

# DIE GALATER UND DER BRIEF AN DIE GALATER

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## THE SEMANTIC FIELD OF THE CONSTRUCTION “δοκέω + εἶναι” IN GAL 2:9 IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BIBLICAL TERMINOLOGY

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### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In Gal 2:9 we read a short sentence in which the apostle Paul “rates” his fellow-apostles from Jerusalem: Ἰάκωβος καὶ Κηφᾶς καὶ Ἰωάννης, οἱ δοκοῦντες στῦλοι εἶναι. The last part of this clause is translated in various manners:

- Ya'akov, Kefa and Yochanan, *the acknowledged pillars of the community* (CJB)
- James and Cephas and John, *who were acknowledged pillars* (NRSV 1989)
- James, Cephas and John, *those esteemed as pillars* (NIV 2011)
- James, Peter and John, *those reputed to be pillars* (NIV – 1984)
- James and Cephas and John, *who were reputed to be pillars* (NAB, NAS, NAU, RSV 1952/1971)
- James and Cephas and John, *who were the ones recognised as pillars* (NJB)
- James and Cephas and John, *who seemed to be pillars* (ESV, KJV, NKJV)

From the translations presented above we can see that they express a variety of semantic nuances regarding to the apostles in Jerusalem, from the meaning that they were acknowledged or recognized of being pillars of the community until the possibility that they only seemed they had the role of pillars in the earliest Christian Church. The names and sequence of those called the “pillars of Jewish mission” recall the names and sequence of the so-called Catholic Epistles, with the purpose to “provide an authorized apparatus of various checks-and-balances that prevent the distortion – and indeed thicken – the church's understanding of the Pauline Epistles and so of the full gospel”.<sup>1</sup> According to some other scholars the formation of the Catholic epistles occurred quite

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<sup>1</sup> Wall, Robert W.: The Significance of a Canonical Perspective of the Church's Scripture. In: McDonald, Lee Martin – Sanders, James (eds.): *The Canon Debate*. Hendrickson Publisher, Peabody (Massachusetts) 2002. 540.

late, in order to “to provide a broader and more balanced literary representation of the apostolic witness than the letters of Paul”.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this short paper is to analyse the semantic field of the grammatical structure “δοκέω + εἶναι” which appears to be translated in various and ambiguous ways. Therefore, I invite the reader to a short philological adventure during which we will try to unfold the semantical field of the grammatical structure “οἱ δοκοῦντες στῦλοι εἶναι” used in Gal 2,9, and I try to find an answer to the following question: what does this characterisation exactly mean?

- Does it mean that everybody (inclusive Paul) considers them to be the pillars of the Church? Were they appointed or named to act as pillars i.e. leaders?
- Does Paul agree with this “position” of his fellow apostles, or do his words express rather a polemic position?
- Which of the above presented translations do express better the intention of the author?

### A FEW REMARKS CONCERNING THE STYLE OF EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

Many scholars consider the Epistle to the Galatians to be one of the earliest Christian writings (among Mark, the double or triple synoptic tradition, Acts and Romans).<sup>3</sup> Its style is generally more polemical and, in some measure, harsher than the style of the other Pauline letters, with “its acid language often bombastic and sarcastic”.<sup>4</sup> Harnack remarked that the lines of this letter were rather scratched, than written.<sup>5</sup> Or as Dunn states: “Galatians or 2Cor 10–13 in particular can hardly be called eirenic”.<sup>6</sup> Further one can also see that

his language moves from ridicule (“You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?” [3:1]) to acrid vulgarity (“I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves!” [5:12]).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Gamble, Harry Y.: *The New Testament Canon: Recent Research and the Status Quaestionis*. In: McDonald, Lee Martin – Sanders, James (eds.): *The Canon Debate*. Hendrickson Publisher, Peabody (Massachusetts) 2002. 288.

<sup>3</sup> Barrera, Julio C. Treballe: *The Origins of a Tripartite Old Testament Canon*. In: McDonald, Lee Martin – Sanders, James (eds.): *The Canon Debate*. Hendrickson Publisher, Peabody (Massachusetts) 2002. 141.

<sup>4</sup> Holladay, Carl R.: *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament. Interpreting the Message and Meaning of Jesus Christ*. Abingdon Press, Nashville 2005. 463.

<sup>5</sup> Harnack, Adolf von: *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*. Leipzig 1924. 68.

<sup>6</sup> Dunn, James D. G.: *Has the Canon a Continuing Function?* In: McDonald, Lee Martin – Sanders, James (eds.): *The Canon Debate*. Hendrickson Publisher, Peabody (Massachusetts) 2002. 576.

<sup>7</sup> Keefer, Kyle: *The New Testament as Literature: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008. 74–75.

With another illustration this letter “is much more like a shouting match. Since certain people have convinced the Galatians to act differently from what they originally learned, Paul has to make his own voice heard”.<sup>8</sup>

In this letter Paul repeatedly tries to prove his authority towards the Galatians, while he argues against some Judaizing groups. The basic problem was that

after Paul converted a number of Gentiles to faith in Christ in the region of Galatia, other missionaries arrived on the scene, insisting that believers must follow parts of the Jewish Law in order to be fully right before God.<sup>9</sup>

Paul’s point is that

those who are troubling the Galatians are acting hypocritically, for while they compel the Galatians to be circumcised in accordance with the rule of keeping the law, they themselves do not follow this rule.<sup>10</sup>

His purpose is to convince the Galatians that they are engaging in incorrect practices.<sup>11</sup> While he argues against these groups, he also expresses his distancing from the apostles in Jerusalem, as well (it becomes obvious from the manner how he presents the incident at Antioch). This letter is also remarkable for sophisticated rhetorical techniques in the service of theological argument.<sup>12</sup>

### THE TESTIMONY OF THE DICTIONARIES

As the first step to find an answer for the question mentioned in the introduction, I will start with the basic meaning of the verb δοκέω. I begin unfold its semantic field with the help of the new BRILL Dictionary of Ancient Greek, where we can read the following meanings: to seem, have the appearance, to seem (to be something), to be considered, to be known, to appear, to have the air, to be present, to seem good, to

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<sup>8</sup> Keefer, Kyle: *The New Testament as Literature: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008. 75.

<sup>9</sup> Ehrman, Bart: *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. Oxford University Press, New York – Oxford 2008. 339.

<sup>10</sup> Farmer, William R.: Reflections on Jesus and the New Testament Canon. In: McDonald, Lee Martin – Sanders, James (eds.): *The Canon Debate*. Hendrickson Publisher, Peabody (Massachusetts) 2002. 324.

<sup>11</sup> Keefer, Kyle: *The New Testament as Literature: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008. 75.

<sup>12</sup> Harrington, Daniel J.: The Old Testament Apocrypha in the Early Church and Today. In: McDonald, Lee Martin – Sanders, James (eds.): *The Canon Debate*. Hendrickson Publisher, Peabody (Massachusetts) 2002. 207.

decide, to decree (of public deliberations), to expect, to imagine, to think, to believe (with infinitive), to consider, to propose, to establish; in passive voice: to be held or considered, to be established or decided, etc.<sup>13</sup> Similar meanings are presented in Diggle's Cambridge Greek Lexicon: to think, to imagine, to suppose, to have an opinion, to be minded, to intend, to seem likely (of a person), to seem to do or to be such and such, etc.<sup>14</sup>

Within the examples given by Montanari<sup>15</sup> we can see a couple of fragments containing the structure δοκέω + εἶναι. For example, from Aeschylus (*Septem contra Thebas*, line 592), which is also quoted by Plutarch: οὐ γὰρ δοκεῖν ἄριστος, ἀλλ' εἶναι θέλει (= for he does not want to seem the best but to be the best). In Plato's Gorgias 527b we read: ἀνδρὶ μελετητέον οὐ τὸ δοκεῖν εἶναι ἀγαθὸν ἀλλὰ τὸ εἶναι (= male name should take care not to seem to be good, but to be good). In Gorgias 472a we also read: ὑπὸ πολλῶν καὶ δοκούντων εἶναι τι (= by many who have the reputation of being valuable). In Plutarch (*Aristides*): τὸ φρονεῖν ἐδόκει τις εἶναι περὶ τὸς (= he had the reputation of being a person of superior good sense).

From the examples presented above we can see that this construction denotes something that only has the appearance of something, but in fact, it is not (or at least it is not sure that it is or not) what it appears to be.

### THE CONSTRUCTION ΔΟΚΕΩ + Εἶναι IN THE BIBLE

After seeing what the dictionaries have to say about the meaning of the verb δοκέω and especially about the construction δοκέω + εἶναι, I will turn my attention to the biblical occurrences of this construction, in order to see if this meaning appears in the Bible, as well, or not. In the followings I will list (the Greek text and their translation/paraphrasis of) those biblical verses that contain the construction δοκέω + εἶναι, and if necessary, I will add a short remark to them.

#### I. NARRATIVE TEXTS OF THE GREEK OLD TESTAMENT:

- Gen 38:15 – καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὴν Ἰουδας **ἔδοξεν** αὐτὴν πόρνην **εἶναι** – In the narrative of the affair between Judah and his daughter-in-law, Tamar, and according to this passage of the text Judah thought that Tamar is a prostitute, which, in fact, she was not.

<sup>13</sup> Montanari, Franco: *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*. BRILL, Leiden – Boston 2015. 545.

<sup>14</sup> Diggle, James (ed.): *The Cambridge Greek Lexicon*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2021. 388–389.

<sup>15</sup> Montanari, Franco: *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*. BRILL, Leiden – Boston 2015. 545.

- 2Macc 1:13 – εἰς τὴν Περσίδα γενόμενος γὰρ ὁ ἡγεμὼν καὶ ἡ περὶ αὐτὸν ἀνυπόστατος **δοκοῦσα εἶναι** δύναμις κατεκόπησαν ἐν τῷ τῆς Ναναίας ἱερῷ – the army seemed to be irresistible or invincible, but it was not so, because “they were slain in the temple of Nanea”, by a deception employed by the priests of the goddess Nanea.
- 2Macc 14:14 – τὰς τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἀτυχίας καὶ συμφορὰς ἰδίας εὐημερίας **δοκοῦντες ἔσεσθαι** – the Gentiles that fled from Judea joined Nicanor, because it seemed to them that “the harm and calamities of the Jews to be their welfare”.
- 3Macc 5:6 – οἱ δὲ πάσης σκέπης ἔρημοι **δοκοῦντες εἶναι** τοῖς ἔθνεσιν Ἰουδαῖοι – “The heathen believed the Jews to be destitute of all protection”, while the narrative suggests that they were not helpless.
- 3Macc 5:49 – ὑστάτην βίου ῥοπὴν αὐτοῖς ἐκείνην **δόξαντες εἶναι** – they thought that they had come to the last moment of their life – and it was not so.
- Bel (Th) 1:6 – καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ βασιλεὺς οὐ **δοκεῖ** σοι Βηλ **εἶναι** ζῶν θεός ἢ οὐχ ὀρῶς ὅσα ἐσθίει καὶ πίνει καθ’ ἐκάστην ἡμέραν – the king asks Daniel if he does not think Bel to be a living god, and if he does not see how much Bel eats and drinks every day.

All these narrative passages from the Septuagint reveal a use of the construction δοκέω + εἶναι, where it describes the personal thoughts or opinions, that can strongly differ from the reality.

## II. WISDOM-LITERATURE OF THE GREEK OLD TESTAMENT:

- Prov 2:10 – ἡ δὲ αἴσθησις τῇ σῆ ψυχῇ **καλὴ εἶναι δόξη** – This passage of Prov 2 is part of an exhortation that urges to “understand righteousness and judgement”, and its result will be that wisdom will come into the mind of this person, and “perception/discernment (αἴσθησις) shall seem pleasing to your soul”. Through the construction **καλὴ εἶναι δόξη** (= δοκέω + εἶναι) the text expresses that perception or discernment is pleasant only to those who have acquired wisdom through understanding “righteousness and judgment”.
- Prov 14:12 – ἔστιν ὁδὸς ἣ **δοκεῖ ὀρθὴ εἶναι** παρὰ ἀνθρώποις τὰ δὲ τελευταῖα αὐτῆς ἔρχεται εἰς πυθμένα ἄδου – there is a way (i.e. a lifestyle, or kind of behaviour) that seems to humans to be right, but in the fact it leads to the Hades’ depths. This way only seems to be right, but in reality it is the most dangerous that puts human life to an end.
- Prov 16:25 – εἰσὶν ὁδοὶ **δοκοῦσαι εἶναι** ὀρθαὶ ἀνδρὶ τὰ μέντοι τελευταῖα αὐτῶν βλέπει εἰς πυθμένα ἄδου – there is a way (i.e. a lifestyle, or kind of behaviour) that seems to humans to be right, but in the fact it leads to the Hades’ depths. This way only seems to be right, but in reality it is the most dangerous that puts human life to an end.

- Prov 17:28 – ἀνοήτῳ ἐπερωτήσαντι σοφίαν σοφία λογισθήσεται ἐνεὸν δέ τις ἑαυτὸν ποιήσας δόξει φρόνιμος εἶναι – Wisdom shall be imputed to a fool who asks after wisdom: but someone who keeps himself speechless, will seem to be wise/prudent. Someone who does not ask for wisdom will seem to be wise – but the reality can be different from the appearance.
- Prov 26:12 – εἶδον ἄνδρα δόξαντα παρ’ ἑαυτῷ σοφὸν εἶναι ἐλπίδα μέντοι ἔσχεν μᾶλλον ἄφρων αὐτοῦ – I have seen a man who seemed to himself to be wise; but a fool had more hope than he. This passage shows clearly that the person in question is not wise at all, but only considers himself to be so. The second part of this sentence shows the enormous discrepancy between his own opinion about himself (i.e. that he considers himself wise) and the reality.

The above presented passages from the Wisdom literature of Septuagint show a use of the construction δοκέω + εἶναι, that corresponds to the manner of usage seen in the narrative corpus. It denotes a subjective aspect of the topic in question, a so-called “parallel reality” in which the fool or silly person considers himself wise, and the ways that are considered to be right are leading to perdition.

### III. NARRATIVE TEXTS OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT:

- Lk 22:24 – Ἐγένετο δὲ καὶ φιλονεικία ἐν αὐτοῖς, τὸ τίς αὐτῶν δοκεῖ εἶναι μείζων – among the disciples of Jesus arose a dispute “as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest”. The gospel was written a few decades after the event in question, and the writer knows that the “competition” of Jesus’ disciples concerning their own prestige, according to Jesus’ scale of values, cannot be about true greatness. If so, this passage contains a slight irony into the direction of the disciples, according to the sayings of Jesus preserved in the Gospel of John: “a servant is not greater than his master” (John 15,20). Perhaps they only wanted to seem great or prestigious (that was their human desire), while they were ordered just to be servants of the “coming Kingdom”.

### IV. EPISTLES FROM THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT (EXCEPT GALATIANS):

- Heb 12:11 – πάντα δὲ παιδεία πρὸς μὲν τὸ παρὸν οὐ δοκεῖ χαρᾶς εἶναι ἀλλὰ λύπης, ὕστερον δὲ καρπὸν εἰρηνικὸν τοῖς δι’ αὐτῆς γεγυμνασμένοις ἀποδίδωσιν δικαιοσύνης. – “Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it”. In this case is clear that the circumstance described by the construction δοκέω + εἶναι is different from the reality: for the discipline that at the moment does not seem to be pleasant will bring a great benefit to those who receive it.

- Jam 1:26 – Εἴ τις **δοκεῖ** θρησκὸς **εἶναι** μὴ χαλιναγωγῶν γλῶσσαν αὐτοῦ ἀλλ’ ἀπατῶν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ, τούτου μάταιος ἡ θρησκεία. – “If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless”. Here the construction δοκέω + εἶναι depicts that the religiosity of those who are not controlling their speech, is worthless. They only seem to be religious, but the reality is strongly different.
- 1Cor 3:18 – Μηδεὶς ἑαυτὸν ἐξαπατάτω· εἴ τις **δοκεῖ** σοφὸς **εἶναι** ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, μωρὸς γενέσθω, ἵνα γένηται σοφός. – “Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise”. Everything that seems to be wisdom according to the “world”, turns out to be folly according to the divine scale of values. Therefore, believers should acquire the real wisdom, and not that only seems to be wisdom.
- 1Cor 11:16 – Εἰ δέ τις **δοκεῖ** φιλόνηκος **εἶναι**, ἡμεῖς τοιαύτην συνήθειαν οὐκ ἔχομεν οὐδὲ αἱ ἐκκλησίαι τοῦ θεοῦ. – “But if anyone is disposed to be contentious – we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God”. Here the meaning of the construction δοκέω + εἶναι shows the difference between an inclination to a certain habit (i.e. to be contentious) and the expected reality within the Church of God.
- 1Cor 12:23 – καὶ ἃ **δοκοῦμεν** ἀτιμότερα **εἶναι** τοῦ σώματος τούτοις τιμὴν περισσοτέραν περιτίθεμεν, – “and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour”. Some parts of the body maybe considered less honourable, but their real value is indisputable.
- 1Cor 14:37 – Εἴ τις **δοκεῖ** προφήτης **εἶναι** ἢ πνευματικός, ἐπιγινωσκέτω ἃ γράφω ὑμῖν ὅτι κυρίου ἐστὶν ἐντολή· – “Anyone who claims to be a prophet, or to have spiritual powers, must acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord”. Here the apostle depicts through the construction δοκέω + εἶναι the expected habit of those who (according to their own opinion) consider themselves prophets or spiritual people. Their real status is not relevant from the view of the text, it is only important that they should accept what the apostle commands.
- 2Cor 11,16 – Πάλιν λέγω, μὴ τίς με **δόξη** ἄφρονα **εἶναι**· εἰ δὲ μή γε, κἂν ὡς ἄφρονα δέξασθέ με, ἵνα κἀγὼ μικρόν τι καυχῶμαι. – “I repeat, let no one think that I am a fool; but if you do, then accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little”. The gap between the reality and the very personal opinion of some Corinthians is obvious.

The depiction of a personal opinion or of a status that differs from a certain reality, from these examples is evident, as well.



## V. THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

- Gal 2:6 – Ἐκ τῶν δοκούντων εἶναι τι, – ὅποιοι ποτε ἦσαν οὐδέν μοι διαφέρει· πρόσωπον [ὁ] θεὸς ἀνθρώπου οὐ λαμβάνει – ἐμοὶ γὰρ οἱ δοκοῦντες οὐδὲν προσανέθεντο – “And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) – those leaders contributed nothing to me”. certain people suppose that a couple of other people “are something”, i.e. are leaders, but their leadership is not acknowledged by everyone, or is not important for everyone.
- Gal 2:9 – Ἰάκωβος καὶ Κηφᾶς καὶ Ἰωάννης, οἱ δοκοῦντες στῦλοι εἶναι – “James and Cephas and John, *who seemed to be pillars*”.
- Gal 6:3 – εἰ γὰρ δοκεῖ τις εἶναι τι μηδὲν ὄν, φρεναπατᾶ ἑαυτὸν. – “For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves”. In this case the construction δοκέω + εἶναι expresses explicitly the gap between the personal opinion of certain people (who think that they are something) and the reality (they are nothing).

The biblical examples listed above shows that the construction δοκέω + εἶναι describes things, persons, behaviours, etc. that have an appearance, or that seem to be something or somehow, but the reality whether is something others, or is not sure or is not stressed upon in the context of the description. I would say that this construction presents an opinion, whose content of reality is whether other than suggested by the used words, or is not important from the perspective of the speaker, and suggests a high level of subjectivity.

### THE CONSTRUCTION ΔΟΚΕΩ + ΕΙΝΑΙ IN THE LANDSCAPE OF GAL 2.

In Gal 2 Paul presents a series of events from the life of the earliest Church – including conflicts, as well – from his own perspective, and adapted to his own rhetorical and theological purpose:

- In verses 1–10 there is a report on the Apostolic Council<sup>16</sup> in Jerusalem, parallel to the narrative in Acts 15 or maybe another meeting<sup>17</sup> with the Apostles in Jerusalem;
- In verses 11–14 the so-called incident in Antioch (11–14).

<sup>16</sup> See: Bultmann, Rudolf: *Theology of the New Testament*. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1951. 56.; Meiser, Martin: *Galater*. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2007. 81–97.

<sup>17</sup> See: Silva, David Arthur de: *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation*. IVP Academic, Downers Grove (Illinois) 2018. 429.

In Gal 2 both occurrences of the construction δοκέω + εἶναι appears in the passage that presents the events of the Apostolic Council or of another meeting; and people denoted by the “Ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν δοκούντων εἶναί τι” from Gal 2:6, are the same as the “οἱ δοκούντες στῦλοι εἶναι” from Gal 2:9,<sup>18</sup> i.e. the construction refers in both cases to the leaders of the Church in Jerusalem (in the second case they are specified by name). Further the explicative addition “μηδὲν ὧν” in Gal 6:3 gives us an insight into the semantic field of the construction δοκέω + εἶναι.

Although the text suggests the birth of an agreement between Paul and the other Apostles, the internal conflicts of the Early Church also appear behind the lines. Right after the report on the meeting and agreement with the apostles in Jerusalem, Paul recalls the incident in Antioch, a very sharp conflict between him and at least one of the three “pillars”, because “he thought it exposed the deep differences between himself and the very people who signed off on the Jerusalem agreement, most notably Peter”<sup>19</sup>. In the light of the narrative of the incident in Antioch it is highly possible, that the traces of the conflict between Paul and Peters (and the other “pillars”) also become visible behind the lines of the immediately preceding passage. This is also suggested in the commentary of Silva when the author writes concerning Gal 2:9:

At this point, it is difficult to read 2:9, “those who seemed to be pillars,” in any way other than with at least a hint of irony. Since Paul will very shortly narrate the failure of one of these three men to walk in line with their agreement, at least in Paul’s estimation, it is likely that Paul is expressing some reservation here about people who prove, most obviously in Peter’s case (but also implied in the case of James, given the position taken by the “men from James”), “shaky” pillars at best.<sup>20</sup>

The idea that Paul has used through the structure δοκέω + εἶναι in this verses “something of a note of irony”, appears in Longenecker’s commentary, as well, and the author underlines that the suggestion of irony is strengthened by the use of the verb δοκέω in Phil 3:4, where a nearly similar situation is described.<sup>21</sup> He also argues that Paul uses this irony due to his Judaizer opponents, and he seems to be opposed not to the title στῦλος in its original Christian context, but rather he has been opposing to

<sup>18</sup> Mussner, Franz: *Der Galaterbrief*. Herder, Freiburg – Basel – Wien 2002. 120.

<sup>19</sup> Holladay, Carl R.: *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament. Interpreting the Message and Meaning of Jesus Christ*. Abingdon Press, Nashville 2005. 467.

<sup>20</sup> Silva, David Arthur de: *The Letter to the Galatians*. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids (Michigan) 2018. epub edition (e-ISBN: 978-1-4674-5044-7).

<sup>21</sup> Longenecker, Richard: *Galatians*. (Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 41.). Logos Research Edition, 2002.

inflated adulation of the Jerusalem leaders by his Judaizer opponents and their use of the title, setting both them and it against Paul.<sup>22</sup>

Another possible explanation for Paul's irony towards his fellow-apostles from Jerusalem could be found in Esler's commentary: the fundament of his argument is that the expression "δίδωμι δεξιάν" = give right hands" occurs 11 times in the 1 and 2 Maccabees in a very special context. He mentions that

In almost all of these cases a person who is in a superior position, usually in a military context, gives the right hand to people who are virtually suppliants, who 'take it', as a way of bringing peace to a conflict. [...] This context brings out some surprising dimensions to Gal. 2.9. We should not read this verse as an expression of balance and amity between the parties. Rather, James, Cephas and John condescend to Paul and Barnabas by acting as if they are in a superior position to them in a conflict and are graciously offering a cessation of hostilities. This is the force of 'giving right hands'. Paul and Barnabas clearly took the hands that were proffered to them, but Paul expressly dissents from the superiority implied in the gesture by describing the three Jerusalem leaders, in the same verse, as (only) seeming to be pillars.<sup>23</sup>

I think that based on the inner coherence of Gal 2, and on the general usage of the construction δοκέω + εἶναι in the Bible, and especially in the Pauline corpus, the accommodation to the semantic field mentioned earlier is evident: this construction denotes something that only has the appearance of something, but in fact, it is whether other than the thing suggested by the words or expresses the very subjective perspective of the speaker. If so, the double usage of this construction within the presentation of the same event suggests a very strong conflict between Paul and his fellow-Apostles in Jerusalem. This very strong conflict also echoes in the narrative of the so-called incident at Antioch (Gal 2:11–14), but it has more signs in the Acts of the Apostles, as well, e.g., in Acts 15:36–41, where the conflict between Paul and Barnabas (see the incident in Antioch!) leads to their separation: Barnabas and Mark are travelling to Cyprus, while Paul and Silvanus are going to Syria and Cilicia. The traces of this conflict also appear in the passage where Paul presents the birth of the agreement between him and his fellow-apostles from Jerusalem, because he thinks that their behaviour in Antioch gave the opportunity to some false apostles that appeared in Galatia and compelled Christians to keep Jewish rituals like circumcision. The way in which Paul presents these conflicts is evidently adjusted to his own rhetorical and theological purpose, and also foreshadows the triumphal route of Christianity coming from a Gentile background and the later fading into the background and disappearance of the so-called Jewish-Christianity.

<sup>22</sup> Longenecker, Richard: *Galatians*. (Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 41.). Logos Research Edition, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Esler, Philip F.: *Galatians*. Routledge, London – New York 1998. 133.

## CONCLUSION

There are (at least) two possibilities of interpretation, besides the classical interpretation that Paul in these verses does not use sarcasm or irony, and this structure does not have any negative nuances,<sup>24</sup> which implies that he also recognizes the pillar-role of James, Peter, and John:

- James, Cephas, and John seem to be pillars (=leaders) of the Church, people accept them as such, but in reality – at least according to Paul – they are not.
- James, Cephas, and John seem to be pillars (=leaders) of the Church, people accept them as such, but for Paul it is not important whether they really are leaders or not.

I think, the best solution is to leave open this question, because the text does not offer more clues. What is definitely clear: through the words of Paul by which he characterizes his fellow-apostles, we get an insight into the long-lasting internal conflicts of the Earliest Church – a Church, that in its earthly form/organization is “*Human, All-Too-Human*”<sup>25</sup> and needs Gods renewing grace in every circumstances.

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<sup>24</sup> Matera, Frank J.: *Galatians*. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville (Minnesota) 2007. 77.; Mussner, Franz: *Der Galaterbrief*. Herder, Freiburg – Basel – Wien 2002. 120n107.

<sup>25</sup> I have chosen intentionally the title of Nietzsche’s book: *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches (Human, All-Too-Human)*, due to its expressiveness.

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