

ASSUMPTIONS of this thinksheet: (1) The life-literature-life flow (thinksheet #27), viz. the hermeneutic principle that interpretation is life touching life with literature as bridge; and (2) The Keltoi/ai-Galatians-Galli-(Scotch-)Irish are one people, originally central-Asian Aryan and then, 2 1/2 milleniums ago, exploding in central Europe to become westward the French ("Gauls"), Welsh, Irish, and eastward to become "the Galatians" Paul addresses in this letter (see thinksheet #84). Consequently, (3) we cannot abstract Paul's "message" in Gal. from the letter alone, but must interface the letter with the life addressed by it, and only then, phenomenologically-culturally-existentially, interface that whole with our life and times and way of seeing and living in our world. But (4) some images-ideas-phrases are Sitz-im-Leben-transcending, so that without the historical background one can come boldly to the letter and "get at" its heart; yet this raw "getting at" needs ever the control of assumptions-information-attitudes (1)-(3).

LIFE-LIFE INTERFACE: Is the central problem of our time freedom or control? It depends on whom you're asking. Me, I'd respond "Both!" And that's the situation in Gal., which at its heart is a discourse on the permanent/changing valences of liberty/order "in Christ," i.e. in relation to the Lord within and beyond the Christian community. It's time for Gal. to be "in" again, as it was not for the millenium AD500-1500. Gal. now can be for us a paradigm and allegory and theater for experiencing "in Christ" the current issues of heart and history and hope, and a cure or at least a monitory corrective vis-a-vis the polar ideologies of "liberationism" and "libertinism" and of "liberalism-individualism" and "collectivism."

THE PEOPLE (add. to assumption #2, above): People south of them called them "the Whites" (Gk.gal. metathesized as Lat.lact., "milk-colored" skin)--so, Paul's Letter to the Whites--on etym., Jerome's Comm.Gal.2:425; so Virgil; Jer. source, the Xn Lactantius). Before being gentled down successively by Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Xny, they were (in A.Minor and west. Europe and Brit.Isles) fierce, expansionist, tough, valorous, restless, tumultuous, high-energy, mercurial, inquisitive, insubordinate, freedom-loving, fun-loving, excitable, irascible, strife-prone, ritualistic. Jerome visited them both in west. Europe and in A.Minor, finding only minor modifications in their Gaelic speech in the two loci (which Loree and I heard among rural folk in west. Ireland, the chief remaining pocket of the lang.) --Greeks calling both loci "Galatians," Romans only the central Turkey group [the Turks being an entirely other people, late-come long aftrer NT; but "Anchor City" (Ankara, anc. "Ancyra," main capital of the Galatians East) being Turks' capital--"Angora" wool!]. "Celts" (the ethnog. term for this central-Europe explosion ca. 500BC) prob. do not include the Germans, but this from Luther: "We Germans [who may be "descended from the Galatians"] are not much unlike them in temper." Paul grew up just to the south of these Celts East, and had some of their spirit if not also blood; and in Gal. he scores them for greed-avarice (6.6f), factious pride (5.15,20,21,26; 6.3), drunkenness [Irish!] and revelry (5.21), inconstancy (I.6;3.1-3), ritual-enslaved_m (4.8-10; cf. Druidism in west and Great Mother Cybele in east: human sacrifice + orgies and self-mutilations)...Paul addresses very different folk in Col. (East-facing, gnosis-prone, occult-open, Hindu-Buddhist) and Cor. (degenerate, refined-vicious Greek)...Conversion--prone, change-seeking, fickle.

THE PLACE: Phrygian aborigenes, then Celts (who dominated throughout NT period), then in order Greeks and Romans and Jews and Christians. Excellent agriculture and herding; excellent commercial locus: a self-sufficient territory, like the Celtic spirit. Till Roman pacification, unstable area: war, slavery, famine, disease, radical wealth/poverty gap, and East/West cultural confusion [like now!].

PRESSURES ON PAUL (who writes ca.49-52): puff up/down [quick follow/apostasize], rural superstitions, urban "pluralistic" dilettantism, novelty-hunting, ritualism of both nature (Great Mother, Druidism) and history (Judaizers and Jews), antinomianism, submission/rebellion vis-a-vis authority, paleo-and-neo-legalism.

Gal. THEMES subseq. developed: grace/law (Ro.) and freedom/responsibility (1 & 2 Cor.).