

The Role of the Doctrine of Trinitarian Worship in Paul's Dispute with the Judaizers: Galatians 4:6 and Philippians 3:3 as Test Cases

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Abstract

Paul's dispute with the Judaizers primarily centred on the soteriological implications of the 'works of the law', specifically, whether the circumcision of males, participation in Jewish festivals, and eating of *kosher* food were *a priori* preconditions for salvation. However, several aspects of Paul's arguments indicate that there were secondary areas of divergence from these Jewish opponents, which, when taken together with the primary issue, have important implications for understanding the theological bases of the 'parting of the ways' between Christianity and Judaism. One such secondary issue is reflected in Paul's appeal to Trinitarian worship as part of his denunciation of the Judaizers. After a brief summary of the dimensions of Paul's dispute with the Judaizers, this article sets out definitional criteria for identifying references to Trinitarian worship as Paul conceptualized it in his letters. It then demonstrates that Galatians 4:6 and Philippians 3:3 are test cases describing the role of the doctrine of Trinitarian worship in the dispute. It

¹ The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

concludes by enumerating the implications of the findings to the Trinitarian distinctiveness of Christian worship.

1. Introduction

1.1. Statement of the thesis

In this essay, I argue that Paul's doctrine on Trinitarian worship, as he conceptualised it in Galatians 4:6 and Philippians 3:3, was one of the components of the issues involved in his dispute with the Judaizers. Also, I posit that it was this element of the dispute which led Paul to characterize compliance to the teachings of the Judaizers as equivalent to apostatizing to paganism (Gal 4:9) and idolatry (Phil 3:19). If these proposals are correct, they have some historical, theological, and contemporary pastoral implications.

1.2. Background and rationale

Paul's dispute with the Judaizers was one of the key defining features of early Christianity. It affected some of the historical events which were pivotal in the formation of Christian congregations in the first-century. It influenced Paul's pastoral relationships with the founding churches of Christianity. It shaped many of the theological themes on which Paul elaborates in his letters, letters which constitute almost half of the foundational documents of Christianity. It laid the foundation for the subsequent fissure and the 'parting of the ways' between Christianity and Judaism (Elmer 2009; Lea 1994:23–29; Nanos 2000:146–159; Russell 1990:329–350; Tyson 1968:241–254). Accordingly, delineating the exact issues which lay at the centre of this dispute has important historical significance.

Recent trends in Pauline studies have also made such an analysis imperative. The influential scholarly construct, known as ‘the New Perspective on Paul’, has opened up some fruitful avenues of enquiries for clarifying the socio-historical circumstances behind the dispute (Bird 2005:57–69; Kim 2002; Stuhlmacher 2001; Thompson 2002; Westerholm 2003). Specifically, it has shed useful light on Second Temple Judaism and how, in its variegated form, it understood key theological concepts such as the law, grace, election, justification, and the covenant (Barclay 1996; Dunn 1983:95–122; Sanders 1977; Wright 2005). Better understanding of the Judaism of Paul’s day has also led to better understanding of Paul’s arguments against the Judaizers in his letters.²

On the negative side however, and building on the insights of ‘the New Perspective on Paul’, some interpreters have attempted to rehabilitate the Judaizers, and so, raised important questions regarding the dispute itself and its theological foundations. So, Gager (2000) and Räisänen (1986), to cite two examples, have argued that Paul misunderstood and so, misrepresented the Judaizers. Räisänen is, in particular, so convinced of his stance that he, rather provocatively, prefers to describe the Judaizers as ‘Jewish Christian restorers’ (1986:264), and Paul, as the one with ‘personal theological problems’ who thus had a distorted understanding of the Judaists (1986:12).

Nanos, though more measured in his assessment, has nevertheless also cast doubts on the traditional view that the Judaizers aimed to get Paul’s converts to bind themselves in a rigid manner to Torah observance. In

² Other positive benefits of the ‘New Perspective’ have been its contribution to improvements in Catholic-Protestant, and Jewish-Christian relationships. For a full bibliography on the ‘New Perspective on Paul’, see www.thepaulpage.com/the-new-perspective-on-paul-a-bibliographical-essay/.

fact, he objects to the use of the term 'Judaizers' for this group, due to the term's 'negative connotations', and queries: 'is it really likely that the ones whose influence Paul opposed stood against values such as freedom and Torah-oriented norms such as love of one's neighbour?' (2010:459).

Other interpreters have opted to argue that it was the later Protestant reformers, not Paul, who misunderstood the exact nature of the bones of contention between Paul and the Judaizers. The Reformers, it is thus put forward, posited a difference between Paul and the Judaizers that did not exactly exist (Boyarin 1994; Dunn 1990:183–206; Esler 1998; Fredriksen 2010:232–252).

Whether it is Paul or the Protestant reformers who are judged to have misunderstood the Judaizers, the potential effects of these revisions are the same. They redraw the balance on the nature of the issues at the centre of the dispute, and call into question a number of historically conservative accounts of Christian doctrine. Certainly, if these revisions were correct, centuries of traditional scholarship on the theological issues which led to the 'parting of the ways' between Christianity and Judaism will need to be rethought (Campbell 2006; Ratke 2012; Thompson 2002; Watson 2007). Furthermore, these revisions are raising contemporary pastoral questions regarding the definition of fundamental concepts such as the distinctiveness of Christian worship (Luter Jr. 1988:335–344).

It is therefore fitting that many critics of 'the New Perspective on Paul' have mounted cogent refutations of some of its excesses (Bird 2005:57–69; Carson, O'Brien and Seifrid 2004; Kim, 2002; Laato 1995; Seifrid, 1994:73–95; Stuhlmacher 2001; Watson 2007). These refutations have, however, focused on the central issue in the dispute, namely, the soteriological function of the 'works of the law'. Secondary matters,

which appear to have played roles in shaping the dispute, have not been as keenly addressed.

The present essay approaches the debate from a different angle, by arguing that Paul's forceful assertion of the Trinitarian nature of valid worship of God in Galatians 4:6 and Philippians 3:3, constitutes one of the secondary dimensions in his dispute with the Judaizers. It further proposes that it was this secondary dimension which lies behind Paul's statements that yielding to the teachings of the Judaizers amounted to apostatizing to idolatry.

I am not aware of any specific examination of the Trinitarian aspects of Paul's dispute with the Judaizers in the secondary literature. The reasons for the paucity of studies on this subject are not hard to find. Two basic methodological hurdles³ have served as barriers to addressing the problem, and these may be stated in the form of two questions. Firstly, what are the safest methodological procedures for identifying the dimensions of the apostle's dispute with the Judaizers? And secondly, to what extent can one speak of a Trinitarian element of a dispute in the first half of the first century AD, given the lack of explicit mention of the doctrine, as it is presently formulated, in Paul's letters? I shall briefly address these methodological questions before proceeding to examine the two passages concerned.

³ One of the objectives of the present essay is to address these methodological difficulties transparently and so, hopefully, contribute to the wider methodological discussion on the conduct of biblical research on the Judaizers and the doctrine of the Trinity. This accounts for the extensive attention devoted to addressing these hurdles.

2. The Dimensions of Paul's Dispute with the Judaizers

2.1. Method for establishing the dimensions of the dispute

Because the Judaizers did not bequeath to us with extant accounts of their side of the dispute, interpreters have no option but to rely solely on Paul's characterizations of these opponents. To put the problem more sharply, we have no means of knowing how the Judaizers themselves perceived the conflict; we only have access to the witness of one of the interested parties involved in this ancient disagreement. This obviously 'one-sided' nature of the extant historical evidence inevitably creates a methodological challenge for interpreters. Ultimately, like all historical enquiries, the hermeneutical presuppositions of the interpreter significantly affect how they evaluate this 'one-sided' account of the dispute.

Conservative interpreters with a high view of scripture take Paul's analyses of the issues at stake as the Spirit-inspired divine perspective. So, based on this high view of the historical source at hand, that is, Paul's letters, conservatives are confident that the data gleaned from them accurately reflect what happened in the dispute. In the words of Schreiner (2010:32), 'it is certainly the case that no one has a "God's-eye" view of any situation. But if we accept the scriptures as the Word of God, Paul's words in the letter represent the divine perspective of the opponents and cannot be restricted merely to his human judgement.' I share this hermeneutical presupposition, and so, approach the text with this in mind.

Even when this hermeneutical challenge is overcome however, an exegetical difficulty nevertheless presents itself. Since the Judaizers were one of several opponents of Paul (cf. Lea 1994:23–29), studies aimed at identifying the dimensions of the dispute must be restricted to

those letters in which discussions of the dispute are most prominent and explicitly stated, namely, Galatians 1–6⁴ and Philippians 3.⁵

Other Pauline epistles, possibly Romans (cf. Campbell 2006:112; Canales 1985:237–245), 1 and 2 Corinthians (cf. Barnett 1984:3–17; Martin 1987:279–289; Murphy-O'Connor 1986:42–58), and perhaps Colossians (cf. Sumney 1993:366–388), may or may not provide further data for characterising the dispute. However, since the ‘opponents’ in these letters are quite diverse and, in any case, difficult to identify categorically, the data these letters provide can only be employed for validating conclusions made from the study of Galatians and Philippians 3. For methodological purity therefore, other Pauline letters cannot be taken as the foundational sources on the dispute with the Judaizers.⁶

Yet, even in Galatians and Philippians 3, Paul does not present the issues in the dispute in a systematic manner. He quite rightly assumes

⁴ A few scholars take it that Galatians 5–6 address a separate group of opponents from Galatians 1–4, whether libertines (Lutgers 1919; Ropes 1929), Pneumatics (Crownfield 1945:492) or Gnostics (Schmithals 1972:13–64). These variations of the ‘two-front theory’ of Paul’s opponents in Galatia have, however, failed to convince the majority of interpreters. For a recent evaluation of theories on the opponents in Galatians, see Witherington III (2004:21–25).

⁵ While it is evident that the opponents alluded to in Philippians 3:2–3 were the Judaizers, questions have been raised as to whether the opponents in Philippians 3:18–19 were Judaizers. This will be discussed in a later chapter of this essay.

⁶ It is true that Acts 15 describes the dispute and quotes one of the theological maxims of the Judaizers as: ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved’ (Acts 15:1). However, in Acts, the exact tenets behind this maxim are not stated, neither are there further descriptions of the dimensions of the dispute. Thus, Galatians and Philippians 3 are the two sources for investigating the dispute. For more on the role of Acts in characterizing the dispute, see Morgado (1994:55–68). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations are from the NRSV.

that the first readers were familiar with the causes of disagreement, and so, proceeds to argue his case based on that assumption. Accordingly, to establish the dimensions of the dispute, interpreters employ 'mirror reading', an exegetical procedure in which some of Paul's statements are regarded as polemical retorts against his opponents, and so, employed to construct the most probable positions of these opponents.

Manifestly, there are inherent difficulties with the 'mirror reading' method. It largely depends on whether the judgment that a statement by Paul is polemical, is correct. In some cases, even when correct, a mere reversal of Paul's statement may not, in itself, automatically lead to an understanding of the points of view of his opponents. Accordingly, several interpreters (e.g. Barclay 2002:367–382; Gupta 2012:361–381; Lyons 1985; Thurson and Ryan 2009:115–118) have rightly cautioned against over-exuberant and uncontrolled application of the 'mirror reading' method for exegesis.

All the same, within the limits of the sources that are available, a controlled 'mirror reading' of Paul's letters is unavoidable if the letters are to be interpreted correctly in their context. In the particular case at hand, I shall follow the criteria laid out by Barclay (2002:367–382) to ensure as balanced an exegesis as possible. Moreover, since almost all interpreters are in agreement that the specific opponents at the centre of Paul's discussions in Galatians and Philippians 3 were the Judaizers, the study's delimitation to these two passages appears prudent.

2.2. The primary and secondary dimensions of Paul's dispute with the Judaizers

The word Ἰουδαϊκῶς (literally, 'live Judaically') occurs once in the LXX (Est 8:17) and once in the New Testament (Gal 2:14). In its strictest sense, Gentiles used it to describe the adoption of the Jewish

manner of life by Gentiles. Since the second-century AD however, the term has been used to describe Jews associated with the earliest Christian movement who insisted that Gentile converts to the Christian gospel ought to adopt also the Jewish manner of life (Bird 2006:126).

It is likely that the Judaizers were not a homogenous group, some adapting their demands depending on local circumstances. All the same, it is universally accepted by scholars that the central theological bone of contention between Paul and the Judaizers, the ‘primary issue’ on which Paul’s refutations of the Judaizers dwelt, was the soteriological implications of ‘the works of the law’ (Rom 3:20; 3:28; Gal 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10; cf. Bird 2006:113; Seifrid 1994:78–79).

This primary bone of contention focused on whether the Torah’s requirement for the circumcision of males (Rom 2:25–29; Gal 5:1–11; Phil 3:2–3), participation in Jewish festivals and Sabbath laws (Rom 14:5; Gal 4:10; Col 2:16), and observance of Jewish dietary rules (Rom 14; Gal 2:11–17; Phil 3:19; Col 2:16) must be fulfilled as pre-conditions for salvation. In all these, Paul vehemently insisted that obedience to the ‘works of the law’ was not a precondition for salvation. The Judaizers radically differed from Paul on this primary issue.

A number of proponents of ‘the New Perspective on Paul’ (e.g. Dunn 2008; Wright 1997) have argued that this primary matter was not really a soteriological issue, but an ecclesiological one. In other words, they argue that these practices were regarded as the boundary markers of what defined the people of God, and not necessarily how people became part of that community.

However, as several critics have rightly pointed out (e.g. Bird 2006:109–130; Schreiner 2009:140–155), this more recent reconfiguration of the nature of Paul's dispute with the Judaizers does not fully explain the various turns of the apostle's argument. What is more, this reconfiguration posits a theological distinction which did not exist in Paul's mind. As astutely put by Bird (2006:127), 'Any bifurcation between justification as "entrance" or "membership" is based on a false dichotomy'. It is right to affirm then, that the primary bone of contention centred on the soteriological implications of 'works of the law', no doubt a contention which inevitably had ecclesiological ramifications.

In addition to this primary issue however, certain secondary matters also featured in the dispute. These secondary issues were theological and exegetical ideas, which Paul often introduced in the service of arguing on the primary issue, but which on their own, are also substantive theological concerns that generate wider understanding of Paul's viewpoint. So, for example, in both Romans (ch. 4) and Galatians (chs. 3–4), Paul extensively discusses the place of the Abrahamic covenant in supporting his point of view (Fee 2010:126–137; Perkins, 2001; Rhoads 2004:282–297; Schreiner 2010:34).

Similarly, the soteriological implications of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ (Rom 5:6–15; 7:4–9; Gal 2:20–22; 3:1; 5:11; 6:14; Phil 3:7–11; cf. Jervis 1999:18; Kern 2011:135–154; Kirk 2006:133–154) and the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to justification (Rom 2:29; 7:6; 8:1–27; Gal 3:1–14; 4:29; 5:1–25; 6:8; cf. Cosgrove 1988; Williams 1987:91–100; Wilson 2006:157–160) constitute extensive elements in Paul's argument in support of his position.

It is evident by the consistency with which these secondary issues occur in his disputations with the Judaizers that, in Paul's mind, these secondary issues cannot be divorced from the primary cause of the disagreement. Moreover, by their nature, these secondary issues inevitably led to different conclusions and approaches in other aspects of the beliefs and practices of the Christian community. Thus, their likely effects on how the earliest Christian congregations conducted themselves cannot be dismissed.

It must be admitted that, methodologically, while it is certain that Paul radically differed from the Judaizers on the primary issue of the soteriological implications of the works of the law, it is on the other hand not possible to establish fully the extent to which he differed from his opponents on these secondary issues. As stated previously, many of these secondary issues are introduced in the service of arguing in favour of the primary issue. And so, it is remotely conceivable that Paul may well have used arguments on some of these secondary issues because he reckoned that his opponents would have agreed with their premises.

Though remotely conceivable, this scenario is however, most unlikely. The letters were addressed, not to his opponents, but to readers who had been adversely influenced by the opponents. So the notion that Paul agreed with his opponents on the substantive elements of the secondary issues which he employs in his argument is really incompatible with the fact that Paul's aim was to restore his readers. Paul was not seeking to convert the Judaizers to his side. His aim was to retain the Galatians.

Accordingly, it is much more likely that there were more elements of disagreement in the secondary issues than areas of agreement. On the whole, however, and given these limitations, it is advisable not to take

routinely every comment by Paul on these secondary issues as necessarily indicating a disputed point of difference from his opponents.

Be that as it may, there are reasons to believe that by virtue of the fact that, Paul consistently introduces these secondary matters, and in some cases, devotes extensive parts of his argument to establish his point of view on them, these indicate that they constituted additional points of divergence from his opponents. In other cases, the apparent 'intrusion' of references to these matters into Paul's train of argument and other rhetorical features of the statements, would also appear to suggest the necessity for Paul to draw out a distinction from the Judaizers.

Certainly, the important roles that the secondary issues play in supporting Paul's argument suggest that they cannot be extricated from characterising the nature of the dispute. This essay proposes that the doctrine of Trinitarian worship, to the discussion of which I now turn, was one of the secondary issues in the dispute.

3. Trinitarian Worship in Paul's Letters

3.1. Criteria for identifying trinitarian references in Paul's letters

The second methodological hurdle relates to whether, and to what extent, it is appropriate to use the word 'Trinity' in relation to Paul's letters. The word 'Trinity' itself does not occur in the Bible; explicit statements of the doctrine, as presently formulated, are also lacking. Presently, the doctrine, in the words of the Nicene Creed, states:

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty maker of heaven and earth... We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made ... We believe

in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.⁷

This statement of the doctrine, formulated in AD 325, followed a long history of redefinitions shaped by responses to various deviations and theological disputes of the time (cf. Humphreys 2006:288; Jenson 2002:329–339; La Due 2003). Accordingly, when seeking to identify Trinitarian references in the New Testament, a nuanced formulation of how the inspired biblical authors conceptualised the doctrine to address their own situations is necessary.

Without such a nuance, discussions of the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament are, according to Watson (1999:168), liable to be labelled as ‘anachronism’.⁸ As Wainwright (1962:4) also famously put this methodological problem, ‘there is no formal statement of trinitarian doctrine in the New Testament as there is in the Athanasian Creed or in Augustine’s *De Trinitate* ... If the word “Trinity” is a necessary feature of a statement of the doctrine, then it does not appear to have emerged before Theophilus (second century) who used the Greek Τριάς (‘triad’)’.

With this difficulty in mind, some interpreters qualify discourses about the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament by speaking rather of ‘the New Testament’s embryonic affirmations of the Trinity’ (Phan 2011:3; cf. Edgar 2004; Letham 2004), or the New Testament’s ‘trinitarian formulae’ (Wainwright 2011:33), or its ‘trinitarian pattern’

⁷ This ICET translation of the Nicene Creed was accessed from <http://christian-bible.com/Exegesis/creeds.htm>.

⁸ Watson himself rejects such a characterisation, even though he warns that care must be taken not to extrapolate later Trinitarian formulae and language back into the New Testament.

(Wainwright 1962:6), or its 'triadic conception of God' (Wainwright 1962:248), or its 'underlying proto-trinitarian depth structure' (Schwöbel 1995:127), or the 'underlying logic of the New Testament's pervasively triadic God-language' (Watson 1999:169).

Other interpreters have made strong cases for using explicit criteria for identifying how the individual inspired writers of the New Testament represented the doctrine (e.g. Black 2010:151–180; Congdon 2008:231–258; Holsteen 2011:334–346; Humphreys 2006:285–303; Rowe 2003:1–26; Scaer 2003:323–334; Yeago 1994:152–164). One such approach, for example, examines how the epistle to the Hebrews shows 'clear evidence of the oneness of God and also evidence of three distinct persons' (Holsteen 2011:334; cf. Letham 2004; Warfield 1991:152–155). Another approach (Kostenberger and Swain 2008) focuses on proving the divinities of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John, and thus, forming the conclusion that the doctrine of the Trinity is evident in that gospel.

While these approaches are helpful, they nevertheless result in simply proving that the New Testament indeed contains the basic elements of the doctrine of the Trinity. They do not show how the inspired authors employed the doctrine to address their contemporary socio-theological and pastoral situation at hand. Without establishing the link between the presence of the doctrine and the immediate pastoral purposes for which they are deployed, it is difficult to demonstrate whether the writers were indeed conscious of the doctrine in the first place.

Moreover, these approaches tend to skew discussions of the Trinitarian doctrine towards primarily answering modern disputes about the doctrine, rather than demonstrating the New Testament's own presentation of the doctrine. As Humphreys (2006:290) puts this criticism, 'Both biblical exegesis and the search for intentional teaching

about the component Trinitarian themes are valuable, but they do not exhibit a doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament’.

For our present purposes, therefore, two alternative criteria for identifying Trinitarian references in Paul’s letters are preferred. Firstly, triadic references to God (or the Father), Jesus (or the Son) and the Holy Spirit, in a single thought unit,⁹ must be regarded as employing a Trinitarian doctrine as part of the thought of that unit. This criterion is based on the widely recognised nature of the Trinitarian pattern in the New Testament in which the biblical authors elaborate on the Father, Son, and the Spirit in close literary proximity to one another, and often, in a fashion not directly germane to the argument they were making.

So, Humphreys (2006:292 cf. Erickson 2000; McGrath 1988:148–149) for example, identifies that there are up to one hundred and twenty such thought units¹⁰ in the New Testament in which, ‘without any

⁹ I adopt Bailey and Broek’s (1992:51) definition of a biblical ‘thought unit’ as a statement or groups of statements representing a single idea, usually limited to a single paragraph.

¹⁰ As footnoted by Humphreys (2006:292 n.21), the 120 passages are: Matthew 1:18–23, 3:16–17, 4:1–3, 10:20, 12:18, 12:28, 12:31–32, 22:43, 28:19; Mark 1:10–11, 3:29, 12:36, 13:11; Luke 1:35, 1:15, 4:1, 6:7, 2:25–32, 3:22, 4:1–3, 4:14–19, 10:21, 11:13, 12:10, 12:12; John 1:32–34, 3:5, 3:34, 6:63–65, 14:15–17, 14:26, 15:26, 16:5–11, 16:12–15, 20:21–22; Acts 1:1–3, 1:7–8, 2:4, 11, 22, 2:33, 2:38–39, 4:30–31, 5:29–32, 7:55–56, 8:14–19, 8:29–39, 9:17–20, 10:38, 10:39–48, 11:15–17, 15:1–11, 16:6–10, 19:1–8, 20:21–23, 20:28, 28:23–25; Romans 1:1–4, 5:1–8, 8:1–2, 8:3–4, 8:9, 8:11, 8:15–17, 14:17–18, 15:12–13, 15:16, 15:18–19, 15:30; 1 Corinthians 2:6–16, 3:16–23, 6:11, 6:19–20, 12:1–3, 12:4–6, 12:12, 13,28; 2 Cor 1:21–22, 3:3, 3:4–6, 3:17–4:1, 5:5–7, 13:14; Galatians 3:1–5, 3:6, 3:10–14, 4:4–6, 5:1–6, 5:21–25; Ephesians 1:13–14, 1:17, 2:18, 2:22, 3:5, 3:16, 4:4–6, 5:18, 6:10, 11, 17; Philippians 1:19, 3:3; Colossians 1:7–9; 1 Thessalonians 1:4–6; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Timothy 3:15–16; 2 Timothy 1:3, 13,14; Titus 3:4–6; Hebrews 2:3–5, 6:4–6, 9:14, 10:29; 1 Peter 1:2, 1:3–

explanation whatever, reference is made to the Father, the Son and the Spirit together'. These passages provide the data for constructing the New Testament authors' deployment of Trinitarian doctrines to address their contemporary issues.

Secondly, there must also be other indications elsewhere in the same letter or book closely associating Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit, with God (or the Father), in a way as to indicate the author's conception that they separately shared God's divinity.¹¹ Such individual passages themselves are not to be taken to be Trinitarian, unless they contain triadic references.

However, these other passages are necessary for indicating that the author, in our case, Paul, regarded Jesus and the Holy Spirit as sharing in God's divinity, and that by bringing all three together in a triadic pattern elsewhere in the letter, he was consciously expressing a Trinitarian doctrine and expected his readers to make that conclusion. The delimitation of this criterion to the book or letter concerned is necessary for indicating that a Trinitarian thought is consciously being expressed and employed for the benefit of the first readers of that book or letter.

12, 3:18, 4:14; 1 John 3:23–24, 4:2, 4:13–14, 5:5–9; Jude 20–21; Revelation 1:4–6, 1:9–10, 2:1, 7, 3:21–22, 14:12–13, 22:16–18.

¹¹ Recent discussions in biblical scholarship on the relationship between ancient Jewish monotheism and the worship of Jesus as part of Christian origins (e.g. Bauckham 1998; Hurtado 2003) have laid firm foundations for understanding the historical development of the Trinitarian conceptions in New Testament times. I personally find this development extremely promising (Asumang 2010:81–102).

3.2. Definition of trinitarian worship

Based on the above methodological considerations, I can now define Trinitarian worship from a biblical perspective. Worship, though difficult to define, generally describes the believer's attitude of submission, devotion, and reverence to God, as well as the distinctive actions that naturally result from this devotion, often, but not exclusively, expressed in the context of the community of other believers (Segler and Bradley 2006; Shum 2008:35–53; Thompson 1997:121–132; Treier and Lauber 2009; Wainwright, Tucker and Westfield 2006).¹²

Exegetically, it is sometimes difficult to identify whether an attitude of worship is being stated or described in a particular passage. This difficulty is, however, often ameliorated by references to distinctive actions that result from these attitudes of worship. For example, references in the Bible to prayer, petition, singing, bowing, praising, glorifying, adoring, honouring, blessing or thanking God, or acts of giving, serving, or obedience to God, denote acts of worship and should be taken as such. This pragmatic approach to identification of passages in which worship is a theme has tremendously enhanced research into other areas of Biblical scholarship (cf. Hurtado 2003:31. n.10).

With these in mind, Trinitarian worship may be defined as attitudes of devotion and/or acts of worship of God which recognise him in triadic fashion by explicitly making references to God (or the Father), Jesus (or

¹² Martin (1982:4) defines worship as 'the dramatic celebration of God in His supreme worth in such a manner that His "worthiness" becomes the norm and inspiration of human living'. Though erudite and helpful, this definition nevertheless lacks the robustness that is required for collecting data from the Bible.

the Son), and the Holy Spirit in the same thought unit. The present essay employs this as its working definition of Trinitarian worship.

3.3. Trinitarian worship in Paul's letters

As Appendix 1 shows below (p. 43–45), forty-two thought units in Paul's letters contain triadic patterns which qualify to be identified as Trinitarian based on the above definition. These references are unevenly distributed among the letters and applied to wide-ranging circumstances and theological ideas, such as Paul's calling to be an apostle, his ministry itself, the nature of the gospel, sanctification, the nature of conversion and spiritual growth, and the nature and functions of the church. Indeed, the frequency of occurrences of the Trinitarian thought units favourably compares with the twenty explicit references to the cross in Paul's letters (Grieb 2005:225–252; Letham 2002:57–69; Treier and Lauber 2009). It is evident that the concept of the Trinity is an essential pillar of Paul's theological thought structure.

Of these forty-two triadic thought units, eleven fulfil the criteria laid out above as employing ideas on Trinitarian worship to address particular situations. Two of these references to Trinitarian worship occur as part of Paul's pronouncement of benediction on his readers (Rom 15:12–13; 2 Cor 13:14). Five of the references relate to prayer, by either describing the nature of prayer (Rom 8:15–17; Gal 4:6) or are employed within the context of Paul himself praying (Eph 1:17, 2:18, and 3:14–21). The other four references to Trinitarian worship occur in the context of Paul distinguishing valid worship from invalid worship (Rom 14:17–18; 1 Cor 12:1–3; Eph 5:18–21; Phil 3:3). These data essentially demonstrate that Trinitarian worship was an important component of Paul's beliefs, practices and teachings.

Of these eleven references to Trinitarian worship in Paul's letters, only two, namely, Galatians 4:6 and Philippians 3:3 are directly employed in polemical arguments against the Judaizers. Conceptually and linguistically, Romans 8:15–17 parallels Galatians 4:6; but, Romans 8:15–17 is not directed at rebutting the teachings of the Judaizers, not in the manner that Galatians 4:6 does. Clearly, Paul could restate or readapt a doctrine previously employed in the service of one argument for other circumstances (cf. Campbell 2006:112). So, the parallels between Galatians 4:6 and Romans 8:15–17 are not surprising, despite their different contexts.

It is fair, therefore, to conclude that Galatians 4:6 and Philippians 3:3 are the two instances in Paul's letters in which Paul's polemics against the Judaizers converge with his conceptualization of Trinitarian worship. This, then, begs the question: what is the exact role of the doctrine of Trinitarian worship in Paul's dispute with the Judaizers? The rest of the essay is devoted to answering this question.

4. Trinitarian Worship in Galatians 4:6 in the Dispute with the Judaizers

The situational context behind the writing of Galatians is as well-known as it is well-debated (Betz 1979; Schreiner 2010:21–59; Witherington III 2004). To summarise, in Paul's absence, certain Jewish opponents, namely, the Judaizers, undermined Paul's preaching in Galatia (Gal 1:6–9; 5:7–10) by insisting that the Gentile converts must obey the works of the Law in order to be saved (Gal 2:16). In particular, these

opponents demanded that the converts be circumcised (Gal 6:12–13) and celebrate the Sabbath and other Jewish festivals (Gal 4:10).¹³

It is evident by the passion expressed in the letter that Paul believed that his opponents had been successful in persuading some of the Galatians, even if there is no evidence from the letter that the Gentiles had actually submitted themselves yet to be circumcised. It also appears that, as part of their wider strategy of weaning the Galatians off the apostle, the Judaizers undermined Paul's authority, whether in relation to his accreditation as an apostle and/or in relation to the nature of his relationship with the other apostles in Jerusalem (Jervis 1999:7; Schreiner 2010:35).

Therefore, Paul wrote to the Galatians with a two-prong strategy in mind, namely, to refute the arguments of the Judaizers, and to restore the Galatians back to the gospel which was first preached to them, by reasserting this gospel and explaining its ramifications for their Christian existence in Galatia. The problem for interpreters lies in how to determine to which of these prongs of Paul's strategy a particular argument of the letter belongs.

Nevertheless, I now put forward five sets of arguments to demonstrate that the reference to Trinitarian worship in Galatians 4:6 was directed at rebutting the Judaizers' stance on the nature of valid worship, and so, constitutes an important element in the dispute. To summarise, these sets of arguments are:

¹³ Most commentators (e.g. Dunn 1993:227–229; Garlington 2007:249; Longenecker 1990:182; Schreiner 2010:279) take Galatians 4:10: ἡμέρας παρατηρεῖσθε καὶ μῆνας καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἐνιαυτούς (literally, 'you keep watch for days and months and seasons and years') to refer to the celebration of the Sabbath and other Jewish festivals.

- 1) Structurally, the section of the letter containing Galatians 4:6, that is 4:1–11, is of key importance in rebutting the Judaizers, and focuses on what constitutes valid worship by the true heirs of Abraham.
- 2) Rhetorically, the forceful assertion of Trinitarian worship in Galatians 4:6 itself indicates Paul's attempt to demarcate clearly one of his differences with the Judaizers.
- 3) Theologically, the follow-on argument in 4:7–11, that adopting the teaching of the Judaizers would amount to apostatizing to paganism in general and idolatry in particular, indicates that the categorical choice for the Galatians was between Paul's Trinitarian worship and the Judaizers' non-Trinitarian and so idolatrous worship.
- 4) Christo-pneumatologically, the repeated associations of Jesus and the Holy Spirit with divinity elsewhere in the letter supports the view that Trinitarian worship was being consciously expressed in Paul's triadic assertion in Galatians 4:6.
- 5) Stylistically, the overall Trinitarian pattern of the letter to the Galatians, with 4:6 as its fulcrum, indicates that the doctrine of Trinitarian worship was important to Paul's argument with the Judaizers.

I shall now briefly explain each of these points.

4.1. Valid worship by the true heirs of Abraham in Galatians 4:1–11

The most sustained theoretical argument of Galatians is found in Galatians 3–4. Almost all commentators (e.g. Barrett 1976:6; Betz 1979:14–25; Hays 2002; Longenecker 1998; Schreiner 2010:191) therefore believe that the extensive appeal to Abraham in this section was not incidental to Paul's argument, but served as a direct polemical

rebuttal against the Judaizers. Exactly what the Judaizers made of Abraham is not explicitly stated. Even so, it is logically inevitable that the Judaizers would have appealed to the circumcision of Abraham in their attempt to convince the Galatians to adopt the rite (cf. Jervis 1999:83).

In addition however, and given the wide-ranging nature of the argument in Galatians 3–4, it is also most likely that Paul differed from the Judaizers on several other facets of the interpretation of the scriptural account on Abraham which was employed to serve their theological agenda.

As the structure of the argument of Galatians 3–4 below shows, at the centre of Paul's series of refutations in this regard is Galatians 4:1–11, which asserts that only the sons and true heirs of Abraham can render valid worship to God. And this valid worship is explicitly defined as Trinitarian in Galatians 4:6.

Galatians 3–4 is made up of five interwoven sub-sections:

Galatians 3:1–5. Paul appeals to the Galatians' experience of the Spirit as evidence of their salvation without circumcision, and thus, confirming the veracity of his gospel. This also prepares the ground to show in the rest of Galatians 3–4 that the Galatians have already received the blessing of Abraham, and so, having been authenticated as God's sons through incorporation into Christ, they are able to worship God in a valid manner (Jervis 1999:86; Kwon 2004:108–111).

Galatians 3:6–29. Paul uses several Old Testament passages¹⁴ to argue that those who believe his gospel of faith are the true sons and heirs of Abraham. As sons, they inherit the blessing of Abraham, which Paul identifies as the eschatological outpouring of the Holy Spirit on those who believe (3:14). Similarly, as sons of Abraham, believers, through being united with Christ who is Abraham’s Seed, are thereby also sons of God.¹⁵ Those who seek to be circumcised are conversely depicted as slaves who, by focusing on the Mosaic Law, only inherit the curse of the law (Betz 1979:181–185; Gordon 2009:240–258; Longenecker 1990:110; Schreiner 2010:189).

Galatians 4:1–11. Paul reiterates his previous point on the validation of those of faith as heirs of Abraham by arguing that they have been liberated from the slavery of the Mosaic Law, have received the Spirit promised in the Abrahamic covenant, and so, have been enabled to worship God in a valid manner. In its details, the argument of this subsection, which flows in four logical steps, employs several terminologies related to attitudes and actions of worship.

In *Galatians 4:1–3*, Paul uses an everyday illustration to argue that, before being in Christ, humanity is enslaved (δεδουλωμένοι), in other

¹⁴ These include Genesis 15:6 in Galatians 3:6; Genesis 12:3 and 18:18 in Galatians 3:8; Deuteronomy 27:26 and 28:58 in Galatians 3:10; Habakkuk 2:4 in Galatians 3:11; Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12; Deuteronomy 21:23 in Galatians 3:13.

¹⁵ Paul equates υἱοὶ εἰσὶν Ἀβραάμ (‘sons of Abraham’, Gal 3:7) with υἱοὶ θεοῦ (‘sons of God’, Gal 3:26) by employing a complex exegesis based on resonance of the terminologies (cf. Jervis 1999:86), as well as the idea that Christ is the Seed of Abraham, and so believers who are united with him are his siblings in both respects (Schreiner 2010:256).

words, humanity worships¹⁶ the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου ('the elements of the world'). Exactly who or what these στοιχεῖα are is hotly debated by interpreters. Opinions range from the physical elements (e.g. Schweizer 1988:455–468; Thielmann 1989:80–83), the fundamental principles of all religions (e.g. Bundrick 1991:353–364; Matera 1992:149–150), the regulations of the Torah (e.g. Fung 1988:181; Longenecker 1990:165–166), the dominion of the flesh, sin, and death (e.g. Vielhauer 1976:553), the spirits of the planetary systems (e.g. Hong 1993:165), or most likely, the principalities and powers (e.g. Arnold 1996:55–76; Schreiner 2010:268). In any case, Paul compares and contrasts these στοιχεῖα with 'gods' in Galatians 4:8–9. Thus, whichever is the correct view, there is no doubt that Paul characterises life before becoming united with Christ as constituting worship of the στοιχεῖα, 'the elements of the world'.

In *Galatians 4:4–6*, Paul restates his gospel in redemptive-historical and Trinitarian terms, asserting that in Christ, God has now made valid worship of God possible by sending *the Spirit of his Son* to redeem the enslaved so that they worship him in a valid fashion (4:6; cf. Betz, 1979:213). In loving devotion and in the language that Jesus himself used for his Father (Mark 14:36), believers worship by earnestly and joyfully crying aloud to God and calling him Abba Father (Αββα ὁ πατήρ cf. Longenecker 1990:174). This is valid worship. Indeed, as Witherington (2004:291) puts it, this language of worship is 'a relic of the earliest Aramaic Christians' unique manner of addressing God, perhaps, in 'ecstatic utterances' (cf. Dunn 1993:222).

¹⁶ For a recent study of the use of the terminologies of slavery as a metaphor for worship of God, idols, and the Emperor, see Jeffers (2002:123–139). On the sociological background of this concept, see Patterson (1982:68–70).

In *Galatians 4:7–8*, Paul further explains that the Christian’s present existence in Christ is therefore one of valid worship in the sense that he is no more ‘enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods’ (4:8). In the past, the unredeemed did not εἰδότες (‘know’) God. But now, through redemption by the Spirit of God’s Son, they ‘have come to know God, or rather to be known by God’ (4:9). This technical terminology of ‘knowing’ God or ‘being known’ by God is derived from the Old Testament and again describes the nature of valid worship of God (e.g. Gen 18:19; Amos 3:2; Jer 1:5, 9:25–27; cf. Rom 1:18–23; Baugh 2000:183–200; Rosner 2008:207–230). In Jeremiah 9:23–27, for example, knowing that ‘I am the Lord’ is contrasted with the ‘circumcision of the foreskin’, and underlined as the distinctive mark of those who ‘glory’ or ‘boast’ in the Lord. As we shall shortly see, Paul repeats a similar argument in *Philippians 3* against the Judaizers (cf. Koperski 1996:20–59; Schreiner 2010:277)

Galatians 4:9–11 completes the sub-section by asserting that logically, therefore, submitting to the teachings of the Judaizers would amount to abandoning the valid worship of God, and apostatising to paganism and idolatry. The equation of the celebration of the Jewish calendar to relapsing into paganism in 4:10 again places the argument of the section under the theological rubric of valid worship. Indeed, as pointed out by Betz (1979:217), the word παρατηρεῖσθε (‘you keep watch’) in 4:10 is used in the context of worship, since it describes a ‘typical behaviour of religiously scrupulous people’.

Galatians 4:12–20. Paul directly appeals to the Galatians based on his friendship with them as a way of seeking to persuade them to be restored back to their relationship, and so, to accept his side of the argument.

Galatians 4:21–31. Paul employs an allegory of Sarah and Hagar as a secondary supporting argument to apply further the slavery-sonship antithesis to the dispute between him and the Judaizers with the aim of distancing the Galatians from the Judaizers.

It is evident from this literary structure of Galatians 3–4 that Galatians 4:1–11 is central to Paul's argument. A running theme of Galatians 4:1–11 is that the hallmark of the true heirs of Abraham is their valid worship of God. Specifically, Paul's position was that the true heirs of Abraham validly worship God in a Trinitarian manner. Conversely, people like the Judaizers, who wished to claim sonship of Abraham based on the works of the law, cannot render valid worship to God because their worship is not Trinitarian. This shows that the doctrine of Trinitarian worship was a key issue in Paul's dispute with the Judaizers.

4.2. The forceful assertion of trinitarian worship in Galatians 4:6

The rhetorically forceful nature of Paul's assertion of Trinitarian worship in Galatians 4:6 further indicates the important role that this doctrine played in his dispute with the Judaizers. There are several reasons for this conclusion. Firstly, Galatians 4:6 represents a logically decisive statement concluding the preceding argument which began in Galatians 3:1. In rhetorical terms, it combines *pathos* with *logos* to establish its point.

In fact, as a conclusion, Galatians 4:6 reiterates the introductory statement in Galatians 3:1–5, that 'the powerful presence of the Spirit marks the Galatians out as members of the people of God' (Schreiner 2010:271). The forcefulness of the conclusion in 4:6 therefore supports the view that Paul wished to use the statement to make a demarcation between him and the Judaizers.

Secondly, the rhythmic nature of the preceding Galatians 4:4–5¹⁷ suggests that Galatians 4:6 is used to demarcate sharply Paul from the Judaizers. The doctrine of Trinitarian worship itself is stated in 4:6 through a simple formula: ‘God has sent *the Spirit of his Son* into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”’ This, in itself, is a rhetorically impressive pithy phrase, especially given that it is the only place in Paul’s letters with such a rendering of the triadic formula (Witherington 2004:290).

However, Betz (1979:205–207), Longenecker (1990:166–170) and Tolmie (2005:149) have also argued extensively that the preceding Galatians 4:4–5 was part of a pre-Pauline confessional which Paul now rephrases, with Galatians 4:6 serving as the inevitable corollary of that confessional. It is difficult to be certain whether this suggestion is correct. All the same, the rhythmic nature of Galatians 4:4–5 indicates that the Trinitarian worship emphasised in the subsequent Galatians 4:6 was a key Pauline emphasis that he wished to make in distinction from his opponents.

Thirdly, the Trinitarian doctrine in Galatians 4:6 is introduced as an inevitable logic of sonship of Abraham with the use of the emphatic phrase *Ὅτι δὲ ἐστε υἱοί* (to paraphrase in translation, ‘because it is a fact that you are sons’). This emphatic introduction suggests that Paul wanted to drive home the statement to follow as a rhetorical apex of his argument. Certainly, this introduction means that the Trinitarian doctrine that follows it cannot be regarded as an aside to Paul’s argument. I propose that the reason for this rhetorical forcefulness is because he differed from the Judaizers on that point.

¹⁷ For a recent account of the verbal rhythms in Galatians 4:4–5 see Tolmie (2005:145–156; cf. Lightfoot 1957:168).

Finally, the shifts in the pronouns of the passage, from second person plurals in Galatians 4:1–5, to the first person plural in Galatians 4:6, and then to second person singular in 4:7, are categorical and indicate the importance to which Paul wished the Galatians to take the Trinitarian worship doctrine he was propounding in Galatians 4:6. Betz (1979:211 n.96) is certainly correct in arguing that these changes in the pronouns suggest the presence of diatribe rhetoric against Paul's opponents. In that case, the rhetorical features of Galatians 4:6 indicate a point of difference between Paul and the Judaizers.

4.3. Apostasy to paganism in Galatians 4:7–11

In what, to many interpreters, constitutes an 'astonishing' (Schreiner 2010:278; cf. Garlington 2007:249; Hays 2000:287) statement, Paul submits that the celebration of Jewish religious festivals by the converted Galatians would have amounted to apostatising back into paganism. It would mean turning 'back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits' (4:9). This remarkable warning begs the question: in what way does subscription to works of the Law by the converted Galatians amount to pagan worship?

The answer to this question is found in the theological logic of Galatians 4:1–11. If, as Galatians 4:6 indicates, the only valid worship in the new eschatological era ushered in by Christ is Trinitarian worship, then any other form of so-called worship, which falls short of this Trinitarian worship, must be regarded as idolatrous worship. The categorical choice before the Galatians, therefore, was between continuing in Trinitarian worship, and defecting to the idolatrous worship propounded by the Judaizers.

Indeed, Calvert (1993:222–237) has shown that the argument of Galatians 4:1–11 employs several Old Testament and ancient Jewish

traditions about Abraham which stress the patriarch's rejection of idolatry to receive Yahweh's covenant. Paul's argument in 4:7–11, then, is that abandoning the Abrahamic covenant amounted to returning to the idolatry from which Abraham was redeemed; and, as he has argued, heirs of Abraham validly worship God in a Trinitarian manner. So, abandoning this Trinitarian worship was equivalent to Abraham's heirs returning to their forefather's idolatry. Asserting Trinitarian worship thus constituted a key argument in Paul's dispute with the Judaizers.

4.4. The divinities of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in Galatians

As stated in § 3.1 above, to conclude reliably that in using the triadic God language in Galatians 4:6, Paul was *consciously* employing a Trinitarian doctrine, it must be shown that elsewhere in Galatians, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are underlined as sharing in God's divinity. The fulfilment of this criterion will now be addressed.

4.4.1. The divinity of Jesus in Galatians

There is certainly ample evidence in Galatians to lead to the conclusion that Paul regarded Jesus as sharing in God's divinity. A few examples will suffice. The very first statement of Galatians indisputably distinguishes Jesus from human beings and explicitly associates him with God: 'Paul an apostle—sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead' (Gal 1:1). The polemical nature of this verse is well recognised. However, also of importance, is the underlying assumption of Jesus' divinity in this verse. Jesus, though human (Gal 4:4–5), is explicitly distinguished from human beings, and closely associated with God in a manner as indicating that he shares in God's divinity (cf. Letham 2004:52).

The greeting of Galatians 1:3 amplifies this close association of Jesus with God when Paul requests for grace and peace from *both* 'God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' to be bestowed on the Galatians. Indeed, a few verses later, in Galatians 1:6, the grace is said to proceed from Christ alone. The word 'grace' itself occurs on seven occasions in Galatians. On two occasions (1:15 and 2:21), grace proceeds from God alone. On two occasions (1:6 and 6:18), grace proceeds from Christ alone. On one occasion (1:3), it is from both God and Christ, and on two occasions (2:9 and 5:4), it lacks indication of the source, whether from God or from Christ. These data on the source of grace in Galatians indicate a Pauline assumption that Christ shared in the divinity of God.

A similar literary-theological phenomenon occurs in Paul's consistent use of the title 'Lord' for Jesus throughout Galatians (1:3; 1:19; 5:10; 6:14; cf. Hurtado 1993:560–569). Other thought units which closely associate Jesus with God in Galatians are 1:3–4; 2:20–21; 4:4–6; 6:16–18.

Another indication of the divinity of Jesus in Galatians is in relation to Galatians 4:4, which underlines that Jesus was ἐξαπέστειλεν ('sent out') by God when the eschatological time of redemption arrived. The idea that Jesus was 'sent' does not, on its own, naturally indicate his divinity. However, in the immediate context of describing his birth under the Law, it underlines Jesus' pre-existence, an important feature of the New Testament's doctrine of Jesus' divinity (cf. Rom 8:3; Phil 2:5–11; cf. Betz 1979:206–207; Longenecker 1990:167–170; Matera 1992:150; Schreiner 2010:270).

Perhaps the most important statement of the divinity of Jesus is in the Trinitarian formula to Galatians 4:6, in which Paul describes the Spirit of God as the *Spirit of his Son*. This exact phrase πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ

αὐτοῦ is unique in Galatians, even though the description of God’s Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus occurs elsewhere in Paul’s writings (Rom 8:9; Phil 1:19; cf. Acts 16:7).

Fee’s (1994:404) observation on the significance of this description of God’s Spirit as Jesus’ Spirit is therefore apt: ‘besides saying something significant in terms of Christology (it is no small thing that the Spirit of God can so easily also be called the Spirit of Christ), it also says something significant about the Spirit (that the indwelling Spirit, whom believers know as an experienced reality, is the way both the Father and the Son are present in the believer’s life)’. Given these indications in other passages in Galatians that Jesus shared in God’s divinity, it is reasonable to conclude that Paul *consciously* applies a Trinitarian doctrine with the triadic formula of Galatians 4:6.

4.4.2. The divinity of the Holy Spirit in Galatians

The case of the divinity of the Holy Spirit in Galatians is less clear-cut. Even so, there are suggestions in the letter that Paul held such a conception. The Spirit is certainly underlined as ἐπιχορηγῶν (‘supplied’) by God, and indeed is described as the agent by whom God works miracles among the Galatians (Gal 3:5; cf. Fee 1994:388–389; Letham 2004:66; Schreiner 2010:186).¹⁸ This idea of the Spirit as an agent of God is, in itself, significant, and indicates a conception in Paul that God’s Spirit shared in God’s nature, fully represents him as his agent, and therefore, shares in his divinity.

¹⁸ Fee (1994:372–376) has argued that though passages such as Galatians 2:2, 2:19–20, and 3:21–22 do not explicitly refer to the Spirit, there are indications that the presence of the Spirit is assumed in the statements of these verses. In that case, these passages also underline the divinity of the Spirit.

A similar idea of God working miracles through the agency of the Spirit underlines Paul's claim in Galatians 4:29 regarding the birth of Isaac. Isaac, Paul points out, was 'born according to the Spirit'. In other words, Isaac's miraculous birth was through the Spirit's activity in the same manner as the Spirit works miracles among the Galatians. Given the consistency with which Galatians 3–4 claims that the true heirs of Abraham are the true sons of God, incorporated into Christ by the Spirit (Gal 4:6), it is not surprising that it is also claimed that Isaac, the legitimate heir of Abraham, was also born by the Spirit. This indicates the conception that the Spirit shared in God's divinity, just as much as Christ does.

Another indication in Galatians that the Spirit shares in the divinity of God is the parallel that Galatians 4:4–6 creates between God sending Jesus his Son, and also sending the Spirit. Significantly, Paul uses the same word, ἐξαπέστειλεν, to describe both commissioning acts of God. If, as argued above, the sending of Jesus indicates his pre-existence, and thus, the idea that he shared in God's divinity, then the same notion applies to the Spirit.

As Beale (2005:10–11) has shown, the Old Testament background to this idea (i.e. the sending of the Messiah and the Spirit) is found in Isaiah 48:16–17, and serves as one of the roots of the doctrine of the Trinity. Its full deployment in Galatians 4:4–6 indicates that Paul *consciously* wished to project that doctrine.

To conclude the present section, there are definite indications in Galatians that Paul held, and consciously expressed, the conception that Jesus and the Spirit shared in God's divinity. Therefore, it is safe to surmise that the triadic statement of Galatians 4:6 expresses a Trinitarian doctrine of worship.

4.5. The trinitarian thought structure of Galatians

One more piece of circumstantial evidence, supporting the notion that Galatians 4:6 explicitly employs a Trinitarian doctrine of worship in Paul’s polemics against the Judaizers, is the apparently Trinitarian thought structure of the whole letter. As figure 1 summarises below (p. 33), and Appendix 2 details (p. 43-45), the relative frequencies of the references to God, Jesus, and the Spirit in Galatians follow an interesting pattern in which references to the Father and the Son dominate earlier parts of Galatians, and references to the Son and the Spirit, the latter parts.

This apparently triadic pattern of distribution of the references to the Godhead is not unique to Galatians. Wainwright (1962:248–259; cf. Letham 2002:52–72) has indeed demonstrated that sections of a number of Paul’s letters, such as Romans 1–8 and 1 Corinthians 1–3, exhibit this ‘Trinitarian thought structure’ by following an outline which first addresses theological issues related to the Father, followed by those related to the Son and then those related to the Spirit.

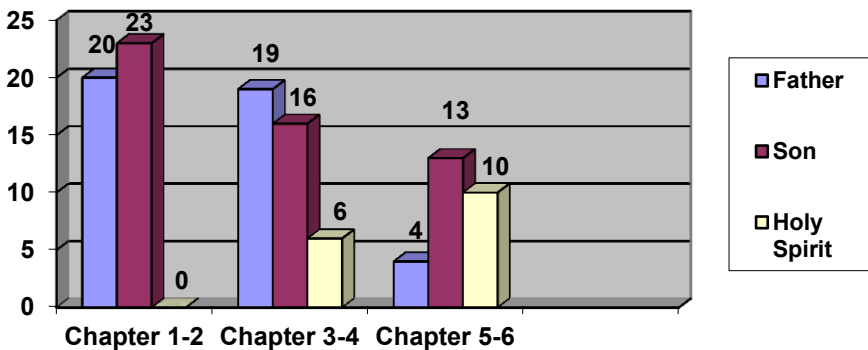


Fig 1: Distribution pattern of references to the Godhead in Galatians

Galatians is, however, distinctive in the sense that the distribution of the frequency of references to the Godhead involves the whole of the letter and not sections of it. Admittedly, as a letter, Galatians is shorter than, say, Romans or 1 Corinthians. Even so, this triadic pattern is interesting and should not be dismissed as an irrelevant coincidence.

On its own, this triadic pattern in Galatians does not necessarily indicate a conscious Trinitarian concept enveloping the whole of the letter. However, it seems to indicate a Trinitarian mind-set of Paul the writer. And this, in turn, supports the proposition that Galatians 4:6, since it is the most condensed expression of the triadic thought in Galatians, serves as the fulcrum to the Trinitarian references of Galatians. Martyn (1997:388) is certainly right in this regard in positing that Galatians 4:6 is 'the theological centre of the entire letter'. In that case, the thesis, that Paul consciously expounds the doctrine of Trinitarian worship in Galatians 4:6 should be upheld. Certainly, the indication is that the doctrine was an important point of difference between Paul and the Judaizers.

4.6. Summary: trinitarian worship in Galatians 4:6 and Paul's dispute with the Judaizers

Several pieces of evidence have been advanced in support of the thesis that Paul consciously expresses the doctrine of Trinitarian worship in Galatians 4:6, and that this doctrine was one of the issues at stake in Paul's dispute with the Judaizers. Moreover, it was this element of the dispute which lies behind Paul's insistence that adopting the teaching of the Judaizers would amount to apostatising to paganism.

The pieces of evidence advanced include the fact that (a) Galatians 4:1–11 characterises valid worship by Abraham's true heirs as Trinitarian, (b) the forceful rhetorical features of Galatians 4:4–6, suggesting the

likelihood that a diatribe against opponents occurs in that passage, and (c) the dramatic contention that adopting the teachings of the Judaizers would amount to invalid worship and idolatry in particular. I shall now demonstrate that this proposal is consistently reproduced in Paul's polemic against the Judaizers in Philippians 3.

5. Trinitarian Worship in Philippians 3:3 and the Dispute with the Judaizers

In a rhetorically charged triple invective in Philippians 3:2, Paul warns the Philippians to 'Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh'. Majority of interpreters (e.g. Bockmeuhl 1997:182–185; DeSilva 1995:27–54; Fee 1999:131; O'Brien 1991:354–357; Silva 2005:147; Thurston and Ryan 2009:119) agree that the opponents against whom Paul directs this invective were the Judaizers, even though the exact situation of these opponents, whether in Philippi, Rome, or elsewhere is uncertain and debated.

Whatever their situation was, Paul's reaction to these opponents is unambiguous. He counters his own triple attack of the Judaizers with an equally emphatic triple counterclaim in Philippians 3:3, to wit that, 'it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus [having] no confidence in the flesh'. Thus, Philippians 3:2–3 uses a very precise language to characterise the dispute between Paul and the Judaizers by placing an ironic description of the Judaizers in direct opposition to Paul's self-characterisation.

In what follows, I advance five pieces of argument to demonstrate that Philippians 3:3 confirms the thesis that the doctrine of Trinitarian worship was an important element in Paul's dispute with the Judaizers.

5.1. Paul distinguishes valid from invalid worship in Philippians 3:3

In Philippians 3:3, Paul employs a number of technical terminologies of worship to characterise the dispute and to defend his own position. These indicate that a key element of the dispute was the definition of what constituted valid worship.

Firstly, with a biting play on words, Paul characterises the Judaizers' circumcision as *κατατομήν*, ('mutilation of the flesh'). This ironic characterisation of circumcision, equates it to the kind of self-mutilation which was associated with the pagan rites condemned by passages such as Leviticus 19:28, Deuteronomy 14:1, Isaiah 15:2 and 1 Kings 18:28 (cf. O'Brien 1991:357; Witherington III 2011:190). In other words, Paul equated the rites demanded by the Judaizers as equivalent in nature to the pagan worship practices. This exactly mirrors his argument in Galatians 4:7–11, and characterises the worship of the Judaizers as invalid and idolatrous.

Secondly, Paul is emphatic that, unlike the Judaizers, he, and evidently his team members and the Philippians, *λατρεύοντες* ('worship', Phil 3:3b) in the Spirit of God. Up until Paul's time, *λατρεύοντες* was only used to describe 'the carrying out of religious duties, especially of a cultic nature' (BAGD). Fee (1994:752) is therefore correct in pointing out that *λατρεύοντες* in Philippians 3:3 describes 'service rendered to God as a form of devotion to Him'. In other words, it describes valid worship.

Thirdly, *καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*, ('glory in Christ Jesus', Phil 3:3c) is a typical terminology of worship. In the LXX, *καυχώμενοι* is used in passages such as Jeremiah 9:23–26 and Deuteronomy 10:21 to describe joyful praise and thanksgiving to God (cf. Bockmeuhl

1997:193). Paul's emphasis, then, is that true believers glory or worship in Jesus Christ, by God's Spirit, and not in the flesh. In other words, their worship was validly Trinitarian. The Judaizers, in contrast, did not worship God in the valid manner.

Fourthly, and as in the case of Galatians 4:1–11, Paul later employs other terminologies of worship, such as 'knowing' Christ (Phil 3:8–11) and, in the negative sense, δόξα ('glory', Phil 3:19) to describe and delineate the nature of Christian existence in positive and negative terms. Given the repeated contrasts throughout the chapter, it is clear that Paul wished to distinguish valid from invalid worship in Philippians 3:2–3 (cf. O'Brien 1991:454; Witherington III 2009:206).

Therefore, we must conclude that, as with Galatians 4:6, the polemic against the Judaizers in Philippians 3:3 is expressed within the context of distinguishing valid worship from invalid worship. According to Philippians 3:3, for worship to be valid, it must be Trinitarian.

5.2. Triple denial of invalid worship in Philippians 3:2–3

The assertion of Trinitarian worship in Philippians 3:2–3 is arranged and presented as a vigorous denial of the invalid worship of the Judaizers. In this arrangement, the triple alliterative warnings against the Judaizers in Philippians 3:2 is matched by an equally arresting triple rebuttal in Philippians 3:3. Fowl (2005:147) is therefore likely correct in positing that in the triple alliterative warnings of Philippians 3:2, Paul is 'using language that Judaizers might have used about themselves and turning it on its head.'

Witherington III (2011:189) describes the genre of this rhetorical device as an example of ancient 'rhetorical amplification' and '*synkrisis*'. The repeated contrasts throughout the chapter indeed add to the rhetorical

effects of refuting and denying the invalid worship of the Judaizers (cf. Bockmeuhl 1997:182; cf. Thurston and Ryan 2009:115). In that case, Paul's equally triple response sharply demarcates his differences with the Judaizers in stark terms.

This triple denial of the triple position of the Judaizers in Philippians 3:2–3 therefore indicates that the question of Trinitarian worship was important in Paul's dispute with the Judaizers. At least, and as Heil (2010:118; cf. Silva 2005:148–149) rightly points out, the potent presentation of Paul's argument is designed to 'jolt' the audience. The most likely reason for this is that the Trinitarian worship was a direct cause of disagreement with the Judaizers.

5.3. Rhetorical nature of the assertion of Trinitarian worship in Philippians 3:3

Paul's retort against the Judaizers in Philippians 3:3 basically emphasises that the true people of God, the 'we who are the circumcision', offer Trinitarian worship to God (Fee 1995:302; Silva 2005:149; Wainwright 1962:243). They 'worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus'. This assertion is made in a rhetorically and acoustically effective manner that virtually matches the opposite position of the Judaizers in Philippians 3:2 (cf. Bockmeuhl 1997:184). The rhetorical design of the verse, then, appears to support the thesis that the doctrine of Trinitarian worship was an important element in the dispute.

5.4. The description of the Judaizers as idolatrous in Philippians 3:18–19

In Philippians 3:18–19, Paul further characterises a group of opponents as 'enemies of the cross of Christ ... their end is destruction; their god

is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things'. It is widely disputed among interpreters whether these opponents were the same as those in Philippians 3:2–3, namely, the Judaizers, or a different group. However, while not all interpreters agree, the view that the opponents described in Philippians 3:18–19 were the Judaizers appears to be the most convincing (Heil 2010:135–136; Moiser 1997:365–366; O'Brien 1991:456; Rosner 2007:94–98; Silva 2005:181).¹⁹

If this view is correct, Paul's emphasis, that the god of the Judaizers was their 'belly', must be taken as accusation that their worship, which overly focuses on eating the correct food, was idolatrous, and so, invalid. The parallel to this description in Romans 16:18, that 'such people do not δουλεύουσιν ('serve') our Lord Christ, but their own appetites' supports the view that Paul was characterising the Judaizers' worship as idolatrous (cf. O'Brien 1991:455–456; Witherington III 2011:194). As with Galatians 4:1–11, Paul could make such a claim in Philippians 3:19 exactly because the worship engendered by the Judaizers was not Trinitarian worship.

5.5. The Divinities of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in Philippians

There are several pieces of evidence in other sections of Philippians supporting the view that the triadic reference in Philippians 3:3 represents a conscious expression of Trinitarian doctrine by Paul.

¹⁹ Important in this judgment are (a) Paul's consistent application of the message of the cross in his polemics against the Judaizers elsewhere, such as 1 Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 3:1; 5:11; 6:12–13, (b) the use of κοιλία ('belly') in passages such as Mark 7:19 and Romans 16:18 to represent Jewish scruples about food laws, (c) the double *entendre* use of αἰσχρόνη ('shame') for circumcision and shamefulness. For an alternative view, see Fee (1999:161–164).

Several passages, such as Philippians 1:2, 1:8, 1:11, 2:11, 3:9, 3:14, 4:7, and 4:19, associate Jesus with God in such a manner as to indicate that Jesus shares in God's divinity (cf. Letham 2002:40–51; Wainwright 1962:187–188). Similarly, Philippians 2:5–7 underscores the pre-existence and equality of Jesus with God before his incarnation. Indeed, as Fee (1999:84) has shown, Paul also expresses a Trinitarian pattern in Philippians 2:1, just as he does in Philippians 3:3.

The Holy Spirit is also associated with God in Philippians in a manner as to indicate his sharing in God's divinity. He is identified as Spirit of Christ (Phil 1:19) as well as Spirit of God (Phil 3:3). Similarly, in Philippians 2:1, he is associated with Jesus and God in a triadic pattern which resonates with the Trinitarian grace of 2 Corinthians 13:14 (cf. Asumang 2012:26–27). Consequently, it may be concluded that Paul *consciously* expressed the idea of Trinitarian worship in Philippians 3:3 in his rebuttal of the Judaizers.

6. Conclusion and Implications of Findings

In conclusion, the thesis, that Trinitarian worship played a secondary role in Paul's dispute with the Judaizers, has been demonstrated and defended as evident in both Galatians 4:6 and Philippians 3:3. This thesis has some implications of historical, theological, and contemporary pastoral importance.

Firstly, the fact that the doctrine of Trinitarian worship was one of the secondary issues at stake in Paul's dispute with the Judaizers somewhat illuminates aspects of the historical background of the 'parting of the ways' between Judaism and Christianity. Clearly, the evidence marshalled above does not warrant a conclusion that the Judaizers

totally rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, as it was conceptualized in New Testament times.

Yet, given that Paul consistently asserts the doctrine of Trinitarian worship in contrast to the Judaizers' emphases, it is reasonable to surmise that the Judaizers held a defective notion of the doctrine. Certainly, the above thesis underscores the fact that the doctrine of Trinitarian worship played an important role in the fissure between Judaism and Christianity. Put another way, the vehemence with which Paul asserted the doctrine of Trinitarian worship highlights it as a key defining feature of biblical Christianity.

Secondly, the above thesis casts significant doubt on the prudence of the recent trend within influential circles of biblical scholarship which seeks to rehabilitate the 'voiceless Judaizers'. As has been shown, Paul regarded the doctrine of Trinitarian worship as a 'red line' which divided Christianity from all other forms of worship. Interpreters, who wish to deny that the Judaizers were on the wrong side of the argument, may well be offering an apology for a religion that is not Christian.²⁰

Thirdly, the above thesis makes a methodological contribution to research on the Trinity in the New Testament. It is suggested that the two criteria for identifying Trinitarian references in the New Testament may be useful in other studies. As has been shown, these criteria provide transparent bases for studying and assessing the presence of the doctrine, and delineating how the inspired authors consciously

²⁰ It seems to me that this trend has been fuelled by the postmodern tendency to resist uncritically 'dominant' voices and support 'the voiceless'. This postcolonial approach to biblical scholarship may well have its uses in some cases; but, as shown in the present essay, it can lead to wrongly skewing biblical interpretation. For a gentler critique of this particular trend in relation to the Judaizers, see Witherington III (2011:232).

employed the doctrine to address the socio-historical and theological issues in their churches.

Finally, there is an important pastoral implication of the above proposal, given that the thesis hopefully provides a critique of contemporary Christian worship. Among conservative churches, it is not uncommon to find imbalances in the various emphases on the three persons of the Trinity. Some conservative churches, especially those of older denominations, may overly focus on the agency of Christ in worship to the neglect of the work of the Spirit who mediates the presence of God in Christian worship. Others, such as the newer conservative Charismatic churches, may focus on the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit in worship with apparent neglect of the agency of Christ and the Father to whom the worship is directed.

This thesis has shown that both scenarios deviate from valid Christian worship and has significant implications. Paul vehemently underlines any worship that is short of Trinitarian as idolatrous worship. That must be a sobering thought for all Christians today.

Appendix 1: Triadic references to the Trinity in Paul's Letters

Passage	Application of triadic conception
Rom 1:1–4	The gospel is Trinitarian
Rom 5:1–8	Post-justification ethical conduct is Trinitarian
Rom 8:1–4	Sanctification is Trinitarian
Rom 8:9	Sanctification is Trinitarian
Rom 8:11	Assurance of salvation is Trinitarian
Rom 8:15–17	Trinitarian worship (prayer)
Rom 14:17–18	Trinitarian worship (fellowship)
Rom 15:12–13	Trinitarian worship (benediction)
Rom 15:15–16	Paul's priestly calling is Trinitarian
Rom 15:18–19	Paul's ministry achievement is Trinitarian
Rom 15:30	Prayer request is stated in Trinitarian terms
1 Cor 2:6-16	Christian wisdom is Trinitarian
1 Cor 3:16–23	Trinity and ecclesiology
1 Cor 6:11	Sanctification is Trinitarian
1 Cor 6:19–20	Ecclesiology is Trinitarian
1 Cor 12:1–3	Trinitarian worship (Christian confession)
1 Cor 12:4–6	The spiritual gifts are Trinitarian
2 Cor 1:21–22	The Trinitarian God's acquisition of us for his own
2 Cor 3:3	The Corinthians are Trinitarian
2 Cor 3:4–6	Trinitarian confirmation of Paul's ministry
2 Cor 3:17–4:1	Sanctification is Trinitarian
2 Cor 5:5–7	Christian migrant existence is Trinitarian
2 Cor 13:14	Trinitarian worship (benediction)
Gal 3:1–6	Christian existence is Trinitarian
Gal 3:10–14	Justification is Trinitarian

Gal 4:4-6	Trinitarian worship (prayer)
Gal 5:21-25	Sanctification is Trinitarian
Eph 1:13	Conversion is Trinitarian
Eph 1:17	Trinitarian worship (prayer)
Eph 2:18	Trinitarian worship (prayer)
Eph 2:22	The church's Trinitarian existence
Eph 3:14-21	Trinitarian worship (prayer)
Eph 4:4-6	Ecclesiology is Trinitarian
Eph 5:18-21	Trinitarian worship (corporate)
Eph 6:10-18	Spiritual armour is Trinitarian
Phil 2:1	Christian fellowship is Trinitarian
Phil 3:3	Trinitarian worship (general statement of Christian worship)
Col 1:7-9	Christian growth is Trinitarian
1 Thess 1:4-6	Conversion is Trinitarian
2 Thess 2:13	Conversion is Trinitarian
1 Tim 3:15-16	Christian confession is Trinitarian
Titus 3:4-6	Conversion is Trinitarian

Appendix 2: Distribution of references to the Godhead in Galatians

Chapter	Father/God	Son/Jesus/Christ/Lord	Spirit
Chapter 1	God:1, 3, 4, 10, 13, 15, 20, 24 Father: 1, 3, 4 He: Him: 16 His: 15, 16	Son: 16 Jesus Christ: 1, 3, 12 Christ: 6, 7, 10, 22 He: 4 Him: 1, 6 Lord: 19	
	15	12	0
Chapter 2	God: 6, 17, 19, 20, 21	Son: 20 Jesus Christ: 4, 16a, 16b Christ:16, 17a, 17b, 20a, 20b, 21 He: 8	
	5	11	0
Chapter 3	God:6, 8, 11, 17, 18, 20, 21, 26 He: 5a, 5b, 16	Son: Jesus Christ: 1, 14, 22, 26, 28 Christ: 13, 16, 17, 24, 27a, 27b, 29	2, 3, 5, 14
	11	12	4
Chapter 4	God: 4, 7, 8, 9, 9, 14 Father: 6 He: Him: His: 4	Son: 4, 6 Jesus Christ:14 Christ: 19,	6, 29
	8	4	2
Chapter 5	God: 21	Son: Jesus Christ: 6 Christ: 1, 2, 4, 24 Him: 8 Lord: 10	5, 16, 17a, 17b, 18, 22, 25a, 25b

	1	7	8
Chapter 6	God: 7, 14, 16	Son: Jesus Christ: 14, 15, 17, 18 Christ: 2, 12	8a, 8b
	3	6	2

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