

ISSA Proceedings 2002 - Paul's Argumentation In Galatians 3.6-14



Abstract

Gal. 3.6-14 is one of many passages in the letters of Paul which is difficult because of the argumentation it contains. An argumentation analysis is therefore called for to disentangle the arguments and to recover any implicit premisses. Such an analysis gives a more complete picture of Paul's argumentation and helps us understand and evaluate it. The analysis indicates that Paul is attempting to convince both through logical argumentation and through an argumentative strategy using arguments by appeal to tradition and to authority. The argumentation is at times, strictly speaking, fallacious. It is suggested that a neutral and transparent argumentation analysis using a contemporary approach is a fruitful preliminary step in the exegesis of Pauline argumentative texts.

Text of analysis (Paul's Letter to the Galatians 3.6-14)

*3.6 Just as Abraham 'believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,'
3.7 so, you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham. 3.8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.'
3.9 For this reason, those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed.
3.10 For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.' 3.11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law; for 'The one who is righteous will live by faith.' 3.12 But the law does not rest on faith; on the contrary, 'Whoever does the works of the law will live by them.'
3.13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us - for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree' - 3.14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. [Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition, copyright 1989, 1993, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.]*

1. Introduction

The pericope of 3.6-14 in Paul's letter to the Galatians is among the most argument-rich passages in the New Testament. Although examined many times, few have undertaken a basic argumentation analysis of the passage. It has been argued that Paul's reasoning does not pay much attention to the logic of argumentation, that it is based mainly on persuasion through rhetoric and use of authority. In several passages, however, the argumentation gives the impression of being based predominantly on logical arguments. Gal. 3.6-14 is such a passage and should therefore be useful as a test case for a modern argumentation analysis. My expectation is that such an analysis is useful as one of the initial steps of an exegesis. Section 3.6-14 stands at the beginning of what is often described as the argumentative section of Galatians, chapters 3-4. Verses 3.6-14 deal with two of the main themes in these chapters: Abraham's faith and function as a role model and the Christian as being not under the law but in Christ.

Two of the main commentaries on Galatians which specifically analyse the letter from the viewpoint of argumentation (through a rhetorical analysis) are those of Hans Dieter Betz (Betz, 1988) and Richard N. Longenecker (Longenecker, 1990). Betz calls Gal. 3-4 'The Proofs' which contains six arguments that support Paul's main argument, the *propositio* of 2.15-21. Section 3.6-14 makes up one of these 'proofs': God's promise to Abraham (Betz, 1988, viii). Longenecker sees three sets of arguments which are mustered in support of the thesis of 2.15-16 that the law plays no positive role in becoming a Christian: (a) arguments from experience, vv. 1-5, (b) arguments from Scripture, vv. 6-14, and (c) *ad hominem* theological arguments, vv. 15-18, (Longenecker, 1990, 98). Although Betz and Longenecker disagree on other questions concerning Gal 3-4, they agree on the structure of the first part of the passage: vv. 1-5, 6-14, and 15-18. It is thus natural to separate vv. 6-14 for an analysis of this single 'proof' or 'argument from Scripture'.

The section 3.6-14 presents arguments from Scripture making use of the example of Abraham. The problem with interpreting the passage is that it is not immediately apparent how the quotations from Scripture relate to Paul's argument. In the analysis below, the difficulties in the passage will be more closely described.

2. The Method

The enthymemic nature of many of Paul's arguments is often noticed in exegetical studies. However, although the enthymeme is a common form of an argument, it

is not the only form. I therefore find it more convenient to use a modern approach that is not restricted to any specific form. I have therefore chosen to use the schematical presentation for complex argumentation structures suggested by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992). This method is more flexible than an enthymemic approach in that it can be used also on complex argumentation structures (e.g. multiple argumentation, coordinatively and subordinatively compound argumentation, arguments with an unexpressed conclusion, and arguments with more than one unexpressed element, see van Eemeren/Grootendorst, 1992, 73-89). These can then be clearly presented graphically, in chains of arguments when applicable. A presentation that would emphasise the logical validity (e.g. *modus ponens*, *modus tollens*) has little to contribute to the present study. In explicating unexpressed premisses or conclusions, it is more meaningful to reconstruct the *pragmatic optimum* as it is suggested by the context. The strictly logical premiss (the *logical minimum*) usually does not help to clarify the argument (for a description of the pragmatic optimum and the procedure for determining it, see van Eemeren/Grootendorst, 1992, 60-72). As in all analyses, the analyst must be sensitive to the text and careful not to force any reconstruction on it.

No analysis of a Pauline text can be definitive. The advantage of the present method primarily lies in that it offers a clear and detailed workflow and in that the procedure and the results are transparent to others. All methods include an element of intuitiveness, but the clearer the presentation of the analysis, the easier it is to follow and to point out the exact point of disagreement, should there be any. Since the method does not presuppose any form (e.g. *enthymeme* or *epicheireme*) it is useful for a neutral reading of any argumentative portion of the text. In a subsequent step, the analysis can be used as the basis for a historical comparative analysis, where e.g. classical argumentative figures are identified.

3. Analysis of Gal. 3.6-9

The pericope of vv. 6-14 is characterised by unusually many quotations from Scripture. The quotations are centred on Abraham. We cannot know exactly why Paul quotes precisely these OT-passages but, if not the passages, at least the issues they deal with seem to be of crucial importance to Paul's argumentation. It is not here necessary to discuss the textual relationship between the quotations in Galatians and their sources in the OT. There are thorough studies on the subject (cf. Ellis, 1957, and commentaries on Galatians). In the analysis below, the way

the quotations function in the arguments is of primary interest. In 3.6-14 there are six quotations: Gen. 15.6 (Gal. 3.6), Gen. 12.3 (Gal. 3.8), Deut. 27.26 (Gal. 3.10), Hab. 2.4 (Gal. 3.11), Lev. 18.5 (Gal. 3.12), and Deut. 21.23 (Gal. 3.13).

The first quotation introduces the theme, v. 6, 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' Betz describes this as the 'proof text for the entire argument in 3.6-14' (Betz, 1988, 138). The quotation is used as grounds for the claim in v. 7, 'those who believe are the descendants of Abraham'. Setting the argument in a form with premisses followed by conclusion, separated by a line, it reads something like this: see Fig. 1.

Figure 1 The Text of 3.7.

Abraham believed God.

Abraham's faith was reckoned to him as righteousness.

—————
Those who believe are the descendants of Abraham.

This presentation shows an imbalance in the argument. Mußner notes that we would rather have expected another conclusion, namely: 'Erkennt also, daß der Mensch aus Glauben gerechtfertigt wird und nicht aus Gesetzeswerken.' (Mußner, 1981, 216; 'Recognise, therefore, that man is justified by faith and not by works of the law.'). Hansen recognises that, 'Verses 6 and 7 taken together form an argument by enthymeme.' and notes that, 'The conclusion (*ara*) in v. 7 is derived from the implicit premiss that as God dealt with Abraham, so he will deal with all men.' (Hansen, 1989, 112). The enthymeme as suggested by Hansen then reads as follows: see Fig. 2. Hansen does not display the enthymeme schematically and the figure shows his description to be unbalanced, since the premisses do not directly support the conclusion.

Figure 2 Hansen's Understanding of the Enthymeme in 3.6-7.

Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

[As God dealt with Abraham, so he will deal with all men.]

—————
Those who believe are the descendants of Abraham.

The problem seems to be that two different arguments have been mixed in vv. 6-7: one about Abraham, one about faith and works. Paul has shortened the

argument by leaving out two premisses. Logically the first implicit premiss is, 'Faith is reckoned to one as righteousness.' That this is the implied premiss is clear from the statement in v. 8: '... that God would justify the Gentiles by faith' (it is also clear from the whole section of vv. 6-14, which focuses on faith). The second implicit premiss has to do with the thought that those who share the same faith and righteousness as Abraham are the (spiritual, true) descendants of Abraham. In other words, to be a descendant of Abraham is to be one that like him is justified by faith. Paul simply omits some of the intermediate stages of the argument. In full, the argument would read something like this: see Fig. 3 and 4. The figures are rather self-explanatory. Important to note, however, is that implicit premisses and conclusions are indicated by a prime, ', and put in brackets, []. An implicit premiss is linked to an explicit premiss with an ampersand, &. For further details, see van Eemeren/Grootendorst, 1992, 73-89. The practice of putting implicit premisses in brackets is here used also in the standard form presentations.

Figure 3 3.6-9, Part 1/3.

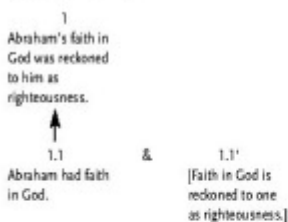
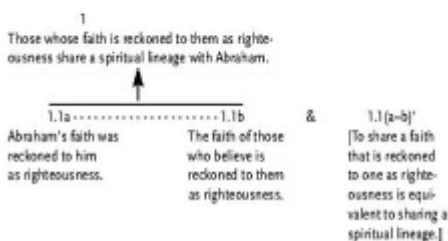


Figure 4 3.6-9, Part 2/3.



In figure 3, the implicit premiss 1.1', 'Faith in God is reckoned to one as righteousness', is not the only possible interpretation of Gen. 15.6, but Paul's argumentation shows that here this is *his* interpretation. Elements 1 and 1.1(a-b)' in Fig. 4 represent my interpretation of what Paul meant by being 'a descendant of Abraham'. Since there can be no question of a physical descent on behalf of the Gentiles, Paul must have had a spiritual descent in mind. What is meant by 'those who believe' (1.1b in Fig. 4) are Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians that believe in God and because of their faith are reckoned righteous. Verses 8 and 14 indicate that Paul especially has the Gentiles in mind. If we explicate this, the

argument can be presented as in Fig. 5. Jewish Christians are then clearly included at the end of the pericope, in the 'we' of v. 14. The conclusion, 1, in Fig. 4 is in effect the same as the one in v. 9 ('those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed').

Although this presentation of the argument clarifies the logic, it shows that the crucial implicit premiss, 'faith in God is reckoned to one as righteousness.' (1.1', Fig. 3), is not necessarily convincingly backed up. In fact, this understanding is far from evident, e.g. for someone well versed in the Scriptures. Still, Paul uses the Scriptures to back up precisely this premiss. The other implicit premiss, that to share the same faith and righteousness is equivalent to a spiritual lineage, is much easier to accept. The claim concerning righteousness through faith, however, needs backing. Paul tries to achieve this by a series of further claims, the first of which states that, 'The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith.', v. 8. This interpretation of Scripture is based on the 'blessing of Abraham'. It is, however, not clear how 'All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you' can be taken as saying that justification only comes through faith - it could as well refer to Abraham's works. Hansen (1989, 114) states that, 'Paul's definition of faith implies that he did not understand *elogisthee autoo eis dikaiosyneen* as his opponents probably did, to mean that Abraham's faith was reckoned to be equivalent to Abraham's righteous behavior - defined in terms of distinctively Jewish customs (nationalistic righteousness).' To say that 'by faith' cannot include the Torah, does not agree with our knowledge of Judaism. It is in fact a clear departure from Judaism (Betz, 1988, 147-148). Nevertheless, Paul uses the quotation as saying the former, not the latter. In the argument, the problem is solved by Paul's suggestion that the promise proclaimed by Scripture was in fact the Gospel. This is deduced from the interpretation that it was Abraham's faith that incurred God's blessing. Since only the Gospel entails the notion of blessing through faith -according to Paul - the blessing must have been the Gospel. Furthermore, the Gentiles are included in the blessing, and in the justification provided by the Gospel. Thus, then, 'those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed.' See Fig. 6 and 7. That God's blessing should here be understood as synonymous with righteousness can easily be deduced from vv. 6 and 8, where righteousness is connected with the blessing of Abraham.

Figure 3 3.6-9, Part 3/3, The Gentiles as 'Heavenly Citizens' of 1.1.

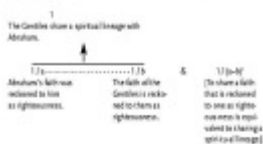


Figure 6 The Blessing of Abraham, Part 1/2.

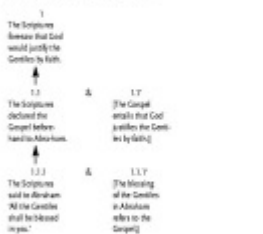


Figure 7 The Blessing of Abraham, Part 2/2.



Now that the argumentation in vv. 6-9 has been analysed and schematically presented, we notice a tendency to leave one premiss unstated. The argument is enthymemic: In four verses, Paul's argumentation contains five units that more or less are enthymemes. Since the arguments are intertwined, as in vv. 3.6-7, only some of them are truly enthymemes. The rhetorical practice of using enthymemic argumentation is sometimes useful, because a reader – and especially a hearer – does not always make the effort to reflect on what the unstated premiss is. It is thus possible to present arguments that seem convincing, but which rest on premisses that – if they would be clearly stated – would not readily be accepted.

The same applies for all arguments with unstated premisses, or even conclusions, be they enthymemes or not. With this in mind, let us take a closer look at the implicit premisses. To repeat: these are not the only possible reconstructions of the arguments. Some of the premisses could certainly have been formulated at least slightly differently. However, if the analysis seems probable, it should be close enough to do the text justice, and to be useful for further exegesis. To summarise, the implicit premisses in vv. 6-9 are:

1. Faith in God is reckoned to one as righteousness, 1.1', Fig. 3.
2. To share a faith that is reckoned to one as righteousness is equivalent to sharing a spiritual lineage, 1.1(a-b)', Fig. 4 and 5.
3. The Gospel entails that God justifies the Gentiles by faith, 1.1', Fig. 6.
4. The blessing of the Gentiles in Abraham refers to the Gospel, 1.1.1', Fig. 6.
5. The blessing of Abraham was founded on his faith, 1.1(b)', Fig. 7.

These premisses are all consistent with Paul's argument. Explicating the implicit premisses does in fact make Paul's argument even clearer. It thus seems that this mode of argumentation is not chosen because some of the premisses would be more difficult to accept than those that are explicit. This unravelling of Paul's argumentation does, however, more clearly expose weaknesses in the connections between premisses and conclusions.

First, the backing of the claim that faith is reckoned to one as righteousness is rather weak; the statement from Gen. 12.3 cannot convincingly be claimed to foresee the Gospel and the notion of justification through faith (1 in Fig. 6). If the idea that the blessing of Abraham was equivalent with the Gospel is not accepted,

then it does of course not follow that the Gospel would include also the Gentiles (1.1' in Fig. 6).

Furthermore, it is by no means clear that Abraham's belief can be contrasted with his deeds. That Abraham's faith was reckoned to him as righteousness is not equivalent to saying that he was justified through faith – especially since Abraham's faith in Gen. 15.6 is closer to 'faithfulness' than a 'theological' faith (cf. e.g. Mußner, 1981, 214-215). In fact, no Jew would have accepted the notion of faith and works of the law as opposites (Mußner, 1981, 218). It seems that Paul is exploiting a verbal parallel; the 'blessing of Abraham', v. 8, does not really say, what Paul reads into it. The presupposition that the Scriptures 'foresaw' that God would justify the Gentiles through faith, is not stated in Deut., nor anywhere else. Abraham was not an example in the sense Paul presents him: The idea of a forensic declaration of justification is foreign to the OT (Mußner, 1981, 214-215). The reference to Abraham is perhaps best understood as an *argument by analogy*: Just as Abraham believed ... , so also now we believe. Just as Abraham's faith was reckoned to him as righteousness, so now our faith is reckoned to us as righteousness. At the same time, it bears the characteristics of *argument by appeal to tradition and to authority*. A critic could raise the objection that the analogy with Abraham is a false analogy, that Paul here is guilty of a *fallacy of relevance*:

1. Abraham's faith was not faith in Christ and
2. the righteousness reckoned to Abraham is not identical to the righteousness reckoned to those who believe in Christ, and that
3. in Gen. 15 the intention is not to contrast Abraham's faith with his deeds. Thus the analogy with Abraham has many dissimilarities which reduce its argumentative value. This indicates that the appeals to the authority of Abraham and the implied tradition of righteousness by faith may be *rhetorical moves*. The reference to Abraham can be argued not to be *evidentially relevant*, it is, however, *topic relevant* since it does deal with the key-concepts of faith and righteousness.

Thus it appears that Abraham as an example of a faith not based on deeds of the law is a clever argumentative construction created in order to support a thesis of a righteousness based on faith alone. On closer inspection, based on the original context, Abraham's faith cannot as easily be separated from his deeds as it is in Paul's argument. This means that the connection that Paul makes in v. 7, 'those

who believe are the descendants of Abraham', is easy to contest. The problem lies not in a spiritualising of the idea of 'sons of Abraham' (cf. Mußner, 1981, 219), but in the fact that Abraham does not represent such a division between faith and deeds as wanted by Paul.

4. Analysis of Gal. 3.10-14

If a claim is somewhat weak, it can be strengthened by negative arguments to present any alternative in as bad a light as possible. Paul's claims need more backing, and this is given by a few negative assertions about the law and living by it. This section, vv. 10-14, is among the most disputed in Galatians.

The thesis is stated thus: 'For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse', v. 10, and it is backed up with a quotation from Deut. 27.26: 'for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law."' Many commentators have noticed the problem with this claim and its backing; that it is a hopeless *non sequitur* (Young, 1998, 82). The problem is also dealt with in e.g. Hill, 1982; Donaldson, 1986; Stanley, 1990; Bonneau, 1997; see also Betz, 1988, 145-146). In fact, the backing seems to contradict Paul's claim: are not those who 'rely on the works of the law' the same people that 'observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law'? In that case, should not those who do rely on the law actually be blessed, and those who do not, be cursed, and not vice versa?

Traditionally, many commentators have assumed an implicit premiss in the argument: no one is able to completely keep the law (e.g. Oepke, 1957, 72; Longenecker, 1976, 40-43, 120, 124 and 1990, 118; Mußner, 1981, 226; and Räisänen, 1987, 94), see Fig. 8. It has, however, been pointed out that this view does not agree with our knowledge of the historical realities, and it has consequently been refuted (cf. Young, 1998, 83-84; Martyn, 1998, 309-311; Morland, 1991, 277-286; Sanders, 1983, 28-29; see also Mußner, 1981, 229-230). Young states that, 'there is no hint in Deuteronomy, in Paul, or in Judaism that the law required an impossible perfection. To suggest that any human shortcoming immediately attracted the law's curse is really an unlikely proposal once the historical realities are considered.' (Young, 1998, 83). What incurs the law's curse are not any inevitable infringements, but a 'purposeful abandonment of any of the covenant's demands.' (Young, 1998, 84). Young's analysis of the problem is one of the most recent attempts to solve Gal. 3.10. He presents the following solution, see Fig. 9 (Young, 1998, 87).

Figure 8 The 'Implicit Premiss'-Reconstruction of 3.10.

All who do not keep the law perfectly are cursed. [Deut. 27.26/Gal. 3.10b]
[No one can keep the law perfectly.]

All who rely on the works of the law are under a curse. [Gal. 3.10a]

Figure 9 Young's Suggestion to 3.10.

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| statement: | As many as function from the Mosaic covenant and its requirements are under a curse, |
| unexpressed condition: | if they abandon any of that covenant's laws, |
| textual proof: | because the Torah itself pronounces a curse on anyone who does not adhere to all its requirements. |

We notice that the text in Young's suggestion is somewhat modified in comparison with the text of v. 10. This need not be a problem, if the externalisations are correct. Young's schema clearly shows that the idea of the argument is that it is fruitless to try to function from the Mosaic covenant and its requirements and at the same time abandon any of that covenant's laws. The logic of the argument is clear, but there seems to be one point where Young departs from the text of v. 10. In Young's schema, the curse is avoided by not abandoning any of the covenants main requirements, whereas in Paul's argument the curse is avoided by not to 'rely on the works of the law' in the first place (literally not to 'be of the works of the law', *ex ergoon nomou einai*). It would perhaps not have been strategically wise for Paul to present the case as Young does: Paul would hardly want to say that the curse is avoided by not abandoning any of the covenants main requirements since this is the kind of argumentation Paul opposes! Paul does not say that 'they' (*hosoi*) are under a curse *if* they abandon the law's requirements. In stead, he says that they *are* under a curse because they *do* rely on the works of the law: 'all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse'. This is not a hypothetical situation, but these people, 'they', do exist (according to Paul). Thus the law cannot offer a path to righteousness, no matter how much one would follow 'all the things written' in it.

I do, however, agree on Young's point that Paul argues that one should not 'function from the Mosaic covenant and its requirements' because it is a fact that Christians do not adhere to one of its requirements - circumcision - and the law thus leads to a curse. This argument can be represented as follows: see Fig. 10 and 11.

Figure 10: The Argument in 3.18, Paul (10)

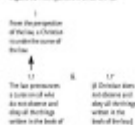


Figure 11: The Argument in 3.18, Paul (11)

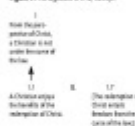


Figure 12: 3.11

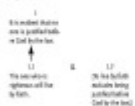
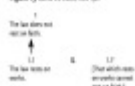


Figure 13: Verse 10, Paul (12)



However, as shown above, the text gives reason to understand Paul's primary point to be that the law *inevitably* leads to a curse, regardless of how well it is followed. In addition to this the arguments given seem to be based on the following thoughts: First, the reason for the law's inability to justify does not lie in an impossibility to adhere to all of its requirements, nor in any original inherent inadequacy of the law itself, but in the fact that a Christian knowingly chooses not to observe all of the Law's requirements, specifically the requirement of circumcision (in this particular argument, that is; later Paul does imply inherent shortcomings in the law itself, cf. 3.19-20). Second, the reason for making such a choice lies in the alternative, faith, an alternative

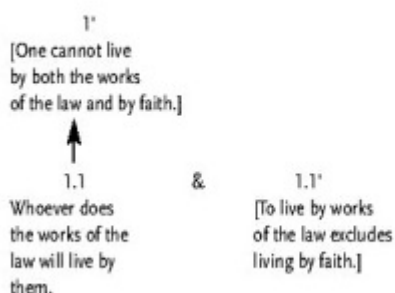
that is incompatible with a life where one relies on the works of the law. Since the way of faith is an alternative opened by Christ ('who redeemed us from the curse of the law'), the abandonment of the requirements of the law does not result in a curse. No matter which of the three points one emphasises, the purpose of the quotation from Deut. is clearly to support the argument that the law cannot provide a path to righteousness. All of this is not stated in v. 10, but becomes clear in the continuation of the argument, in vv. 11-12. Again, part of the difficulty with the argument lies in its compactness. Several difficult thoughts are intertwined in a few short phrases.

The next claim then bluntly states that, 'Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law', v. 11, and the claim is backed up with Hab. 2.4, 'for "The one who is righteous will live by faith."' Once again, it is not clear why this is 'evident' (*deelon*) – the argument is based on a premiss that is only loosely connected to the conclusion, see Fig. 12.

The implicit premiss 1.1', on which the argument stands, cannot be said to be included in the original claim in Hab. Here in Gal. 3.11 'faith' seems to mean faith in Christ – Paul interprets Hab. to suit his theology, not the one of Hab. or other Jewish sources (the LXX reads, 'The righteous shall live by my [i.e. God's] faithfulness', *ho de dikaios ek pisteos mou zeesetai*, and the MT reads, 'The righteous shall live because of his faithfulness.') This fulfils the criteria of a *fallacy of false analogy*. Betz notes that, 'Although the conclusion is drawn from Hab 2.4, v 11 at the same time continues the argument of v 10: if the "men of the Law" are under the curse, it is obvious that by that Law no one can be justified before God.'

(Betz, 1988, 146). This may very well be the line of Paul's argument, but acceptance of the conclusion that no one is justified by the law requires that one concludes that Paul has shown that those who rely on the works of the law really are under a curse. Works of the law are opposed with faith, the former is connected with curse, the latter with justification – a clear use of the strategy of *argumentation by association and dissociation*.

Figure 14 Works vs. Faith, Part 2/2.



The argument continues with still two quotations from Scripture and four accompanying claims. First, Paul states that, 'the law does not rest on faith', v. 12, thus eliminating the quite possible interpretation of Hab. 2.4 that living by faith does not exclude doing the works of the law. Nevertheless, Paul emphasises

that, 'On the contrary, "Whoever does the works of the law will live by them."' In this way, Paul contrasts works and faith: it is either the one or the other, see Fig. 13, and 14.

With the concluding verses (12-14) of the pericope, Paul now returns to the positive statement in vv. 8-9 about the blessing of Abraham. There is a way to avoid the curse of the law because, 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us', v. 13. By itself the statement is enigmatic and the Scriptural backing, 'for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"', does not clarify. It is easy to read familiar dogmatics about atonement into v. 13, but how much of it is really called for in this context? Betz concludes that the passage in Deut. 21.23, 'proves for Paul that Christ's death on the cross fulfilled Scripture.' (Betz, 1988, 152). Although much more cannot be said with certainty, it may be that Paul here quotes an early Christian confession (so Longenecker, 1990, 122). In order to make sense, the 'becoming a curse for us' must in fact express the idea of a 'meritorious death of the righteous and its atoning benefits.' (Betz, 1988, 151; similarly Mußner, 1981, 233). Although the passage in Deut. 21.23 speaks of criminals generally, the special character of Jesus, as the Son of God, gives a basis for seeing his death as being uniquely meritorious. The idea of atonement is not explicitly discussed in the immediate context of 3.6-14, nor the concept 'Son of God', but elsewhere in Galatians (1.4, 2.16f, 2.19f, and 4.4f), and can be supplied without introducing anything foreign to the argument. See Fig.

15 and 16.

Figure 15 3.13, Part 1/2.

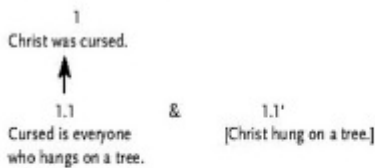
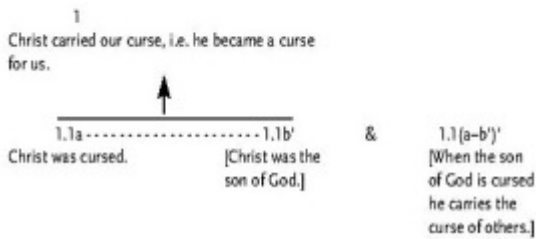


Figure 16 3.13, Part 2/2.



Paul now ends the argument by stating the purpose of Christ's death. It is, 'in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.', v. 3.14. The content of the 'blessing of Abraham' is 'the promise of the Spirit', which now is available 'through faith'. The last clause connects with the beginning of chapter three, v. 2, 'Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing

what you heard?' To summarise, the implicit premisses recovered through the analysis of vv. 10-14 are:

6. A Christian does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law, 1.1', Fig. 10.
7. The redemption of Christ entails freedom from the curse of the law, 1.1', Fig. 11.
8. To live by faith excludes being justified before God by the law, 1.1', Fig. 12.
9. That which rests on works cannot rest on faith, 1.1', Fig. 13.
- 10a. *[The implicit conclusion:]* One cannot live by both the works of the law and by faith, 1', Fig. 14.
- 10b. To live by the works of the law excludes living by faith, 1.1', Fig. 14.
11. Christ hung on a tree, 1.1', Fig. 15.
12. Christ was the Son of God, 1.1b', Fig. 16.
13. When the Son of God is cursed he carries the curse of others, 1.1(a-b)', Fig. 16.

Premiss 6 is quite clear in the light of the argument of the letter as a whole: Paul opposes the idea that Gentile Christians would need to be circumcised, and thus he advocates a conscious departure from 'all the things that are written in the book of law'. Naturally, this premiss would be questioned by those who hold the opposite view: that Christians should adhere to all the requirements of the law, or at least to the one of circumcision.

Premiss 7 lies at the heart of the argument and is almost equivalent to what Paul explicitly says in v. 13.

Premises 9 and 10a, and 10b are amplified by Paul from the original statement in Hab. 2.4 to create a dichotomy between living by faith and living by the law. As stated above, to say that 'by faith' cannot include the Torah, does not agree with our knowledge of Judaism. Premiss 9, then, restates that it is impossible to base one's life both on living by faith and on living by the works of the law.

Premises 6, 8, 9, and 10a, 10b are such that they may have been contested by those among the Galatians who did not agree with Paul.

Premiss 11 stands in connection with Deut. 21.23 that originally concerned condemned criminals and some practical regulations about the disposal of their bodies. This does fit into the situation of Jesus, who according to the Gospels, was hung on a tree and treated as a criminal.

Premises 12 and 13 refer to some idea of atonement. This is a Jewish idea, present in the early Christian kerygma, that probably would be convincing to those Paul wanted to convince.

The conclusion of the whole section of vv. 1-14, is stated in v. 14: 'in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.' This conclusion has two statements that beg a comment.

Firstly, it is noteworthy that nowhere in the Gospels is it stated that the purpose of Christ's death would be that 'the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles'. This might be Paul's understanding of the matter. It may also - in stead of or in addition to this - be a way of creating a background to his claims. If Paul can trace his claims back to Abraham, he has made a convincing argument. The parallel to Abraham is cleverly chosen, because the interpretation does not immediately strike as a strained one.

Secondly, Paul here equates the blessing of Abraham with the promise of the Spirit. There is no backing or warrant indicated. Earlier it was noted that the blessing of Abraham was equated with the Gospel. As Paul sees it, the Gospel is inextricably connected with the promise of the Spirit and so the two can apparently be used synonymously.

5. Results and Conclusion

The analysis suggests that the method utilised is useful. It is flexible enough to be used on different kinds of argument, irrespective of what form they have. Paul's argumentation is at times exceedingly compact, and the practice of recovering implicit premisses, clarifies the argument, as with the case of the double argument in vv. 6-7, which turned out not to be an enthymeme as had been suggested earlier.

As the analysis above has shown, Paul's arguments can be presented in a way that makes sense although the logic is sometimes quite strained. Some of the argumentation is very difficult to analyse, notably v. 10. Such argumentation can only be considered valid by a judge who is sympathetic almost to the extreme. Still, we should assume that some of the difficulty in interpretation is due to the fact that the original situation is mostly lost to us, and we should always try to find a plausible explanation even to the most difficult of Paul's arguments. Nevertheless, we should not overestimate the ability of Paul's addressees: if an argument is exceedingly difficult for us, then in most cases it probably was that too for the original addressees.

By taking a closer look at the premisses extracted in the analysis I hoped to gain some further understanding of the argumentation. One rhetorical use of an enthymeme is not to state a premiss explicitly because the hearers or addressees would not easily accept the implicit premiss, would it be clearly stated. For example, if one does not accept the premisses about the dichotomy between law and faith (cf. Fig. 12, 13, and 14) one will not be able to accept the conclusions. In Gal. 3.6-14, however, already the conclusions pretty clearly state Paul's position on those issues that could be contested. In fact, several of the premisses, which here were implicit, are explicitly stated elsewhere. The choice of an enthymemic argumentation thus seems primarily to be a stylistic feature of Paul's argumentation. However, in some other arguments of Paul this style may have clearer argumentative advantages than in this particular pericope. The advantage of uncovering the premisses in this case is thus mainly that it clarifies the argumentation.

Paul does seem to regard several claims conclusively defended. The claims about the law are summarised in the conclusion that, 'it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law'. Paul's interpretations of Gen. 12.3 and 15.6 are not the only possible ones and the arguments given in support of Paul's

interpretation are rather weak – on their argumentative merits alone they are unlikely to convince someone with good arguments for another interpretation. That Paul presents his arguments as conclusive can be seen as an argumentative strategy that convinces those who do not have the interest or ability to scrutinise Paul's argument or those for whom Paul's authority is enough to believe his words.

The arguments seem to be strengthened by appeal to authority, to Scripture. As mentioned above, the pericope is characterised by unusually many quotations from Scripture probably intended to add authority to Paul's argument (cf. Ellis, 1957, 23). Citing authorities gives an impression of authority in itself, but in addition to this, the quotations are centred on Abraham, the founding father of Israel. If Paul convincingly succeeds in tracing his claim all the way back to Abraham he has an argument that should have a strong impact on those he wishes to convince (cf. Mußner, 1981, 213).

Some of the weaknesses of the argumentation can be described as fallacies. As noted in the analysis above, the connection Paul creates to Abraham is more a rhetorical construct than a factual connection. It rests on an anachronistic interpretation of Abraham's faith, an interpretation that is easily contested. It can be taken as a *fallacy of relevance*, more specifically a *fallacy of false analogy*. Logical shortcomings do, however, not necessarily reduce the persuasive effect of an argument. But if one embarks upon an argumentation using many premisses from sources of authority and it then turns out that these arguments do not stand a closer scrutiny, the credibility of the argumentation (and of the argumentator) may suffer, and thereby also lessen the persuasive effect.

It is possible that the OT-quotations which Paul makes use of are suggested by some earlier stage in the argumentation, either between Paul and his addressees or within the Galatian congregations. Regardless of this, it is probable that Paul directs his argumentation against some Jewish tradition or traditions that have a different understanding of the things under discussion.

The pericope also shows a tendency towards an authoritarian style of argumentation. This creates an interesting tension in the text. On the one hand, Paul states his claims as conclusively defended. He has made an interpretation that should then be accepted by all. On the other hand, Paul really seems to try to make good arguments that are convincing – to argue with claims that are

supported with several premisses, mostly from the OT.

The idea that permeates the whole passage, the dichotomy between law and faith, may be regarded as a *fallacy of false dichotomy*: they need not be as mutually exclusive as Paul asserts. In fact, the whole problem in Gal. 3.6-14 could be seen as a *fallacy of false dilemma*: it is not at all certain that the Galatians perceived their situation as problematical before they received Paul's letter.

This type of analysis can be used as a first step towards a complete exegesis of any argumentative text. In the case of Galatians 3.6-14, the analysis should at least be complemented with a traditional historical-critical exegesis and a rhetorical analysis which takes the letter as a whole into account.

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