

# **Christian Origins, Paul**

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## **Wolves in Sheepskin? (Haggis or Bagpipes)**

One cannot broach the subject of Christian origins without looking at Paul. Christianity is, to a great sense, Paulianity, the theologies found in the Pauline epistles (I'm speaking of all once thought to be Pauline, for purposes of this writing..) Paul, however, is more elusive than one might first think. Once he fit cozily in the bosom of Peter and James, as found in "Acts of the Apostles." Two hundred years of scholarship, however, has convinced many that these "acts" are not historically trustworthy and that one purpose behind writing them was to undermine Marcion and Gnostic sects, who had adopted him as their "super apostle." The author wanted to present a Paul that would fit into the orthodoxy, which he did in several ways, including assembling a newer and more erudite Peter to be a mirror for Paul.

One has to wonder why there was a reason to define or to redefine Paul along the lines of the orthodoxy. If Marcion and his "gospel of Paul," Valentinus and his "Gnostic Paul" were that dangerous, could it have been because they were correct and had earlier writings, autographs? When we look at the Paulines we are looking at them through the lens of many interpreters, including the author of "Acts of the Apostles," even if we realize that it was not history in any sense. We are also, in looking at them, looking at nothing that is close to the autographs, if Tertullian and Irenaeus were correct, in their estimation of Marcion "mutilating" them. This means at the very least that there were very divergent variants of letters in the early, middle second century which had to be reconciled. (One of the more famous is the section of Galatians 1:18-24, which neither Tertullian nor Irenaeus had, a vignette that puts Paul in Jerusalem three years after his conversion instead of the probably original fourteen.) I address this at length in the section "The Case of Creeping Catholicism" later.

Over the last years, it has become easier for this armchair student of Christian origins to see that there are several "gospels" of Paul, some which seem to be at odds with others. One glaring example of this is found in Galatians. Did Lord Jesus Christ give "himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age" (1:3,4) or did he come "in order to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as children" (4:4,5)? In the first, he is an Isaac-like martyr, dying to free people from the evil in the world. In the second, he was sent to buy those "under the law" so they could receive "adoption as children." In Romans, was Jesus a "sacrifice of atonement by his blood" (3:25), "justification and life for all" (5:18-21), as a metaphor for a sinless life (6:6-11, 7:4-6), to "condemn sin in the flesh" (8:4b), or as first fruits awaiting adoption by God (chapter eight)? To a logical person, atoning (unifying) with God and condemning sin are not even close to being synonymous. And, what do these have to do with "justification" of sins for all? Are we looking at a multi-purpose Jesus Christ or several different people giving their versions? I think it is the latter.

Looking very briefly at a letter written, according to some, as early as 95 ce and others as late as 150 ce, "I Clement," we find a more stable Jesus, who is generally seen as a blood sacrifice, whose blood "was poured out for our salvation," (7), who made sins which were crimson "white as snow" (8), whose God "shall have redemption through the blood of the Lord," (12), whose "blood was given for us" (47). When we contrast this coherence with the incoherence of the purpose of Jesus in Galatians and Romans, what is the reason? Clement didn't make the "big time," but Paul did.

Another problem is the "substance" of this Jesus Christ. Was he "descended from David according to the flesh and desired to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead,(Romans 1:3b, 4) the fleshy "Messiah" (9:5), or has God "done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do; by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the spirit" (Romans 8:3,4)? In Galatians, he is "born of a woman and in Philipians, he was "in the form of God" and "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, born in human likeness." Naturally (or unnaturally) the Pauline "epistles" have been blended by theologians into a contiguous man, into one man on one mission. But, theology isn't history.

We know next to nothing about a "historical Paul" for outside sources, perhaps less even that we do about a "historical Jesus." We think he was this or that, said and wrote this and that, but this is largely dependent, at least on an unconscious level, on Acts, largely seen for the last two hundred years as fictive and the letters used to write Acts, which are very inconsistent and show great signs of multiple authors and even multiple "gospels." There are scant mentions in second century (if they are that early), finding him generally paired with Peter, a comparison that smacks of Acts of the Apostles in contrast to Galatians. (1 Clement forty-seven, Ignatius to the Romans, four.) There are also a couple of remarks about Paul and one about Peter in 1 Clement and the Ignatiana, as well as two remarks about Paul in Polycarp.) Can we say with any certainty whatsoever that the letters became the orthodoxy or that the orthodoxy "fixed" the letters to make them become the orthodoxy? It's probably not as much of a "chicken and egg" scramble as it might seem.

### **Here a Gnostic, There a Gnostic**

If the Gnostics mutilated the Pauline epistles, why does Gnosticism remain throughout the scriptures? Why didn't the orthodoxy "fix" what they considered blatant corruption? Or, were they too illiterate to understand the Gnostic strains in it? How could the Gnostics claim primacy for Paul, if he was as orthodox as the orthodoxy made him? What would the purpose be in "mutilating" the Paulines? Indeed, what was their religion, if not an interpretation of "Christ?" As far as we know, they came from within, not from outside of Christianity. Who are we today to marginalize this Christianity and not include it in the study of Christian origins? If there was a first century Paul, there was a first century Christian Gnosticism, unless the Gnosticism one finds in the Paulines was added later.

Elaine Pagels (The Gnostic Paul) finds no less than forty-nine fairly large examples of Gnosticism in the “Epistle to the Romans,” the vast majority found outside the chapter nine through eleven block. She finds an amazing sixty-eight in 1 Corinthians, only eight in 2 Corinthians, and twenty-one in the comparably smaller Galatians, which was originally a Marcionite book (according to Tertullian). These are the four epistles that FC Baur considered authentic. He and the Tubingens had been among the earliest to discard Ephesians and Colossians, largely on Gnosticism found within them. His treatise on Philippians as a later Gnostic work is a classic.

This presents those who insist on an early letter writer Paul with several problems. Is this Gnosticism original to the letters? If it is, this assumes a full blown Gnostic interpretation of Jesus within a decade or so after his death by someone who did not even know Jesus, and, even more importantly, someone who stated he was a Pharisaic Jew (Philippians 3:5). In this epistle, the author, far from having a Pharisaic viewpoint, considered Jesus was “in the form of God,” who “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness” (2:6,7). Surely this should pose a problem for those who see the Paulines as first century letters of a former Pharisee! If one accepts this scenario, one is almost forced to accept the “mythicist” notion that Christ came first and that humanizing Christ into Jesus was a later product. If one goes for this mythicist nonsense or even if one merely wishes to place the Paulines in the middle of the first century, however, one is left to explain why the proto-orthodoxy of the second century fought so diligently to crush the Valentinians and the (not so Gnostic) Marcionites. If the proto-orthodox churches, supposedly in Corinth, Rome, Galatia, etc, possessed these heavily Gnostic letters, what was the big deal (about the cosmology)? Would not, in the hundred years between the supposed dates of the letters and the “heresy fighters,” this have become the orthodoxy? The gospels didn’t begin appearing until the end of the first and in the second century. The synoptics would have been a generation or more later than the Paulines, with the Christology largely missing, and certainly in Luke/Acts the atonement kerygma toned into nothingness.

One has a Gnostic Paul, it seems, in the letters. Gnostic blocks of the epistles are found in chapters one through fourteen in Romans (though two-thirds of these blocks are found in chapters one through eight). Similarly, Gnostic blocks are found in all but two chapters of 1 Corinthians. The Christ of Philippians is not a human, but one who took the form of a human. In Galatians, we find Gnostic thoughts in all of the chapters. Colossians and Ephesians were considered later than the Paulines largely because of the Gnosticism in them. (The first five chapters of Second Corinthians are somewhat Gnostic in nature.) We find, of the other Paulines some consider authentic lacking in Gnostic thought. Darrell Doughty has made a good case for 1 Thessalonians being deuteropauline. FC Baur and Tubingens who followed him made a good case for Philemon being merely an example of Colossians, an allegory about the relationship between Christian slaves and their masters. WC Van Manen said that one didn’t even have to look that far, that the phraseology was borrowed from other epistles, especially Colossians, the Corinthians and Ephesians, and that the mixture in singular and plural in those speaking and those spoken to shows that it is an unnatural dependence on other works, as opposed to being an original document. We also have Ignatius (“Epistle to the Magnesians”) referring to Onesimus.

Though there are many reasons other than these, can one consider the “gospels of Paul” to be dated middle of the first century? This amateur has shared other reasons in the past to question the Paulines as first century, but there seems to be a good reason to believe that most of Romans (minus chapters nine through eleven), 1 Corinthians, Philippians, and certainly Galatians to have been originally Gnostic compositions. It seems apparent. The simplest reason for Marcion, Valentinius and others to adopt these as the writings of the “super apostle of Christianity” is that these were originally Gnostic. It would, it seems, be far easier for the orthodoxy to interpolate than for the “heretics,” with indeed different views amongst themselves, to “mutilate” the epistles in ways that remained in the epistles after Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen and others condemned the “heretics.” With this example of Occam’s Razor, is it conceivable that a first century Pharisee hit with a resurrection to explain would be so adept at Gnostic cosmology? I don’t think so!

### **Galatians (Just a Lad From Pontus)**

One of the most interesting things to do in "Pauline studies" is to take Galatians and delete all that is not attested by second and early third century heresy "fighters," add what is not in there now that they said was, and (using common sense) look at what you have. Herman Detering has done this to some extent, but he color coded and used strike outs. If one takes his basic work and takes those out to form an easily readable Galatians, the result is remarkable. One has none of the pretzel logic or proof texting from the Hebrew scriptures. One doesn't have two different resurrection kerygma or two different origins of Jesus Christ. One is left with a concise writing.

Here is what we get in a "Marcion's Galatians":

1. The author is basically defending his gospel against that which has replaced his in Galatia. (As best as one can see in this version, it seems as if the gospel of the Galatians was Judaism, not Christianity.)
2. Those in Galatia are observing (Jewish) rituals which, according to the author, are rituals of the Demiurge.
3. the Demiurge is symbolized by Abraham, who had two sons. One of these sons, the son of the slave, represents flesh (the "psychic") and the other represents promise (the pneumatic or spirit). Circumcision is merely one manifestation of the flesh, of the inferior psychic. It is symbolic of the natural, lower "law," NOT the reason for the letter.
4. It is important that the author show his superiority to the "James Gang" apostles. Incidentally, there is no "Peter" in the Marcionite version. It is Cephas.
5. The author has been "crucified." Christ now lives in him. He has been adopted by the spiritual God and released from the creator God.
6. The reason Christ came was to redeem those under the law because the law was from the gods in nature (demiurge), the elementary principles of the law, not the true God, and it enslaved people into a world of the flesh. The true God was the fruit of the Spirit - love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, etc.
7. The author, for at least one third of the letter, is defending his right to being the "correct" apostle. The remainder is an exposition on his gospel and why it is THE gospel.

8. Slavery symbolizes "the law."

9. God sent his Son. There was no earthly connection. In the supersessionist version the harshness of this slavery has been drastically softened by the imagery of being "heirs."  
(Slaves aren't heirs!)

The Marcion version of Galatians (which was undoubtedly also the Valentinian version) holds together far greater than the Catholic version we now possess. It is really rather excellently written, with coherent and concise points.

One of the major points one has to reconcile is why the author wrote the letter. If things were as bad in Galatia as implied in the letter, the author would have been in Galatia, righting things. There doesn't seem to be a distinctive church to which the author was writing. He was writing to the whole area. The tone of the book seems to be

a. to discredit the "James Gang"

b. to defend his gospel.

c. To connect "Paul" with Cephas, James and John, giving "Paul" validity. Some of this would have been Marcionite, but we find, with the Church changing Cephus to Peter, they had a vested interest in this.

Anyway, that's what I get from the text as close to Marcion as we can get it. I did this work, but since I was heavily reliant on Hermann Detering (and you can find his research by googling his name... It is the Radikal Kritik (I think) website.. (I took out the interpolations and such and put it into paragraph form. I will use his reconstruction when I use a reconstruction, but I don't have permission to use the complete text.)

Does it make any sense that the Paulines, which were interpreted gnostically in the second century and which still can be interpreted this way began as non-gnostic works? The very things fought against by the heresy hunters of the second and third centuries remain in the "letters"! This seems to be evidence pointing in the favor that the non-gnostic ideas, like the humanity of Jesus and resurrection as a literal "redemption from sin" are later interpolations and that the original writings were gnostic or Marcionite writings and meant to be understood as such. All the ANF's did was re-interpret the Paulines in a way closer to their Johannean understanding. This, however, is a later reading of the letters, as far as anyone can prove, since the tendency, as witnessed first in Acts of the Apostles was to react and soften Paul into another Peter, who was also recreated for the occasion. In fact, ALL of the second century writings (of which I am aware) which dealt with the letters sought to define the letters in terms of the orthodoxy. Identifying this as a motivating factor for Acts, as the Jesus Seminar and others have done should be a reason to re-examine these writings.

This in turn opens the question (which I would like to look at more carefully later) of whether, as in the normative paradigm, a Pharisee with vision problems in the early thirties would have had a vision of a gnostic dualism in which the creator god had enslaved humanity with "the law" (parochial practices), but was superseded (for those with faith) by the "good god" who sent his Son to overturn the Judaic system with the promise of faith and adoption of all who had this faith that Christ had in \*his\* god. This is basically what

the author is stating in a Galatians without the contradictory glosses of the orthodoxy. A gnostic Pharisee????

### **The God of His Good News**

Let's look at a few blocks in Galatians. I am using Detering's reconstruction, basically, but putting them into paragraph form, when I write them. He didn't particularly identify them as "Gnostic," but they give a good shot of what Galatians probably originally said. Pagels has parts of these marked. Her translations are similar to Detering's, but she hasn't done the legwork to see what was or what wasn't in the versions of the second century.

from the first chapter:

"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace and are turning to a different gospel, which according to my Gospel is not "another one" at all, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach something different from what we preached to you, let him be accursed! For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of the God of this aeon? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. "

According to this, the author was "set apart" before he was born and received a revelation about Jesus Christ. This was not learned. It was gnosis, straight from god. We note that he slaps the James Gang thoroughly in this, even before bringing in them. But, what was this gospel? "No man" held authority over the author. He was only connected to a "Jesus Christ" through a revelation from a risen Christ.

From the fourth chapter, we get a hint of what the gospel is not:

"You were enslaved to the gods in nature But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days and months and seasons and years and Sabbaths I think, and kosher meals and fasting and holy days! I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain. Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong. You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. What then has become of the blessing you felt? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth ? They make much of you, but for no good

purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! "

(First, it does sound like the "Paul" of Galatians is blind.) Other than that, in this section, the author explains the "gospel" of the James Gang, those who would pervert his gospel. "The gods in nature," the Jewish god, is worthless, leading people to become slaves to the "elementary principles" of the world, found in dietary restrictions, fasting, Sabbath and holy days. This is the god of the flesh. Who is the "other" God? Note that this gospel is completely separate from one of a historical Jesus and followers. In Gnostic form, Christ must be born into a person.

From chapter 5:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load. One who is taught the word must share with the one who teaches him."

The other god is identified with the Spirit. This is the God that SENT Christ, in order to undo what the "god of the flesh" created: "immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions murder, drunkenness, orgies and things like these." Note how, in 5:19, he refers to "works of the flesh." This is uncannily like "works of the law," which is found in numerous times in the Paulines. The "Paul" of Galatians stated that "through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. Christ had "ransomed him" from the "gods in nature," the flesh, the psychic "law," which he considered the problem.

This was a huge problem for second century Christianity, because when one looks at the gospels and even the non-canonical works through the middle of the second century, Christianity defended its existence largely through its identification with Judaism. Christianity considered Jesus the Messiah to be the culmination of many, many Hebrew prophecies and used the Prophets, Psalms, even the Writings and Torah to prove, to defend its credibility. Then, here are these writings that imply that the Jewish god was not relevant and, in some cosmologies, was an arrogant demiurge who created the world mistakenly. Suddenly, there were sects that threatened the core of Christianity. They all had one thing in common: The epistles accorded to "Paul."

We know that, from the time of Acts (120-140) through at least the time of Origen (220?),

the orthodoxy was combating this. One has to ask why? Why then? If we have the Paulines, they are still chocked full of this Gnosticism. Did they begin this way, if they ended this way? One has to look at Detering's reconstruction (or reconstructions of others). Put it into paragraph form, as I did. It is coherent and cohesive. It is a whole. Then look at the version in today's Bible. It begs quite a few questions.

Major points I try to show in my essay:

1. As far as we know (have evidence of) the Marcionites and the Gnostics were the earliest to interpret the Paulines.
2. A heavy Gnostic or Marcionite interpretation is still in Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, the first five chapters of 2 Corinthians and the Christ of Philippians.
3. Around seventy-five years after they were supposedly written, "Acts of the Apostles" appeared, softening the relationship of Paul and the apostles and really introducing Paul in narrative form, in many respects a copy of Peter, but also as a Homeric-styled hero.
4. 150 years after the epistles were supposedly penned, suddenly there is a rush to condemn them as mutilated, and presenting the Paulines in a different light.

Questions:

Is there any evidence that the Paulines were seen, when they were written and distributed, as anything other than the way the Gnostics (Valentinians, Montanists, etc) or Marcionites presented them?

Why, if the ANF's hated these "heretics" with as much venom as their writings show, was so much that is easily seen as Gnosticism left in the Paulines?

If the Paulines were written in the first century and were extant throughout, why wasn't Gnosticism or Marcionism the true doctrine and what is found in the synoptics and John the heresy? It would have been better received than these other texts, since, if you are correct and there were source documents, those were lost whilst the Paulines remained intact. It would be almost ludicrous to believe that all of the thought interpreted as Marcionite or as Gnostic would have been in there from the beginning and it was merely never noticed until Marcion and Valentinus.

These things are just "downright puzzlin'" to me.

### **Demoting Jesus to Ransom Payments**

I was just thinking. If one takes Galatians 1:1-17 and the first part of chapter two at face value, as a true narrative, absolutely nothing preached in the early churches around the Mediterranean had anything to do with any sapiential teachings, aphorisms, parables, miracles, healings, or other acts or words of Jesus. They centered on Christ elevating (which might have been taught as literal, but more plausibly, since the author claims a revelation, as metaphorically).

The text of 1:13-14 is considered to be (by Detering) an interpolation for several reasons. It is not found in any texts referring to the Marcion Apostlicum. Furthermore, it is a rather



cheap insertion of early legends about "Paul" which interrupts the author's "revelation," found beginning at 1:11,12 and continuing with verses 15, 16. As Bruno Bauer said, if he is writing so intimately to people he knows, why would he have used the words, "You have heard, no doubt"? (One certainly could validly make the point that the whole narrative was unnecessary, if he had begun this congregation!) The point is that this interpolation is an attempt again to soften the insistence that Paul knew nothing about the gospel of the James Gang.

Anyway, if we look at this 1:1-17 and chapter 2, we have a church that would be accustomed to nothing but the "Mysteries of Paul," a religion that had nothing to do with a historical Jesus, from the evidence the author gives us. In fact, the author is hammering that point in, in the first chapter and a half and reinforced at places throughout the exposition. Those who preach a gospel that remains true to Jewish rituals are preaching a gospel of the flesh- their gospel is inferior to the gospel of the spirit. When one today looks at a "historical Jesus," one sees one who observes and interprets the Law, in the estimation of most. Paul said this was wrong.

I would not see Galatians as "falling within the spectrum of a Judaistic continuity." In fact, I would see them as refuting Judaism, which was adherence to the Law, called by the author of Galatians as "a curse," the "weak and worthless elementary principles of the world." The law from Mount Sinai causes slavery. The author calls for those who have begun observing the principles of the Law to "Remove the mark of slavery you who would be justified by the law..." What form of Judaism considered abrogation of the Law to be within the spectrum of a Judaistic continuity? In what Judaism do we find adherence to the Law as "slavery" and "weak and worthless?" I truly don't see how Galatians could be seen as any form of Judaism or even of a continuity that gives a whit about Judaism until one softens the rhetoric.

The simplest explanation (the Gillette or Ockham razor deal) is that Galatians is what it is. And a great deal of it condemns Judaism. Nothing that I can see embraces Judaism, looking at the reconstruction.

I make the assumption that the Paulines were Gnostic or Marcionite documents because of the evidence presented earlier. It seems that the evidence shows that the Marcionites and the Gnostics were the first to actually use the Paulines, that Acts was to a good extent a reaction to this and we don't really get a good picture of the character Paul until after he has been sanitized and made fit for orthodox consumption, at which time the heresiologists went to work on the "heretics," though they left many, many passages in the "letters" which Gnostics and Marcionites used and which are still there with the same interpretations valid. Can one interpret them in an orthodox fashion? Certainly. It took, however, the heavy hand of Origen, Tertullian, Irenaeus and others to "turn the trick."

I went to my books, Remedial Christianity (p. 176ff) and found several theories of atonement:

1. Satisfaction theory - Christ's sacrifice appeased God.
2. Substitution theory - the death wasn't a sacrifice but a payment to god for a debt

3. Ransom theory - Sinfulness had put humanity on the Devil's turf, and that God made the payment to Satan to free us.
4. Victory theory - Christ, through obedience unto death defeated evil.
5. Moral theory - Jesus' obedience and death was to provide an example for humanity to follow.

Apparently, according to Laughlin, Paul was ambiguous about the actual "mechanics of Christ's redemption" help spur those differing theologies. I have mentioned the "many Pauls" for some time. I would submit that this ambiguity has everything in the world to do with "tinkering" with the original texts, of there being author and interpolator!

Moving along, his definition of Gnosticism is "an ancient Greek system of religious belief predating Christianity, it taught that human spirits were divine 'sparks' trapped in human bodies and requiring a savior to bring the spiritual knowledge... that would release the spirits for a re-union with God... very much an influence on early Christian thought..." (p. 264)

If we look at the atonement situation in Galatians (as reconstructed), we find a fairly unambiguous notion - that Christ ransomed Paul from "the God of the law," a curse. Jesus became the curse through his crucifixion so that humanity would "receive adoption as sons." Symbolically, they have "crucified the flesh with its passions and desires," which was a product of "the Law" and its slavery. It was a "ransom theory" of atonement, the ransoming being from "the Law" and its god.

1. Where this varies from Gnosticism is its lack of a cosmology. The Christian Gnostic works I have read use the Hebrew scriptures in this. (Galatians does, in an allegory, but it isn't blown out of shape - It is just to show that the tablets from Mount Sinai led to slavery.)
2. Another difference between Galatians and a Mystery Religion Gnostic view is that the author feels that "faith" is important. Though he is very strong on the "union with Christ," he also considers faith important.
3. It is easy to see why this version of Galatians, without the additions to it, would have caused so much consternation among a proto-orthodoxy basing much of its mythological framework on Judaism and the Hebrew scriptures.
4. It seems fairly clear that a Marcionite version was the original version. It is consistent in its theological approach in a way that the canonical Galatians is not. The canonical version seems to attempt to smooth over or change the original blocks to either negate or soften.

Incidentally, the reconstructed Galatians does not speak of "the brother James," not that it matters. The narrative is there quite purposefully to tie the author with figures found in Acts, which was truly the first real rehabilitation of Peter and the elevation of James, the "brother" from believing Jesus was crazy to thinking he was some kind of originator of a new form of Judaism or a new religion!

### **Short Excursus:**

Here is the situation with Galatians. There is no evidence outside the letter that there was a

church in that region within 150 years of the supposed date of the letter. According to a map by Rodney Stark, a rather conservative historian, the closest would have been in Byzantium in Thrace, which appeared by 180 ce but not by 100 ce. We know of Galatians from Irenaeus and Tertullian, who acknowledged that Marcion was the first to possess it. According to church tradition, Marcion's home was in Pontus, on the Black Sea in the same Galatian area. This is extraneous evidence that Marcion's Galatians was the earliest. An addendum entitled "The Missing *sitz-em-leben* of Galatians will follow.

If the letter is "truncated" by Marcion and was originally the version we know,

a. one can't explain the lack of certain passages, like the three year jaunt of Paul to Jerusalem, in Irenaeus and Tertullian, since using this (and other passages) would have made their case against Marcion stronger.

b. As Detering said, "The supposition that Marcion has subjected the Pauline Epistle to a text-critical revision is, unlike the Gospel, based not on what Marcion himself says, but on an insinuation of the Fathers of the Church. Marcion himself never asserted that the Pauline Epistles had to be freed of Catholic additions." This is an important point. Marcion was interested in ridding the Church of Judaizing effects, not destroying the Church. He joined the Church and was excommunicated. He didn't leave on his own. The propensity to see Marcion as evil is propaganda from the Church because he was leading a competing faction. Marcion prided himself on having cleansed his gospel, according to Irenaeus.

("They glory by shortening the Gospel according to Luke in having their gospel.") Nothing was said about shortening the epistles. The charge was "mutilating," tampering with them. c. Tertullian said, and I will use the most conservative definition of the term "discovered," "But now as Marcion has discovered by lucky chance (nancisi, nactus) Paul's Epistle to the Galatians." How on this gray planet could anyone know what Marcion did after he discovered it, between that time and the time the Church saw it??? Because of this evidence, it is incorrect to call Marcion's version "truncated." He had the first one.

## **The Case of Creeping Catholicism**

Look for a minute at the possible interpolations to the text. I will try to look at these in a common sense way, utilizing the research of Detering at times, and using my own ideas at other times. I was struck at the different gospels that one can find in Galatians, if one really looks. Keep in mind that these possible interpolations are around 1000 words, whereas the Galatians that is in line with Marcion's views, that which Tertullian, Irenaeus and Origen complained, is around 2000 words. That in itself is worth thought. I have concentrated, for the most part, on larger pieces of text. This is not the entirety of the interpolation.

1:4,5 who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The kerygma is at odds with that found in the bulk of Galatians. Had it said, "to set us free from the Law" it would have made somewhat more sense, but the author was assured that Jesus gave himself so humanity could be "adopted" by God.

1:9 As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed.

This basic repetition of 1:8 makes certain that the “angels/messengers from heaven” are toned down.

1:13,14 You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors.

Why would an author who had begun an assembly, thus should have been an intimate part of the group address the group as if it is people he is not familiar with, by saying, “You have heard, no doubt?” Where, other than Acts and the Paulines, is there any iota of evidence that Jews were persecuting Christians? The final sentence sounds like it was lifted from Josephus’ “Life.”

1:18-24 Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days; but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord’s brother. In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; They only heard it and said, “The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy. And they glorified God because of me.

Chapter one is very harsh. The author is very adamant in his defense. He had his gospel revealed to him by Jesus Christ and it had nothing to do with humans. (Talk about a “put down” of the Jerusalem apostles!) In chapter two, he is very defensive against the “leaders,” even calling Peter a hypocrite. There is no purpose for the three year jaunt placed between this except to make it sound like Paul needed to check earlier with the Jerusalem leaders. This would soften his arrogant tone! Here are the criteria for coming to this conclusion: 1. Attestation – late, third century. It is unattested by two second century Apologists (160 -200 ce) who took the letter apart, basically and missed this section. 2. Language – Several have pointed out that to understand 2:2 one has to go back to 1:17 for it to be continuous and for parts to make sense. The Greek for “to visit,” is hapaxlegomenon, found this way only in Acts 17:23. (There are other language reasons. The highly formulaic “I do not lie” is found near other suspected interpolations, for instance. For a detailed summary of language inconsistencies, Hermann Detering’s research on Galatians is excellent. ) 3. Common sense – The author makes a big deal out of saying “I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem,” indeed making the point that he did not receive his gospel from humans. One would expect more time between conversion and meeting the apostles than three years, since he has made it clear from the get go that they did not matter. 4. Interpolator’s purpose in making a change – It tones down the incredible lack of need for any “certification” from the James Gang. We note in Acts that the rhetoric from the Paulines is toned down. It is just as reasonable that the rhetoric from this harsh letter has been toned down. Some have said the interpolator was also trying to make it mesh somewhat better with Acts.

2:8b (for he who worked through Peter making him an apostle to the circumcised also worked through me in sending me to the Gentiles),

This sounds like the “universal theme” of the Matthean “Great Commission.” The Greek “Peter” for “Cephas,” which is used in the next verse, is a giveaway that this is probably a Catholic insertion. It basically reinforces the position of Acts, in making Paul and Peter equals.

2:10 They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do.

This breaks the flow between 2:9 and 2:11 in a superficial way, and tends to soften the point made throughout the gospels, that the James gang was comprised of hypocrites.

2:15- 17 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith of Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by doing the works of the law because no one will be justified by the works of the law. But if in our effort to be justified in Christ we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!

This comes after a diatribe against the “hypocrite” Cephas and those who would circumcise and make people obey the Jewish customs. It precedes a diatribe on the worthlessness of these customs. This was another blurb meant to calm down the heavy handed rhetoric of the writing.

3:6 – 3:9 Just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” so you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham. 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.” For this reason those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed.”

According to Detering, this is missing from Origen and other ANF’s. It is in line with Justin and Catholic supersessionist notions of the second century (and later).

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.”

This is connected with the creator god of the preceding verses. This actually contradicts what the creator god did, according to the same writing!

3:15-3:25 Brothers and sisters, I give an example from daily life: once a person’s will has been ratified, no one adds to it or annuls it. Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring; it does not say, “And to offsprings” as of many; but it says, “And to your offspring,” that is, to one person, who is Christ. My point is this; the law, which came 430

years later, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance comes from the law, it no longer comes from the promise; but God granted it to Abraham through the promise. Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring would come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained through angels by a mediator. Now a mediator involves more than one party; but God is one. Is the law then opposed to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could make alive, then righteousness would indeed come through the law. But the scripture has imprisoned all things under the power of sin, so that what was promised through faith of Jesus Christ might be given for those who believe. Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian of God through faith of Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. My point is this: heirs, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all the property; but they remain under guardian and trustees until the date set by the father.

This is considered by Detering to be interpolated - We know they were not in Marcion's Galatians, according to Tertullian. Detering (against many other scholars), disagrees for technical, language based reasons. Doctrinally, he and van Manen point out that it contradicts what was written earlier (verses 10-14). If you really want to get confused, though, several scholars, including Pagels, see the ten verses as... You have it... Gnostic in origin! I tend to agree with Van Manen, that the block was a "catholicizing supplement." ("According to VAN MANEN, we here once more hear the Catholic editor pouring water into the pure wine, which was too strong in the opinion of many Jewish thinking people. He complies with their reservations as best he can. He annulates the crass contrast of Law and Faith which sees the former as a curse and the latter as a benediction«." from Detering's explanation.) That is exactly what I was speaking about in chapter one of Galatians. Heirs equal slaves?"

4:4 "...born of a woman, born under the law..."

The oddest thing about this is that Tertullian, who was fighting the Marcion who saw Jesus as being sent directly from God, without any birth, wasn't aware of this portion of the verse!

4:25 – 30 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the other woman corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she is free, and she is our mother. For it is written, "Rejoice you childless one, you who bear no children, burst into song and shout, you who endure no birth pangs; for the children of the desolate woman are more numerous than the children of the one who is married." Now you, my friends, are the children of promise, like Isaac. But just as at that time the child who was born according to the flesh persecuted the child who was born

according to the spirit, so it is now also. But what does the scripture say? “Drive out the slave and her child; for the child of the slave will not share the inheritance with the child of the free woman,”

It seems as though the author was concerned about the effects of the original metaphor, as being to anti-Jewish. Here is Detering’s reconstruction of the original: “Gal. 4:20 – 5:1 I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you. Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children by the Law to the Jews’ Synagogue for slavery. The other who bears, higher than all Principality, Virtue, Power, higher than any Name ever named, not only in this Aeon but in that to come, and she is our mother. So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman. In the freedom for which Christ has set us free; stand firm and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. “

6: 15,16 For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything. As for those who follow this rule – peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

This contradicts the message of Galatians. The author wished those who circumcised to castrate themselves, while before that!

### **Looking Back, Looking Forward**

A case has been made to give Galatians another look. The discrepancies, opposing theology and differences in tone all suggest that there was more than one writer who took his pen to the writing. The writing considered to be attested to as in Marcion’s version is around 2000 words, the various suggested interpolations around 1000 words. Those interpolations, which would have been made in the third century or later, served the purpose of toning down the harsh anti-law rhetoric of the original, of adding the orthodox notion of a blood redemption from sin, one human parent, contradicting what was said, and changing the symbolism of parts of it. Without the possible interpolations, the writing actually flows. With them, questions arise. One question I didn’t ask seems, in retrospect, to be rather necessary. Why would the original document, if it had these supposedly added passages, have caused such consternation for the Church?

Obviously, the early Church Fathers believed that this writing was from Paul, even though it was found by Marcion (which leads one to suspect that behind much of the anti-Marcion rhetoric, there was a smidgeon of respect). Though they feared it mutilated, they left intact the bulk of the theology, which could be interpreted and undoubtedly was by all of these “heretics” in a way contra to the understanding of the Church. The interpolations are the key to this. They could interpret the rest of the writing beside Acts of the Apostles and this would further bring Paul, the apostle of the heretics, into the fold.

## **Who Were the Galatians?**

**(“He wrote it, I believe it, and that’s that!”)**

“To the churches of Galatia”

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in grace and are turning to a different gospel”

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?”

“Let me ask you only this:”

“Are you so foolish?”

“Did you suffer so many things in vain?”

“You were enslaved to the gods in nature”

“you did not scorn or despise me but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus”

“You would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.”

“my little children”

“You were running so well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth.

“If you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.”

“You are deceived!”

“From now on let no one cause me trouble”

Deceived and foolish, the childish Galatians of this writing were, deserting the good news for Judaism. But who were the Galatians? From around 270 bce until at least the fifth century ce, the area associated with “Galatia” was an ethnic island. The Galatians had fought their way to this area (in modern Turkey) from around Gaul or the Rhineland. They still spoke the Celtic language and worshipped the Celtic polytheism. They were to a certain extent Romanized in the first century, but there is little evidence to show that their culture was Greek. Indeed, before they reached Galatia proper they had invaded Greece. They were not too friendly, especially in their skirmishes with Pontus, which was to the Northeast of Galatia.

They liked the Romans. In 64 bce they became a client state of Rome, led by their own chiefs. During the reign of Augustus, Galatia became a province which included Pisidia, Phrygia, and Lycaonia. The Galatians built a temple in honor of Augustus.

There are several questions that beg an answer.

1. Was the author speaking of Galatia proper or the Galatian province?
2. Is it conceivable that all of the churches in Galatia, if speaking about the province, were under the effect of one person (3:1, 5:7)?
3. Was the diaspora (the Jews the author speaks of) actually in and around Galatia, either the province or Galatia proper?
4. Is the situation conceivable? Is it believable that a group of either pagans or Jewish proselytes would turn to “Paul’s gospel” of faith and then burden themselves with circumcision and have to be “won back” to a life without the parochial practices?
5. What “tone,” what “voice” does the author use with the Galatians?



Instead of writing to a particular city, the author addresses a large backwater area in what is now Turkey. Instead of a church, he addresses all the churches in the area. According to this, all the assemblies have turned to a Jewish worship because a marauding band of “Judaizers” sent from “James” made it to (probably) Pisidian Antioch, where “Paul” has rebuked them and allegedly further into Galatia (where they have “bewitching” qualities) in order to snip foreskins and force the assemblies to obey the precepts of Torah. One isn’t really certain whether these people have been “Jews” in the past, but he implies that they have, asking how they can “turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits,” giving a group of “special days” and so forth, all the while he is speaking of “the law” as if that is the problem, a curse, as he calls it... The author apparently did not know proselytes of Judaism did not have to be circumcised. Indeed, there is no evidence that there were many of these. It was easy to become a Hellenist proselyte. According to The Jewish Encyclopedia entry on “proselyte”;

“Sacrificial rites were abandoned and the prohibitions of meats, etc., were taken in an allegorical sense, only a few being retained in an ascetic and superstitious spirit. This propaganda was served not only by the Greek version of the Old Testament, but also by numerous pseudepigraphic writings such as the Sibylline Books (q.v.) or pseudo-Phocylides. This kind of proselytism must have enjoyed a success not easily overestimated, and it lasted beyond the time of Hadrian. It admitted, moreover, of innumerable gradations. The most zealous were like Jews, only without circumcision; their children were probably circumcised (Juvenal, *Satire*:, xiv. 96 sqq.)”

The author seems to want the reader to believe that James and the Judaizers, ostensibly teaching the “Jesus movement” gospel, were actually more hard core fundamentalists than any Jews with which anyone is familiar! This is an example of where the life situation of Galatians, to the best of any knowledge, is not realistic.

It is assumed that the “James” mentioned in Galatians is “James, the brother of the lord.” In the probably interpolated 1:18-24, (the only place in Galatians where this “relationship” is seen) it is noted that the author spent time with Cephas and saw this James. It, however, is not repeated in the second chapter and is part of a triad that one finds in Mark 9, that of Peter, James (ostensibly son of Zebedee) and John. James, as a brother of Jesus, is listed in Mark, but his only action is with his mother and brothers, who are looking for him. His relatives, in chapter three, which included his brothers, thought he was insane. (The insanity charge is independently attested in John and indeed John tells the reader in chapter seven, verse five that the brothers of Jesus had no confidence in him. “For not even his brothers believed in him.) As a result of this completely opposing tradition, found in the synoptics and John, it seems preliminary to consider “James, brother of Jesus” as having anything to do with a Jesus movement. There is absolutely no necessity to consider the James and the Jerusalem Council in Acts as historical, especially since there is nary explanation as to how and especially why one who considered Jesus crazy became the leader of a Jesus movement. That would be important, if he was more than a fictive figurehead. He just “shows up” as the boss. The

“James” of Galatians 2 referred to the same triad as the one found in the Markan transfiguration.

Where might these very odd “Galatians” have been living? The obvious situation for this would seem to be found in Acts of the Apostles, chapter sixteen, where the author talks of Paul going to Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium, which was a swing around the southern part of the Galatian boundary. It is funny, however, that this wasn’t mentioned in “Judaizing event” found in Acts 15. It is also interesting that the list of these cities, according to this author, wasn’t considered “Galatia,” since in the next paragraph of chapter 16, the author has them going afterwards to “Phrygia” and “Galatia.” We don’t have a hint of these “Galatians” the author of Galatians speaks in Acts. The “Galatians” “Paul” toured in Acts was obviously separate from those towns, so even the author of Acts was confused about this! The author of Galatians certainly separates Antioch from Galatia, so it doesn’t seem to be there. We are left with Galatia proper, it seems to me, where the inhabitants are ethnically Celtic, worshipping (far from Judaism) many gods and speaking a language that was related closely to that spoken in the Rhineland. This leads us to several uncomfortable points about the writing.

The author speaks harshly to these people, as one can see in my opening quotes. They are “foolish,” “enslaved,” “deceived” and “bewitched.” Obviously, these people do not deserve the respect that Greeks would. This leads one to believe that the author is using the term “Galatian” to refer to spiritually weak people, people who could not take a stand without being persuaded to another religion. This would seem to speak to an ethnic group, one the author probably wasn’t very familiar with. He doesn’t address them as the authors of other Paulines do, as “saints,” “God’s beloved,” “those who are sanctified,” or even “bishops and deacons,” but “to the churches of Galatia” and even “You foolish Galatians”! This author is certainly not writing a letter, he is not writing to anyone in particular, he is lambasting a group of backwater Galatians (probably Celts) who remain anonymous because they have fallen away from his gospel. Would these converts even understand the theology of Galatians, which theologians for the last two thousand years have spent muttering about? What would, “My little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” mean, even today, the words coming from a man who says he is in childbirth until an entity is formed in the one to whom he is talking! It just sounds silly, actually. The popular notion of the orality of this writing makes the theological arguments all the more incomprehensible, if they are merely heard. Heard? By Celtic speakers?

Twice, in Galatians, the author refers to a person or persons who have “bewitched” (3:1) or who “hindered” them from the truth (5:7). Earlier, he has been adamant that these were Judaizers and, by association, from “James.” In these occasions, he is not so sure, demanding, as we say in Southeastern United States, to “call out” this person (or these persons), as if they are still among the Galatians. It seems completely naïve for a writer with these tremendous concerns to merely write a letter, when the situation is apparently ongoing, and actually believe that the force of a letter very derogatory to the supposed audience would have any effect other than alienating them and turning them against him. The author assumes an apostolic “heavenly being” role, saying he was welcomed “as an

angel of God” in one instance (4:14) and that, even if “an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed!” (1:8). The author obviously considers “Paul” to be an apostolic figure who is at least as great as the angels of God. He actually is greater, since if an angel comes from heaven with something different than what “Paul” is saying, he is to be cursed! One really should look at the historical context of this and decide if such (blasphemous) rhetoric would have been used by Paul or by someone attempting to almost deify him, a figure in the past mythologized.

One point of interest is found just before the rather contradictory (considering the contents of the rest) doxology. The author seems to sum up his feelings when he writes, “From now on, let no one make trouble for me...” The author is going to no trouble whatsoever. Had there been trouble, the author would have hauled it up there in person! This sentence is more evidence that the writing should take its place in history, as a writing not to a church or group of churches in Galatians but as a warning against the false “non-gospel” of Judaism. It also goes to the point that the author assumes “Paul” to be a super-apostle, an “angel” too busy to actually confront any supposed problem in the churches.

Darrell Doughty, in volume 5.2 of “Forum,” made an important statement, very possibly the most important statement made this century about Pauline studies:

“Unlike any other field in the study of early Christianity, traditional Pauline studies deals with writings whose authorial authenticity and literary integrity are taken for granted. The critical methodologies - historical criticism and compositional criticism - that we apply to other early Christian writings have no place here, not because the historical integrity of these writings was demonstrated long ago, but because of the assumption of authenticity is foundational for Christian theological hermeneutics. The Pauline writings enjoy a privileged place because these writings more than any others in the Christian canon, whose historical integrity succumbed long ago to the skepticism of historical criticism, continue to uphold view of authority and identity that are fundamental for the Christian religion - the apostolic origin and unity of the Christian religion (1 Cor: 15:1-11; Gal 2:1-10); the universal mandate of the Christian mission (Rom 1:14; 15:18-21; 2 Cor 2:14-16) bourgeois morality (Rom 12-13; 1 Cor 7:1-16; Gal 5:13-6:10 etc); and the superiority of Christianity over Judaism (Gal 3-4; Rom 9-11; Phil 3:2-9.”

I recently read an analysis of the Book of Galatians published by a Southern Baptist theological seminary. The arguments dealt with an analysis of the rhetoric used in Galatians. There naturally was no attempt to look into the historicity of it; that was already assumed. Curiously, the rhetorical style was identical to a Greco-Roman style. There was nothing “pharisaic” or “Jewish” about it. It was Aristotle’s “deliberative

exordia” (“Rhetorical Analysis of the Book of Galatians, Part 2,” Walter B. Russell III). We have a self-described Jew, a former Pharisee, writing about the “curse of the law” and how the law kills, writing a Greco-Roman “letter” that basically calls the recipients “fools!”

When one begins with a situation that one is taught to believe, one is left only with the task of interpreting it, not looking at it critically, historically. I have attempted to show where problems arise, not in the theology per se of the writing, but in the very historical situation as presented by the author. Is the situation a real one? Is the author the protagonist “Paul” or presenting a “superman,” one more powerful than the Jews, one more powerful than the angels? Can the real “Galatians,” the real Galatia be found? Is the purpose specific to a church or a general directive against the law and those Jews who would include it in their gospel? Does the author even know anything about Hellenist proselytes of Judaism? This is a list and probably not even an exhaustive list of problems with Galatians. They will never be seen seriously, because the same mantra of fundamentalist Christianity is sung by the universal Paulist choir: “He wrote it, I believe it, and that’s all!”

Who was “Paul?” If my rambling essay has any merit, we know less about him than we did when I started it. It is funny, but it seems to me that Marcion, and Marcion only, might be the key to solving that problem. If Richard Pervo is correct, and Galatians was a major source in the composition of Acts of the Apostles, practically everything we know about “Paul” originated in this “fortunate discovery” by Marcion. For the readers’ interest, a summary glance of Pervo’s references show twenty-two references to the Marcionite Galatians, ten to the Catholic version. (It is missing, famously, the ending of Galatians chapter one!) The references are not blocks, generally, but isolated verses. Could it be that Acts of the Apostles was used by the interpolators of Galatians? I digress. We have largely lost the Paul of any Jesus movement and possibly of any early Christian movement. He is no longer connected in any positive way with the figures of early Christian mythology (Peter, James and John). We have a legendary figure who spread Christianity throughout the Mediterranean rim. Our only knowledge of this comes not from eyewitnesses, but from faith in a group of writings that were called “epistles.” I don’t know. I just don’t know.