of Pauline and Jewish literature. The point of this excurses is to show that ‘works of law’ in Galatians is primarily used in the context of deliberative rhetoric for a sociological change.

43 Wright, Justification 116.

44 Dunn 76, 77

45 Wright, Justification 87

46 Witherington 116.


Cf. 1 Macc 1.11, 14, 15; 2 Macc 2.12-17; Josephus, *Ant* 11.346-47; *Arist* 139, 142; 1QS 5.21, 23; 6.18; The above quotation was written about the sacking of Jerusalem in 163 B.C. and not contemporaneous with Galatia in the mid-first-century A.D.; however, this type of attitude was set and pervaded thereafter throughout the Roman Empire as Dunn has shown in *The New Perspective on Paul*, 124.

I assume Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles for this statistic. νόμος is used 194 times in the entire New Testament.


What follows is his view of the Jews in the first decade of the second century. This is not the exact time-frame of Galatians. However, there is enough evidence throughout ancient literature that these types of perceptions were wide spread so as to still gain help for understanding first century Galatia.

Τὰ ἔθνη means ‘the nations’

Longenecker 84.

Richard B. Hays gives a brief history of the discussion on πίστις Χριστοῦ over the last century and half (*The Faith of Jesus Christ*, Ed. William Baird [Chico: Scholars Press, 1983] 158-62). Johannes Haussleiter was the first to bring the proposal of the subjective genitive interpretation of this phrase into modern NT scholarship. However, it did not receive much attention until early in twentieth century when Kittle and Diessmann attempted to defend a similar position. Their emphasis, although not different from Haussleiter, was more negative than positive. They did not necessarily accept the subjective genitive, but rejected the objective genitive as the best interpretation. Their proposals did not receive wide acceptance. The issue fell into the background of NT scholarship until the 1950s when A.G. Hebert and Thomas Torrance questioned the long-held view of the objective genitive of the phrases related to πίστις Χριστοῦ. The emphasis of their writings, no doubt, was on the possible Hebrew connotations of behind πίστις quite possibly because of a general keen awareness of Jews in the world due to the recent Holocaust. Along with this came an emphasis on the faithfulness of God to the Abrahamic covenant. However, they were quickly met with criticism.
most notably by C. F. D. Moule, John Murray and James Barr. Barr’s criticism in *The Semantics of Biblical Language* was the most influential in dimming the light on Hebert and Torrance. While Barr’s criticism was somewhat legitimate, it did not quiet the issue. From Barr to Hay’s writing in 1983, there was a flurry of scholarship focused on this issue and it has been a topic of debate until the present.

56 Witherington 179.
57 Longenecker 87
58 Ibid.
61 Ibid., 212-215.
62 Sir 46:15; 1 Macc 14:35
63 Spec IV 30, 34.
64 Vita I 84; *Contra Apionem* II 218; *Bellum* III 6, VI 330.
65 Ant 19:16. Howard makes a convincing argument that the clause used here does not parallel πίστις Χριστοῦ: “πολλὴν ἔχει πίστιν τοῦ Θεοῦ τῆς δυνάμεως” 213.
67 Ibid.
68 “Διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν ἐπιστεύσαμεν.” Respectively: “fidem Iesu Christi nos in Christo Iesu credimus fide Christi” and “behaymanutha deyeshu meshiḥa ḥenan beh beshu meshiḥa haimenn demen haymanutheh demeshiḥa” Howard 213.
69 Dunn, *Galatians* 138.
71 This last phrase is an allusion to Psalm 143.2 (LXX Ps 142.2). Paul changes ‘living ones’ from the LXX and uses ‘flesh’ instead. Paul’s usage here simply means the “finitude, weakness and corruptibility of all human existence” (Dunn, *Galatians* 140). Flesh and living people are used synonymously in 1 En 1.31.5.
72 Wright, *Justification* 92.