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Act One: Paul Arrives in Galatia

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How did Paul preach during his initial missionary visits? An analysis of Galatians' explicit and implicit references to Paul's original preaching shows that there he had initially ignored the Law, and probably had little to say about community order and conduct. The analysis also sheds some light on subsequent events. Apparently the Jewish Christian missionaries who followed Paul compromised on their own observance of the Law, joining the Gentile Christians at meals (as Peter had done at Antioch); they did not understand Paul's position on the Law and did not attack him directly.

I

We know so much about St Paul that it is easy to forget how little we know about him. On the one hand, we have Paul's own words, which make up roughly one-sixth of the NT. On the other hand, all of these words are in his letters. As important as these letters are, they are only adjuncts to Paul's great work of founding churches, without which he would have had no occasion to write his letters.

How did Paul found his churches? This broad question has many parts. The one at which I want to look is, what did he preach in his founding of them? The question draws us closer to our principal evidence, the things Paul said in his letters – closer, but still some distance away. The letters serve a different purpose than the preaching. The letters assume the preaching; we might even start with the presumption that anything said in the letters was *not* said in the preaching – for why should Paul merely repeat himself? And so far as Paul does repeat himself, limitations of space alone are sufficient to guarantee that his letters to his churches will not repeat everything he said to each church while he was present, or even what was of chief importance; rather, in each letter Paul will address what is important when he writes the letter.

Such considerations indicate the difficulty of arriving at Paul's preaching by reading his letters. It is not that the two must have been very different, only that we cannot assume they were the same; and it is hard to tell where the differences lie. The letters must be combed for evidence of what happened before they were

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written – read not just as mirrors displaying immediately preceding events but (to extend John Barclay's metaphor) as mirrors within mirrors, and perhaps in mirrors yet again.[1] To switch metaphors, we have to excavate each layer in the development of the communities to which the letters were written.

As with any archaeological task, the goal is not full reconstruction, but simply to do as much as possible with what there is to be found. Like an archaeologist, I propose to work on a single site, and like John Barclay, I will work on Galatians. Of all Paul's letters, Galatians offers the clearest indications of immediate history, centring on the arrival in Galatia, evidently after Paul had left, of new missionaries who (Paul says) have 'troubled' the Galatian churches (Gal 5.12) by proclaiming 'a different gospel' than Paul's (1.6). To use yet another metaphor, Paul's letter to the Galatians is part of the third act of a drama centred in the Galatian churches.[2] Reading the letter we learn of a second act, which began with the arrival of the new missionaries – in J. L. Martyn's convenient term, 'the Teachers'.[3] Behind this, fainter but not entirely invisible, is a first act, which began when Paul himself arrived in Galatia. Still more remote is a prologue, setting the scene for Paul's arrival.

What happened in Act One? This first act must have lasted weeks or months – however long Paul stayed in Galatia – with many scenes and speeches that, individually, are impossible to reconstruct.[4] But it is possible to draw some conclusions about the act as a whole, organized as a summary of key points in two categories: first, what Paul probably said; and second, what he probably did *not* say. The second category is as important as the first. Since the first act in Galatia sets the stage for the second, as the second does for the third, it is important to know at each point which issues have been presented, and which await the arrival on stage of some new character. Thus, the issue of Law dominates Act Three; did it dominate Act Two as well, or did it then seem one point, which Paul later seized and elevated? And what about Act One? Did Paul come to Galatia preaching a Law-free gospel, or simply a gospel without the Law? Did the Galatians know something about the Law when Paul arrived, so that it was a topic which Paul could not entirely ignore, or were they introduced to it in Act One, or not until Act Two?

1 See J. M. G. Barclay, 'Mirror-reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case', *JSNT* 31 (1987) 73–93.

2 See J. L. Martyn, *Galatians* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 18.

3 Ibid., 117 and throughout, as well as in the earlier essays collected in J. L. Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1997).

4 I use Act One to mean all that happened from Paul's arrival in Galatia through his last contact with the Galatians before he learns of the teachers' presence there, including any additional visits or earlier letters.

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II

It will be useful to identify the resources available for approaching such questions. First, a word on the limits of our topic. We are looking at Galatia, although the same questions might be asked about Corinth or Philippi or Thessalonica; but since we cannot assume that Paul always introduced the gospel in the same way, it is necessary to be specific.[5] This does not mean that Paul's other letters are irrelevant. When we have some evidence that Paul preached in certain terms to the Galatians, the likelihood that he did so is somewhat strengthened by evidence that he used those terms elsewhere. But I will not draw any conclusions about Paul's Galatian preaching *solely* on the basis of other letters. Galatians is the foundation.

Second, the kinds of evidence available to us may be divided roughly into five categories: (a) Sometimes Paul refers explicitly to things he has *said* before; I take these up in section III below.[6] (b) He also refers explicitly to things that *happened* when he was with the Galatians; these I take up in section IV.[7] (c) Sometimes he uses language which seems to assume prior familiarity with particular terms or concepts; this is instructive, provided we can distinguish (as I try to do in section V) what became familiar in Act One from what became familiar in Act Two or the Prologue.[8] (d) We may be able to borrow from the long history of attempts to reconstruct Act Two; if one can work backwards from Paul's response to the Teachers to an outline of what the teachers said, perhaps we can work back from what the Teachers said to what Paul himself first said, and I undertake this in section VI. (E) On occasion, conclusions may be inferred – even without direct evidence in Galatians – based on considerations as to what Paul *must* have said; for instance, if Paul preached about God, he must have explained in some way to his pagan audience what god he meant, and perhaps we can (in section VII) reconstruct elements of this explanation.

III

And now for a catalogue of the evidence itself. We are going to be piling up pieces here, and when we have enough we will try to put them together to suggest some conclusions.

5 Various factors could account for variations in Paul's preaching (even without any variations in the gospel as such): the presence or absence of Jews in the community; other local circumstances; evolution in Paul's way of preaching. The circumstances under which Paul met the Galatians are described in 4.12–14; apparently this mission was not planned, and that might have affected its nature.

6 Gal 1.9; 5.21. 3.1 can be considered in the same category. In 1.13–14 Paul refers to what someone has said, without specifying who.

7 Gal 3.2, 3, 5; cf. 4.6; perhaps 5.24 and 6.14.

8 Possible examples include ἐλευθερία, δικαιοσύνη and πνεῦμα, all of which will be considered below.

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First, we have Paul's direct references to things he has told the Galatians. There are five such references, four in Galatians and one in 1 Corinthians.

Gal 1.9

Here Paul writes, 'As we have said before, now I say again: If someone preaches a gospel different from the one you received [from me], a curse on him.'[9] How came Paul to be so foresighted? It is tempting to think that, since only in Galatians do we have evidence of such a warning, Paul issued it precisely because he knew about the Teachers who would shortly do just what he warned against. But this is doubtful. In the first place, Paul might have said the same thing in Corinth or Philippi, but he found no occasion to bring it up in his later letters to those churches.

Second, the warning as recalled is very general: if Paul had warned the Galatians about the Teachers specifically, why does he not recall the specifics now? Moreover, we shall see as we proceed that most of Paul's arguments against the Teachers seem to be new in Act Three, which is surprising if he already knew in Act One what Act Two would bring.

However, if the general nature of Paul's warning suggests a remote threat, the great force with which he closes it is all the more striking. As part of Act Three, the harsh language in Gal 1.9 is understandable: there *is* 'someone' among the Galatians 'preaching a gospel different from the one you received', and in this urgent situation Paul naturally lets fly with everything he has. But why would he have spoken with this urgency in Act One?[10] Did he then fear some other specific challenge, different from the Teachers? This remains an open question.

Gal 1.13–14

In this passage Paul refers to something of which he says 'you have heard', but he does not say how or when: 'You have heard of my conduct when in Judaism, how extraordinarily I persecuted the church of God and sought to destroy it, and advanced in Judaism beyond many of my age, so exceedingly zealous was I for my ancestral traditions.' 'You have heard' would be a highly oblique

9 F. F. Bruce (*The Epistle to the Galatians* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982] 84) suggests that the reference is to v. 8, not to some earlier communication. E. D. Burton (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* [ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1921] 29) and F. Mussner (*Der Galaterbrief* [Freiberg: Herder & Herder, 1974] 61) reject this possibility on the ground that ἄρτι ('now') implies a difference in time, and R. Y. K. Fung (*The Epistle to the Galatians* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988] 47) on the basis of Paul's use of 'we'.

10 It may be objected that Paul is not necessarily quoting himself directly; there might not actually have been a curse in Act One. I agree that this is possible, but it is not how Paul describes the situation. Perhaps he actually said something else, but in the face of Paul's testimony, I do not know how we could establish this.

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way for Paul to refer to something he himself had said, and contrasts with 1.9 and 5.21. More likely, Paul means something the Teachers have said in Act Two.[11] We shall see that this is consistent with other evidence; the Teachers had reason to talk of this, and Paul is able to turn it against the Teachers here, but it is hard to see what point it would have served in Act One.[12]

Gal 3.1

Here Paul refers to having portrayed Christ to the Galatians as crucified. We can only guess at his language. (In 1 Cor 1.18, 23 we hear of 'the word of the cross' and 'preaching Christ crucified', also with no necessary implication that Paul is quoting directly from his preaching.)

Gal 5.21

Here Paul describes another earlier warning, without claiming to quote it: 'I proclaim to you, as I said before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.' 'Such things' here refers to 'works of the flesh' (5.19), which Paul has just listed, but it does not appear that Paul specified 'works of the flesh' in his original warning; had he done so, recalling this language would aid his argument in 5.13(15, expressly focused as this is on 'flesh' and 'spirit'.[13]

1 Cor 16.1

Here Paul writes: 'Concerning the collection for the saints [in Jerusalem – see 16.4], you too should do as I instructed the churches of Galatia.' Unfortunately, it is not clear whether Paul means instructions he gave to the Galatians in Act One, or much later (perhaps in Act Four). In Gal 2.10 Paul recalls his eagerness for such a collection, but says nothing about its progress (contrast 1 Cor 16; 2 Cor 8–9).[14] But

11 Contra S. K. Williams (*Galatians* [Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1997] 45), Fung (*Galatians*, 55), F. Matera (*Galatians* [Sacra Pagina; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1992] 62), Burton (*Galatians*, 44).

12 The terms that Paul uses here need not have been those used by the Teachers. They will almost certainly have spoken of Paul's zeal for the Law, not for 'ancestral traditions'. It is Paul, not the Teachers, who wants to characterize this zeal in human terms; his contrast between human tradition in 1.14 and divine revelation in 1.15 (and his surprising placement of the Law on the human side of this division) is the climax to the series of human–divine contrasts in 1.1, 10, 11–12.

13 Mussner (*Galaterbrief*, 383) notes the possibility that Paul refers here to a warning he had given to other communities, not the Galatians, but he does not explain the point of such a reference.

14 Martyn (*Galatians*, 222–8), drawing in part on D. Georgi (*Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem* [Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1992] 45), concludes that the collection had not yet begun; contra H. D. Betz (*Galatians* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979] 101). Martyn (*Galatians*, 222–3) also calls attention to Paul's use of the simple past tense in saying 'I was eager' (ἐσπούδασα), as though this eagerness no longer existed, but this is

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Paul's chief point here seems to be that he remains independent of Jerusalem, despite the collection; he has no apparent reason to bring up the collection at all, unless the Galatians already know of it.[15] Probably it began in Act One.

Summary

As we would expect, Paul preached 'Christ crucified' in Act One. He also condemned the kind of deeds which in Act Three he calls 'works of flesh', but probably not in those terms. On balance, I think he probably began a collection for the poor in Jerusalem. He warned against other teachings, not those actually encountered in Act Two, but perhaps those of still other missionaries known to Paul. It is unlikely that Paul talked about his own former zealousness for the Law.

IV

Except for 'Christ portrayed as crucified' in 3.1, the passages just considered are stray bits, not what we would expect to lie near the core of Paul's preaching. When we turn to Paul's references to things that have happened, the core is much closer to hand.

Gal 3.2–5

The chief evidence follows immediately on 3.1: in 3.2, 3 and 5 Paul recalls the Galatians' reception of 'the Spirit', in terms which show that he is convinced the Galatians will know exactly what he is talking about. This, indeed, appears to be the heart of Paul's case, his chief evidence against the Teachers and what they have to say about the Law in general and circumcision in particular.[16]

Paul's language assumes that not only have the Galatians felt the Spirit, they know that it is the Spirit they have felt. Therefore Paul talked of the Spirit in Act

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inconclusive. While the aorist tense is consistent with Paul's zeal being temporary, it does not require this (any more than the simple English past tense would). If Paul only wishes to explain why he accepted the request to support the poor, the aorist rather than the imperfect is appropriate. If he carried out this request in Act One, the Galatians know it; rather, if he had abandoned it, that would seem to require explanation; but none is given here.

15 Perhaps the Teachers are using Paul's support of a collection for the Jerusalem church to show his subservience to that church; Paul then responds by putting this in context. Cf. L. Hurtado, 'The Jerusalem Collection in Galatians', *JSNT* 5 (1979) 46–62, at 51–3.

16 Paul brings so many different arguments to bear against the Teachers, from exegetical (3.6–18; 4.21–31) to *ad hominem* (6.13), that one could dispute which is chief. I think, however, that 3.1–5 has, first, pride of place – it precedes all other arguments except the highly elliptical 2.15–21; and second, pride of substance – it is difficult to imagine any exegesis bearing the weight of actual experience. Paul appeals further to this experience of the Spirit in 5.13–26.

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One.[17] Moreover, with the Spirit came 'the working of miracles', and both the Spirit and the miracles are supplied by God (3.5).[18]

Gal 1.6

Gal 1.6 is similar: 'I am amazed that you are turning so quickly *from the one who graciously called you* to another Good News.' In Paul's usage it is uniformly God (not Paul) who 'calls' believers, and being 'called' almost certainly refers to something experienced (if not, what does it refer to?).[19] Moreover, the argument in 1.6 works just like the argument in 3.1–5: in those verses both the supplying and the reception of the Spirit testify to the validity of the Galatians' faithful hearing of Paul; in 1.6 the calling of the Galatians testifies to the validity of what Paul said, which is the same thing viewed from the other side. Very likely 'call' and 'supply of the Spirit' are two ways of referring to the same event.

Related passages

There are also three verses where Paul speaks of either himself or the Galatians having been crucified (2.19; 5.24; 6.14), and these too seem to be references to a transformative experience.[20] Exactly what Paul's metaphorical uses of 'crucify' refer to is a very large topic, and for our purposes the key point is simply that Paul expects the Galatians to understand him.[21] Thus, in Act One Paul apparently spoke of a transformative experience, which he probably connected with Christ's crucifixion, with receiving the Spirit, and with the working of miracles.[22]

17 See also 4.6 ('God sent the spirit of his son into our hearts') and 1 Thess 1.5 ('our gospel came to you . . . in power and in the Holy Spirit').

18 God is not named – Paul says, 'the one supplying the Spirit', etc. – but there is no doubt who that is. (Cf. 'the one who called you', Gal 1.6; 'the one who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead', Rom 4.24.)

19 It is explicitly God who 'calls' in 1 Cor 1.9; 7.15, 17; 1 Thess 2.12; 4.7; and perhaps (but here many manuscripts lack ὁ θεός) Gal 2.14. Other passages scarcely less clear are Rom 8.30 and Gal 2.14 (if ὁ θεός is not original).

20 On the transformative nature of this experience, note that in each passage Paul uses the perfect tense, '*have been* crucified', emphasizing continuing effect (B. M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1990] 291–7; S. E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood* [New York: Peter Lang, 1993] 256–60). 5.24 ('Those who belong to Christ Jesus have *crucified the flesh* with its passions and desires') is a little different from 2.19 ('*I have been crucified* with Christ'). But the differences need not imply different experiences (especially since the descriptions are metaphorical).

21 On crucifixion with Christ, see Martyn, *Galatians*, 277–80, and the sources cited in Betz, *Galatians*, 122 n. 84.

22 Since it appears that the Galatians' experience resembled Paul's, is it likely that testimony to his own experience was part of Paul's preaching? In his letters, Paul's invocations of this experience generally lack explicit detail (1 Cor 1.18; Gal 2.19–20); when detail appears (2 Cor 12.2–4), it is doubtful that the experience is one shared by other believers. He might have been more direct in his preaching, but I see no way to determine this.

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Summary

Paul assumes that the Galatians understand themselves to have received the Spirit, to have been transformed, and to have been called. As these expressions refer to a key event (or events) of Act One, almost certainly Paul used them then.

V

Now that large but somewhat ill-defined category of terms and concepts with which Paul assumes familiarity. (We have already touched on similar matters, as with 'Spirit'; our categories are not precise.) Here we have two basic questions: first, whether Paul assumes familiarity, and second, if familiarity is assumed, whether we should trace it to Act Two, or Act One, or the Prologue.[23] Under the first question we have to distinguish between familiarity with terms and familiarity with concepts. As will be seen, we can sometimes conclude that the Galatians would not have understood Paul unless they already understood some basic concept (for instance, that Christ trusted God, or that believers trust Christ), but not necessarily that they were familiar with a particular way of expressing this (for instance, the expression πίστις Χριστοῦ).

What we are looking for is not merely general acquaintance with terms, which can be assumed, but evidence that Paul's use of a term implies some prior, special understanding.

'Good News'

'Good News' or 'gospel' is found as noun (εὐαγγέλιον) or verb (εὐαγγελίζω, προευαγγελίζομαι) throughout the letter, beginning in 1.6: 'I am amazed that you are turning so quickly from the one who graciously called you to a different Good News.' Although this would probably be comprehensible even if the language were new, Paul's insistence on it (1.6, 9, 11[2x]), his regular use of it in all his letters and the absence of an alternative expression for the underlying concept mean that Paul almost certainly used it in Act One.

But how was it understood? Paul's abrupt declaration that the Teachers' Good News was inconsistent with the Good News he had proclaimed does not mean that either the Teachers or the Galatians would have agreed, any more than they would have agreed that they were turning away from the one who had graciously called them. Did the Teachers think they were altering Paul's gospel, or just

23 It may also be asked whether Paul was right to assume familiarity; perhaps his own knowledge was mistaken, perhaps he took something for granted without thinking about it at all. These are fair questions, but I do not see any way to test Paul's assumptions by evidence superior to his own.

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adding an additional point? In 1.13–14 there is evidence that they did not understand Paul's view on applying the Law to Gentiles. We concluded in section III that probably the Teachers, not Paul, told the Galatians about Paul's history in Judaism. Why did they? An attack on Paul's past persecution of the church, mentioned in 1.13, is unlikely; Paul makes no effort to defend himself against such a charge.[24]

More likely the Teachers simply wished to invoke Paul's history as an observant Jew. Mistake! This having been raised by the teachers in Act Two, Paul then uses it in Act Three precisely as authority to *attack* the Law; it is *as* a Jew by nature that he knows one is not justified by observing the Law (2.15–16); it is *through* Law that he died to Law (2.19); because of this he can testify about circumcision (5.2) and observance of the whole Law (5.3). The Teachers would not have called Paul as a witness for the Law if they had known what his testimony would be. And now we pass back through Act Two to Act One. If the Galatians had known Paul's radical critique of the Law, they would have told the Teachers. Therefore the Galatians did not know; the critique of the Law was not presented in Act One.

As we proceed we will find further reasons to think that the Teachers' criticisms of Paul were somewhat oblique. Their success is not to be explained by supposing that they persuaded the Galatians to repudiate Paul, but rather by seeing how they might have identified gaps in Paul's account, and filled these gaps in a way appealing to the Galatians. It is at least doubtful that the Galatians understood themselves in Act Two to be hearing a gospel different from that of Act One; they knew the term, but what they took to be its boundaries is not clear.

Judaism, Law and Scripture

In discussing the Good News we have already found ourselves touching on the Law, and Judaism. There is a complex of ideas here, and in order to consider what role they might have played in Act One I want to focus on specific terminology, in three categories: roughly, Judaism (Ἰουδαϊσμός), Law (νόμος) and Scripture (γραφή).

'Judaism', 'Jew', 'as a Jew', 'as a Gentile', 'live as a Jew', 'ancestral traditions'

Principally in the two passages 1.13–14 and 2.11–14, several terms refer to Judaism: 'Judaism' (Ἰουδαϊσμός), 1.13, 14; 'Jew' (Ἰουδαῖος), 2.13, 14, 15; 3.28; 'as a Jew' (Ἰουδαϊκῶς), 2.14; the contrasting 'as a Gentile' (ἐθνικῶς), 2.14; 'to live as a Jew' (Ἰουδαΐζειν), 2.14; and 'my ancestral traditions' (τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεις), 1.14. There is also 'Law' (νόμος), which has much to do with these terms but is not found in these passages and requires its own treatment; as Paul

24 Contra Bruce, *Galatians*, 90; Martyn, *Galatians*, 153. Moreover, the subject here is essentially Paul's observance of the Law; are the Teachers likely to have criticized Paul on this score?

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demonstrates, one can talk about Jews without using the word 'Law', and about Law without using the word 'Jew.'

None of these terms is explained. Paul assumes that the Galatians know about Jews, and know that Jews have distinctive practices handed down from generation to generation, as to which an 'advanced' Jew could be zealous to the point of persecuting those who do not conform (1.13–14). This is probably more than the Galatians will have known from casual contact with Jews in the Prologue; if the Galatians are native Celts of northern Galatia there is little evidence of Jewish presence among them, and Gal 4.8–9 ('But then, not knowing God, you were slaves to beings who by nature are not gods') implies that there are no Jews in the Galatian churches.[25] We shall pursue this subject further under 'Scripture,' and in section VII.

'Law'

The term 'law' (νόμος) appears first in 2.16, and then repeatedly, usually referring to Jewish law; other references ('ancestral traditions', 1.14), as well as allusions ('require to be circumcised', 2.3; 'to live as a Jew', 'to require to live as a Jew', 2.14), presume a familiarity not limited to a specific label. Paul assumes that the Galatians understand that the Law requires circumcision (2.3; 5.3), and also special practices with food; otherwise the point of 2.11–14 will be lost on them. He assumes as well that they know that 'the Law' is also a way of referring to Scripture, its narratives as well as its legal provisions (4.21–30). He also assumes that the Galatians understand that there is a 'whole Law', in contrast to partial versions.

All of these particulars could have been learned in Act Two, from the Teachers – with the possible exception of the last. In 5.3 Paul declares, 'I testify to every man who becomes circumcised that he is obliged to do the whole Law.' It seems that the Galatians know of Law beyond that which the Teachers have told them to do. But this is curious. Why would the Teachers teach about Law they do not require? Moreover, we must suppose some specific knowledge of this additional Law; for otherwise, Paul, to give his warning any impact, would have to tell the Galatians himself what was at issue.[26]

25 I am persuaded by Martyn's argument (*Galatians*, 15–16) that Paul would not have addressed anyone but native Celts as Γάλαται (3.1). On the absence of evidence for Jews in northern Galatia, see Martyn, *Galatians*, 16 n.11.

26 Betz (*Galatians*, 261), J. M. G. Barclay (*Obeying the Truth* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988] 64) and J. D. G. Dunn (*The Epistle to the Galatians* [Black's New Testament Commentary; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993] 267) suggest that 5.3 is only a reminder that full performance of the Law was required, and does not mean that this was actually an issue. In that case it is hard to see why Paul would make a point of it. His form of address in this passage ('See, it is I, Paul, who tell you . . .', 5.2; 'I call to witness . . . [so J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the*

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An explanation for what the Galatians know about 'the whole Law' can be inferred from Paul's account of events in Antioch, which must have had some parallel to events in Galatia. Gal 2.11–14 presents an issue that would necessarily arise whenever Jewish Christians visited Gentile Christians who were not observing the Jewish food laws: would the Jews join the Gentiles at table? In the mid-first century there was no obvious answer to this issue. Paul tells how Peter, coming to Antioch, ate with Gentile Christians there until other Jewish Christians arrived ('certain ones from James') who would not do so. Perhaps these later arrivals came to make a point of this very matter, perhaps not; there is no way to tell, but either way, they created a new issue for Peter, requiring him to choose which group of Christians to dine with. When Peter chose the new arrivals, and when other Jewish Christians in Antioch followed his example, it was the Gentile Christians who were left with a decision: to remain apart, or to dine with the Jews. Apparently they (or many of them) chose to join the Jews, thus effectively submitting themselves to Jewish food law and provoking Paul's angry charge that Peter had 'required the Gentiles to live like Jews' (2.14).[27]

It is interesting that Paul expects the Galatians to follow his abbreviated account of these events; he does not use the term 'Law', and does not explain how Peter 'required' its observance. If the Teachers were preaching Jewish food laws in Galatia then the Galatians would doubtless see the relation to events in Antioch, but it is unlikely that they were; Paul violently attacks the circumcision of Gentiles, and apparently also criticizes Gentile observance of Jewish festivals (see 4.10), but he says nothing about their observance of food laws. And yet he assumes that the Galatians understand these rules.

Now let us consider: when the Teachers came to Galatia, did they share table fellowship with the Galatians, or not? Although there is no direct evidence on the point, we can make an educated guess. To begin with, consider the position of the Teachers at this moment. They are strangers to the Galatians, with a mission which includes challenging Paul, the Galatians' established (though absent) leader. Deferring for the moment the extremely important question of how the Teachers are able even to gain a hearing for their claim that the Galatians need

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Galatians (London: Macmillan, 1890) 203]', 5.3), and the solemn emphasis on his own expertise in matters of Law, show that there is a real issue here.

However, Gal 5.3 does not mean that the Teachers have actually said that the Galatians need *not* do the whole Law. If they had, it is doubtful that Paul could rest on his bare assertion to the contrary; some argument would be required. Rather, the Teachers have said neither yea nor nay; they have not specifically addressed this issue.

27 Betz (*Galatians*, 112) claims that 'to live like Jews' here 'describes forcing one to become a Jewish convert obliged to keep the whole Torah (cf. 5.3)'. This has no support in the context of this passage.

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more than Paul has given them, the Teachers magnify their initial problem if they rigorously refuse to share food with the Galatians. Suppose, instead, that, for the sake of their mission, they join the Galatian Gentiles when the opportunity presents itself. They need not entirely forswear the Law on this point; they might keep its practices among themselves; they might further, as they meet with success, invite some or any of the Galatians to join them at table from time to time; on such occasions they might discuss what they are doing and its significance, while not (as yet?) taking the step of telling the Galatians that such practices, just like circumcision, are enjoined on all of God's people.[28]

In that case we have explained how the Galatians will know of more Law than they have been required to do; they will have seen it for themselves. We also see how the Galatians will have understood Gal 2.11–14, and we have as well a special reason for Paul to tell them that story: it mirrors their own experience, it shows them where that experience may lead them, and, by its association of Peter with the Teachers – probably all, like Peter, 'Jews by nature' (2.15), who by their own conduct at table have testified that observance of the Law is not the path to justification (2.16) – it gives new point to the argument of 2.15–21. On this basis Paul incorporates the Teachers within the 'we' of 2.15–17, who (Paul says) know that one is not justified by observing the Law (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου), as their own willingness to forego Law-observance testifies. The Teachers are part of the Jewish testimony which Paul recites here against Law-observance.[29] They have only failed to interpret their experience correctly, a lack Paul now supplies.

Nothing Paul says about the Law in Act Three implies that it was a topic in Act One. This fits with our earlier conclusion that the Teachers do not appear to have known Paul's critique of the Law, and, consequently, that this critique must be new to the Galatians as well. It also fits with the Teachers' evident success in preaching Law during Act Two, for they have not had to directly contradict Paul in order to do so. It fits also with the absence of any reference in Galatians to things

28 Is it likely that Law-observant Jewish Christian missionaries would have temporarily neglected parts of the Law for pragmatic reasons? We know almost nothing about Law-observant Jewish Christian missionaries, certainly not enough to say that such pragmatism is impossible. Outside Christianity, Josephus tells of pragmatic advice by the Jewish missionary Ananias to King Izates of Adiabene, that he forego circumcision on his conversion to Judaism, lest this rite imperil both his kingship and Ananias (*Ant.* 20.38–42). Josephus contrasts Ananias with the 'very strict' (πάνυ . . . ἀκριβής) Eleazar, who subsequently persuades Izates to accept circumcision (ibid., 20.43–46); even though it seems clear that Josephus favours 'strict' Law-observance (e.g. *Ant.* 1.14; 5.172; *C. Ap.* 2.144, 175, 187; *Vita* 9), it is equally clear that not all Jews are 'strict', much less 'very strict'. See also 1 Cor 9.20(1, 'I became . . . to those without the Law as one without the Law . . . in order to gain the Lawless'.

29 This testimony includes 2.18–20; even though the shift in these three verses to the first person singular lays stress on Paul's own experience, by the terms of his argument the same experience must also be shared by other Jewish Christians.

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Paul had said before about the Law. He did not inoculate the Galatians against the Law during Act One, and the succeeding acts run their course in consequence of this omission.[30]

'Scripture'

The relation between 'Scripture' (γραφή, 'writing', 3.8, 22; 4.30; cf. γέγραπται, 'it stands written', 3.10 [2x], 13; 4.22, 29) and 'Law' is complicated and confusing, even after long study. Like 'Scripture', 'Law' can refer to the text of Scripture – and not only legal texts, but a narrative (4.21, invoking the story of Abraham's two sons and their mothers). In 3.22 ('Scripture shut up all things under sin'), the relation of Scripture to Law as described in 3.23 ('before faith came we were confined under Law') is unclear, as is the apparent parallel between Law and sin.[31]

One point seems reasonably clear, however: the negative connotations Paul attaches to 'Law' do not apply to 'Scripture'. In 3.8; 4.22, 30, Scripture is taken to speak the truth. It also seems clear, from the use Paul makes of Scripture, that it still speaks with authority, while the period of the Law has ended.[32] The assumed goodness of Scripture, in spite of its confusing relationship to the Law, suggests that Scripture was preached in Act One. If Scripture was introduced by the Teachers in Act Two, it must have appeared in tandem with the Law, if not as a synonym for it; and in that case Paul's casual acceptance of the one and rejection of the other must have been even more perplexing.

Two other considerations support this. First, Paul's use of Scripture in Act One would provide the opportunity for the Teachers to change the terms of discussion in Act Two from Scripture to Law. If the Teachers did not have this starting point they would have had to create it, and how they might have done so – strangers on a very difficult mission – is hard to conjecture.

Second, if we consider how Paul might have explained key elements of the Good News to the Galatians, Scripture presents itself as central. Jesus Christ was

30 There remains the possibility that Paul referred to the Law, perhaps casually, while neither criticizing it nor urging actual compliance – as in 1 Cor 9.9, where 'the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle the threshing ox"', is treated (without comment) as authority for Paul's argument that he is entitled to compensation as an apostle. Paul might have referred to this text, in his Galatian style, as 'Scripture'; but he does not do so. However, in the absence of any evidence that Paul used Law casually in Galatia, and also of any apparent reason for him to have done so, I think it is improbable.

31 See also 3.19: 'Why then the Law? It was added for the sake of transgressions.' Martyn (*Galatians*, 354–5; cf. Bruce, *Galatians*, 175) translates the last clause as 'to provoke transgressions'; REV has 'to make wrongdoing a legal offense', NJB 'to deal with crimes'.

32 It may be too that the term 'law' as such implies a connection to the particular nation whose law it is. See M. Winger, *By What Law? The Meaning of Nomos in the Letters of Paul* (SBLDS 128; Atlanta: Scholars, 1992) 35, 60–1.

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raised by 'God'; what god? The author of Acts thought that Paul identified God to the Athenians as the god who made the world (17.24), a plausible answer which also follows Scripture (Gen 1.1); but Scripture does not stop there. Scripture portrays God largely in terms of his relations to people, chiefly the people he chose for his own, a choice Paul discusses in Gal 3.6–18 and 4.21–30. Granting that Paul could have talked about God while ignoring Scripture, it would have left the story incomplete in Paul's terms. It would have been a surprising thing for Paul to do.[33]

The terms of the Good News

So far we have ranged widely in Paul's letter, taking up issues fundamental to Act Three and concluding that they probably were not central in Act One. To make another attempt at what was central to Act One it may be useful to go back to the beginning of the letter and look afresh for clues to the Good News. There are a number of terms and phrases very likely to have been used in its proclamation.

'God the Father who raised [Jesus Christ] from the dead'

Probably we would be inclined to take it for granted that Paul proclaimed God's raising of Jesus during Act One; but our task is to find a precise basis for each conclusion we reach. The basis here is in 1.1, where the descriptive clause 'the one who raised [Jesus Christ] from the dead' appears in the attributive position next to 'God the Father', so that Paul does not assert this proposition but (formally) assumes it. While the form itself is not dispositive, Paul's parallel use of the same terms elsewhere, both in attributive phrases (Rom 8.11a; 1 Thess 1.10) and in phrases standing in place of an express reference to God (Rom 4.24; 8.11b; 2 Cor 4.14), clearly indicates that the thought is familiar. This is almost certainly an echo of Act One.

'The Son'

The term 'Father' invokes 'Son'; if Paul preached the one he must have preached the other, and this is confirmed by the references to the Son of God in 1.16; 2.20; 4.4; and 4.6, all of which assume (rather than state) that this Son is Jesus Christ.

33 It may be asked whether this conclusion does not require re-examination of our earlier conclusion that Paul did not talk about the Law. Could Paul have talked about the God who is presented in Scripture without talking about the Law? I do not think there is any barrier here to my argument. I would guess that almost anyone raised in Sunday School could testify that it is possible to present what purports to be the entire history of the Jewish people while essentially ignoring the Law.

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'Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins in order to free us from the present evil age'

This much more complicated clause (1.4) is also attributive. 'Who gave himself for our sins' has parallels in 1 Cor 15.3; Gal 2.20; and Rom 4.24–5 and 8.31–2; almost certainly Paul said something like this in Act One, for otherwise it makes a poor starting point in Act Three. It is less certain that Paul talked explicitly about 'the present evil age'; such an idea might be assumed. That Christ acted 'according to the will of God' (see also Rom 8.32, and perhaps Rom 4.25) seems like a fundamental point, but not necessarily an obvious one. Since there does not appear to be any reason for Paul to introduce the point here, its presence suggests that it is part of a standard, familiar expression.

'Righteousness', 'faith'

These terms appear in 2.16 and recur (as both nouns and verbs) throughout the letter; the basic ideas are taken for granted and, since the terms themselves are found in most of Paul's letters, there is no reason to doubt their use in Act One. Whether Paul used the key phrase 'faith of [or in] Christ' (πίστις Χριστοῦ) in Act One is uncertain. While some prior use might have resolved the phrase's notorious ambiguity, Paul evidently believed it was clear enough to use in writing to the Romans, who had no previous preaching by Paul to help them.

'Revelation'

In his commentary and other writings Martyn has demonstrated the importance of the 'apocalyptic' word group (ἀποκάλυψις, 'revelation', and ἀποκαλύπτω, 'to reveal'), especially in 1.10, 12, for presenting revelation as the basis of Paul's proclamation.[34] While these passages could probably be understood without prior familiarity with this terminology, the presence of comparable terminology in 1 Cor 2.10; 2 Cor 12.7; Phil 3.15 suggests that it was part of Paul's standard vocabulary.

'Freedom'

In 2.4 Paul writes of certain 'false brothers, who sneaked in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, in order that they might enslave us . . .'. He assumes that there is 'freedom in Christ', and that this freedom is inconsistent with the circumcision of Gentiles, which is a controversial point in Galatia. This freedom is probably familiar from Act One, not Act Two. If the Teachers preached freedom they surely reconciled this with their preaching of circumcision, and Paul

34 Martyn, *Galatians*, 37–41, 148–51; idem, *Theological Issues*, 111–24.

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could not simply assume that the two conflict.[35] But freedom from what? In Act One, not from the Law; perhaps from 'the elements of the cosmos' (4.3), but, in any event, from enslaving powers of some description.

'Slave of Christ'

Besides freedom in Christ, Paul proclaims slavery in Christ (1.10). As Paul takes this paradox for granted, it must be familiar from Act One.[36]

Summary

We have found evidence that a number of key expressions were probably used in Act One: along with cognates, 'Good News', 'Scripture', 'God the Father', 'the Son', 'raised from the dead', 'gave himself for our sins', 'righteousness', 'faith', 'revelation', and the paradoxical combination of 'freedom' and 'slavery'. The exact sense of these terms, however, is not always clear; in particular, 'Good News' appears to have been loose enough for the Teachers to incorporate matters which Paul rejects.[37]

With other terms the evidence for use in Act One is equivocal. Familiarity with 'Jew' and related terms is presumed, but when that familiarity was acquired is unclear. 'Law', evidently a central term for the Teachers, may have been new in Act Two.

VI

So far we have largely been working directly from Act Three to Act One, inferring an Act One background for expressions and ideas found in Act Three. There is another avenue, which proceeds by way of Act Two. I have already alluded several times to an interesting and useful question: how did the Teachers gain entrée to the Galatian churches founded by Paul? This is a difficult and critical issue. In Paul's absence the Galatians have evidently accepted a major new thesis – and not merely an abstract thesis, but one requiring their submission to an intimate and painful act. Why did they do this? Why did they even listen to people whose message was the inadequacy (or at least incompleteness) of what Paul had taught them? Did the Teachers have some credentials which gave them

35 Paul appeals again to freedom in 4.22–31; 5.1, 13, but these passages do not clearly rely on earlier usage; they could have been developed from the biblical story of Hagar and Sara discussed in 4.22–31. A usage similar to 2.4 and 5.1, 13 is found in Rom 8.21; more standard usages appear in 1 Cor 7.21–22; 12.13; Gal 3.28 (vs. slavery); Rom 6.18, 20, 22; 8.2; 1 Cor 7.39; 9.1 (general).

36 Note also 'slave of Christ' as an introduction in Rom 1.1 and Phil 1.1.

37 Other terms could doubtless be added; for instance, 'apostle' (1.1; also Rom 1.1; 1 Cor 1.1; 9.1; 2 Cor 1.1). Literally 'one who is sent', the term is evidently ambiguous as to who does the sending (Gal 1.1).

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immediate authority? Or did they offer something which the Galatians perceived to fill a gap in what they had received from Paul?

The possibility that the Teachers had some extrinsic authority is suggested by the question of authority alluded to in Gal 1 and 2. From the beginning, Paul vehemently denies that his authority is human (1.1, 11–12, 15; 2.6, 11–14). Have the Teachers claimed that Paul's authority was human, or have they claimed human authority for themselves? Is Paul's careful distancing of himself from the Jerusalem church in particular (1.17; 2.11–14) a response to the Teachers' claim to have authority from that church?[38]

Some such authority may have been claimed in Act Two, and it may have played a role in the Teachers' success. But this is not likely to have been the full explanation for their success. Whatever credentials the Teachers may have offered, credentials alone are unlikely to have brought the Galatians to submit to the knife, unless they felt that the knife met some need – that it supplied some lack in the Good News Paul gave them.

What did the Galatians lack? Different answers have been suggested. Jewett proposes that the Galatians sought *perfection*, a conclusion he infers from Paul's language in 3.3: 'Having begun in the Spirit, do you now reach perfection (ἐπιτελεῖσθε) in the flesh?'[39] Barclay suggests that association with the Jewish law, and by extension with Jews, would have regularized the Galatians' social position.[40] Jewett's thesis (apart from the slender evidence for the importance of 'perfection' to the Galatians) begs the key question: why did the Galatians think they lacked perfection? Barclay's social explanation likewise lacks evidence. A better answer can be found in Gal 5.13–25. In these verses Paul asserts that desires of the flesh can be subdued by following the Spirit, and Martyn argues persuasively that this is Paul's response to a claim by the Teachers that the answer to the flesh must be found in obedience to the Law.[41] Paul's solemn promise in 5.16, 'I tell you, walk by the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh', is his rejoinder to the Teachers. It appears as he elaborates his argument that it is new on this occasion; although (as we have noted) he had dealt before with what he now calls 'works of the flesh' (5.19) – 'I told you before that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God' – Paul's account suggests that he had not previously done so in terms of flesh and Spirit.[42]

38 See Martyn (*Galatians*, 119: 'the Teachers are in touch with – indeed, understand themselves to represent – a powerful circle of Christian Jews in the Jerusalem church . . .'; cf. Barclay, 'Mirror-reading', 87–8; Bruce, *Galatians*, 25–6.

39 R. Jewett, 'The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation', *NTS* 17 (1970–71) 198–212, 206–7.

40 Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 56–60.

41 Martyn, *Galatians*, 302–6.

42 Barclay (*Obeying the Truth*, 178) has observed that Paul does not elsewhere discuss ethical issues in these terms.

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This is especially striking in view of the important role which, as we have noted, the Spirit evidently played in Act One. Paul's evident failure to have connected the Spirit with issues of conduct and community order suggests that he may have given those issues only cursory treatment, and that he offered no theory – may we say, no Good News? – on this subject until the conflict with the teachers required him to develop one in Gal 5. Precisely this lack may have supplied the Teachers with their opening.

We have then a negative conclusion about Paul's preaching in Act One, but it has important implications for the place of ethical discussion in Paul's thought. In his new work on this subject Troels Engberg-Pedersen argues that the last two chapters of Galatians form the climax of the letter.[43] But whether or not this is true of the letter, it is not true of Paul's preaching, as that may be inferred from the letter. It is not the centre of Paul's Good News.

VII

Our final category of evidence is what Paul probably had to say in order to say the other things we believe he said.

Paul's use of Scripture

We concluded in our discussion of the term 'Scripture' that Paul probably invoked Scripture in order to characterize 'God the Father' for his pagan audience (1.1, 3, 4). I think it is impossible to draw limits to what parts of Scripture Paul might have used, but his emphasis on Abraham is suggestive. It has been inferred that this emphasis reflects the Teachers' emphasis, and this may be right.[44] But the Teachers' emphasis could also reflect Paul's. If we suppose that Paul used Scripture to acquaint the Galatians with God's dealings with humanity, what would have been more apt to his purpose than the stories of Abraham? Paul might well have avoided Moses because of his close association with the Law – an association, as Paul shows in Gal 3, in which Abraham does not share.[45]

43 T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000) 131–78.

44 For example, Martyn, *Galatians*, 125, 302–6; Barclay, 'Mirror-reading', 87; F. J. Matera, *Galatians* (Sacra Pagina; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1992) 126; C. Cosgrove, *Cross and Spirit* (Macon, GA.: Mercer University, 1988) 87–118.

45 My argument here would be stronger if there were some positive evidence in Paul's other letters; but outside of Galatians (and excluding Romans, which can give no evidence of earlier preaching), Abraham is mentioned only in 2 Cor 11.22 ('Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I', in which 'seed of Abraham', apparently meaning 'Jewish', is evidently a term used by others). Nevertheless, it is to be expected that Act One themes will not recur in later acts unless they are relevant to points at issue; silence in the Corinthian, Philippian and Thessalonian correspondence is not conclusive.

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References to Jews

While the Galatians may have known of Jews through casual contact going back to the Prologue, there is no direct evidence of this. However, if Paul has told them from the Scriptures of God's dealings with humanity, then he has had to talk about Jews; although he need not have used the term 'Jew', if the Galatians are ignorant of it, neither is there an apparent reason for him to avoid it. In any case, he will not have known that the Galatians are ignorant of Jews, should that be the case, unless he raised the subject. He is more likely to have assumed some familiarity. In fact, the more Paul has had to say about Jews, especially while omitting reference to the Law, the easier it is to understand the Teachers' subsequent success.

Then has Paul described himself as a Jew? In Act Three he uses his Jewishness as authority for his criticism of the Law, and in Act Two the Teachers invoke it for (as they think) the opposite purpose. For Act One the matter is cloudy. While Paul had no particular reason to claim his Judaism as a ground for his witness, he also had no particular reason to conceal it, and the more he had to say about Jews (a cloudy point itself, as we have seen), the odder it would be not to mention that he was himself a Jew. Moreover, the Galatians must in that case have assumed that Paul, like themselves, formerly worshipped 'beings that by nature are not Gods' (4.8), and I see no reason why Paul would have failed to correct this predictable mistake.

VIII

Finding himself in Galatia (more or less by accident), Paul told the Galatians the Good News of God the Father, who sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to be crucified for their sins, and then raised him from the dead. With this Good News – itself revealed by God – came the Spirit, which manifested itself among the Galatians in powerful deeds; in an experience somehow analogous to crucifixion, the Galatians were called, and transformed. All of this was recalled by Paul during Act Three, in terms he evidently had used before. Among these terms were also 'righteousness', 'faith', and the paradoxical claim that he and the Galatians had found freedom in their slavery to Christ.

Paul told this story with Scripture as a background; he explained that God the Father is attested in Scripture and known in his dealings with humanity. In this part of his preaching some account must have been given of the Jews, but Paul does not appear to have emphasized their importance to his Gentile audience. Perhaps he focused attention on Abraham, the ancestor of Jews and Gentiles alike (but this point was probably not emphasized until Act Three). Paul may have mentioned that he was a Jew, but this too was probably not emphasized; there does not appear to have been any reason for emphasis.

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In Act One Paul did not preach about the Law: for it, or against it. Apparently he did not preach about the flesh; there seems to have been a gap left for the Teachers to fill in Act Two. While Paul did not ignore questions of conduct in Act One, he evidently did not give them much attention.

These appear to have been key elements in the opening of the Galatian drama. Certainly this account is not complete; that is not possible. (Nor is my account certain; in this article I have indicated degrees of uncertainty about various elements.) There cannot even be any assurance that my account includes the most important points; Paul's aim will rather have been to draw on points useful to him for his task, as he saw it, in Act Three.

While investigating Act One, we have also learned several interesting things about Act Two. To recapitulate the chief points: (1) In Galatia the Teachers did not observe the Law fully; they joined Gentile Galatian Christians at meals, just as Peter had done at Antioch. (2) The Teachers did not attack Paul directly. (3) They did not understand Paul's position on the Law. (4) They themselves preached the Law as the antidote to the flesh, probably making this the key to their appeal. (5) They claimed authority from the Jerusalem church.

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