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*SUGGESTIONS ON THE HISTORY AND LETTERS
OF ST. PAUL.*

I. THE DATE OF THE GALATIAN LETTER.

MUCH depends on the answer to the question—which has recently been much discussed—regarding the date when, and the place where, the letter of St. Paul to the Galatians was written. Several able writers have contended that the letter must be assigned to a very early date. One of the first to do so was Professor Valentin Weber of Würzburg in a series of books and papers. Quite a number of English and Scottish writers have taken the same view: they are too many to enumerate, as I should be certain to omit some, and I should regret to leave out the names of any to whose courtesy and historical acumen I am so much indebted. Bibliography is my weakest point. When I attempt to draw up a bibliographical list, I usually find that I have omitted books of which I have been making frequent use. I must, however, mention several private letters from the Rev. J. Ironside Still as suggestive and stimulating.

For my own part I have long been in a state of uncertainty and dissatisfaction, and hoping for the opportunity of reaching a decided opinion. After one has argued in favour of a date and place, it is not easy to contemplate the whole question from a quite unbiassed point of view; and I waited for leisure and a quiet mind, which are conditions not easily attained.

The theory of early origin was maintained, if I recollect rightly, by Calvin. It frequently came up in my mind, but was always set aside. Now it has established itself in the form that the letter was written at the time meant in Acts xv. 1 f., and was an early step in the controversy there

described. Emissaries from Palestine, acting with a general commission from James, though not with instructions on this special matter (which, as we shall see, had never yet been brought up as one pressing for definite decision) had come to Antioch, and some also into the Galatian churches. In the latter, which were quite newly formed (Gal. i. 5),¹ and in which there was at the moment no authoritative and experienced teacher, these emissaries, being of old standing in the Church, exercised (as was natural) very great influence. They were able to quote words or acts of Paul as implying that he agreed with them: Paul himself, as they declared, was a "preacher of circumcision."

The acts or words are admitted by Paul.² He disputes only the interpretation placed upon them: for the sake of peace and harmony he was willing to make great concessions, but these were only concessions to Jewish weakness and must not be regarded as doctrinal and obligatory.

The Galatians, of course, knew that Paul had never ordered them to accept circumcision; but the emissaries evidently maintained that this rite was the completion of their Christian profession: they had begun well, and now the perfect stage of full communion with the original Church awaited them. If (as seems to me probable) the emissaries quoted on their side a case of fullest concession by Paul, this would be an extraordinarily effective argument. However that may be, it lies in the nature of the case that the familiar idea of a progressive instruction, i.e. of stages in knowledge, was employed. Paul himself had used words of this kind,³ which quite naturally and reasonably sug-

¹ The words here used, coming in the forefront of the letters, as the first after the address, must be meant quite emphatically.

² Gal. v. 11, i. 8-10.

³ First Corinthians ii. 6, iii. 1 f., ii. 15, if read in this order, imply the idea of steps in knowledge, and of teaching withheld from beginners as not intelligible to them, but communicated to advanced Christians.

gested the idea of stages in action. Beginners heard less, and learned less, and were called upon to do less, than Christians of experience, who were more fully endowed with the Spirit of God.

Without this conception of stages in knowledge the action of the Galatians, and the Epistle to the Galatians, cannot be understood, as is maintained in my *Historical Commentary*, § xxvii. p. 324. The Galatians thought that they were progressing to a more perfect stage of spiritual knowledge. Paul points out to them that really they are changing to a different form of Gospel, fleshly and not spiritual; but he acknowledges that they think they are progressing: "After beginning through the Spirit, are you now perfecting yourselves through the flesh?"¹

Even the Apostolic Decree, while it is in word so remarkably complimentary to Paul and Barnabas, yet lends itself without difficulty to a similar interpretation. The concessions regarding meat, etc., are laid down as obligatory, but are called "burdens": it is an easy thing to go on, and to say that burdens are proportioned to the strength of the bearer, and that more perfect Christians can (and should) bear more than the minimum imposed as necessary on weaklings and beginners. This conception of degrees lies at the basis of the whole Galatian trouble. Paul had to remove it by convincing the Galatians that they were moving diametrically contrary to the spirit of his teaching.

It has been argued that the question might have become acute in Antioch long before the Council. That, however, did not take place. So Luke and Paul both say. In Antioch Jewish and Gentile Christians had for years been dwelling side by side, and the conditions of amity must have been settled by agreement, either tacit or formal: the general body of Jewish Christians in Antioch were in full fellow-

¹ Galatians iii. 3.

ship publicly and privately with the Gentiles of the Church. They all ate together and lived together harmoniously. Luke and Paul are in full agreement on this point (Gal. ii. 11 f., Acts xv. 1 f.). Discord arose only when the Christian Jews from Palestine, who were far more strict and narrow than those of Antioch and of the Diaspora in general, found themselves confronted with the question, whether they were to sit and eat with the uncircumcised.

Peter answered the question in the affirmative, Gal. ii. 11, just as previously he ate with Cornelius and other Gentiles, Acts xi. 3. But apparently he did so impulsively and naturally: he looked only to the fact that these also were Christians, that all nations were admitted to the Church (Acts x. 34), that Cornelius and his friends and the Antiochian Church in general had received the Spirit; and he acted on impulse accordingly.

Afterwards, when the protest of the Jewish Christians from Jerusalem made him realise all that was involved in his action, he withdrew from full communion with the uncircumcised Gentiles in Antioch. In Acts xi. 5-17 it is noteworthy that he does not reply to this part of the charge against him. He speaks in general terms: he had Cornelius and his friends baptized,¹ and vaguely he adds, "Who was I that I could withstand God?" That he ate with them, he does not expressly acknowledge, and he does not deny.

The charge in this respect, however, was allowed to drop: it was not urgent, and it was not pressed.

Until the emissaries from Judaea came to Antioch, therefore, there had been no trouble regarding intercourse among the converts Jews and Greek. Such a case as that of Titus in Galatians ii. 3 f. could not have arisen at an earlier date.

¹ It is noteworthy that he did not baptize them himself, x. 48: he had with him one or more ministers for such work. Compare the rareness of Paul's personal action in baptizing at Corinth.

Nor can the case be placed during the controversy after the emissaries arrived in Antioch, for the controversy was a universal one and not about the treatment of an individual. Moreover the circumstances in which the case of Titus came up are of quite different character from what existed in Antioch. The emissaries found there a general rule of common life and intercourse, public and manifest; but the case of Titus was brought forward by some persons, called in strong terms "sham-brethren," who spied secretly and found that Titus was eating along with certain Jews. In Antioch this could be seen every day by all men. Hence I cannot entertain the suggestion (which has been made by some) that the case of Titus occurred at Antioch.

There seems therefore to be no doubt that the case of Titus must be placed at Jerusalem. Nothing in it suits Antioch. Everything in it points to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem there were doubtless many Jews that, without being fully Christian, were in a certain degree sympathetic with the new Faith. These might be called "pseudo-Christians"; and some of these, looking askance at Titus as a Greek, and watching carefully though in a covert way the private life of the Antiochian delegates, observed that he ate with the Jewish colleagues. This is just what would naturally occur in Jerusalem; and doubtless this took place within the first day or two of their arrival. At once there was an explosion similar to that in Acts xi. 2 f., but ending as quickly as in that case, through the prudence and sympathetic action of Titus (as we shall see).

Some of the writers who argue in favour of an early date for *Galatians* seem to lay most stress on the difficulties which accompany the theory (as yet the dominant and generally accepted theory—but after all only a theory) of a late date for the Epistle. Personally I attach great weight in all such problems to positive arguments of one

particular class: which date makes the Epistle most illuminative of Christian history and of Paul's mind and character? As to difficulties, it is often the case that the solution of a seeming difficulty opens the gateway of advance in knowledge; and I do not feel any serious dread of difficulties as such, even although my ignorance may at the moment prove unable to dispose of them. The only real difficulty is the impossibility; and it is not always easy to distinguish between what is only difficult and what is impossible.

Approaching the question on a different line, I am glad to feel that I have reached the same conclusion as Professor V. Weber and the rest, even though it has involved abandoning my former view. I find, however, that the change of view is not so great as might appear. The place of origin remains the same, and this involves the important question who it was that joined with Paul in issuing the letter. Who were the persons that added to Paul their authority in making the weighty decision pronounced in this letter? As it has been already maintained in my *Historical Commentary*, § ii. p. 238 ff., Syrian Antioch, and no other Church but Antioch, could be in the position to join with Paul in authorising this letter.

With the earlier date, there can be no possible place of origin except Antioch (or the road thence to Jerusalem).¹

As has been stated in that book, there was the most complete difference between the class of persons who might be mentioned in the end of a letter as joining in sending salutation to Paul's correspondents, and the class of persons who could be admitted as joint-authorities in issuing the letter. Paul took no humble view of his own relation to

¹ The latter view, which is that of Professor Lake, arises apparently through the idea that "all those who are with me" implies travelling companions. It puts *Gal.* some weeks later.

his correspondents. He composed his letter as one having authority, like an Emperor using a rescript; and few could be associated in composing the rescript.

Generally his authority was Divine inspiration and knowledge of the mind of Jesus; but even where he "has no commandment of the Lord," and gives his own personal opinion (as in First Corinthians vii. 25), he still regards his judgment as carrying weight to his own spiritual children. He did not admit as joint authors of his letters any except persons who occupied a position of authority in respect of the correspondents addressed in the special letter.¹ Timothy, for example, could co-operate in the first letter to Corinth or in that to Colossæ; but not in the circular letter to the Asian Churches which was written at the same time. He had authority in Corinth and in Colossæ,² but not in the Asian cities generally. The person who is associated as an authority was present with him, and approved the doctrine and judgment delivered in the letter.

Antioch was the one church which could and did possess special authority in respect of the Galatian congregations.³ Antioch had sent forth Paul to them, and had received him back to give an account of all that had occurred to him in that mission, and of the new step that he had taken in the course of it, Acts xiv. 27.

If, however, that was so, why did not Paul mention the name of the Church which lent its authority to his letter? Why did he veil it under the vague phrase "all the brethren who are with me"? This question did not occur to me formerly. Now I would suggest that the

¹ The proof of this has been given in detail already, see *Histor. Comm. Gal.* § II.

² On Colossæ, *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 274.

³ Even Jerusalem could not well be considered. It would indeed have the authority suitable in general for any young Church, but not in this peculiar case where its authority is treated rather slightly.

Church in Antioch was not itself unanimous ; and that Paul could only claim the authority of " all those who are with me."

Though there can be no doubt that the overwhelming majority of opinion in the Antiochian Church was with Paul, yet there can also be no doubt that the emissaries who came from Jerusalem had their supporters. Paul, in Gal. ii. 12, tells the story : the Christian Jews in the Church of Antioch, including even Barnabas, pretended in deference to the emissaries to maintain no social intercourse with the uncircumcised Christians. Hence Paul claims to speak with the authority only of " all those who are with me," and not of the Church as a whole. He will not claim support from any man that is not in full agreement.

What light does the early date throw on the difficult sentence in Galatians ii. 3 f. ? " Not even Titus who was with me, who was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised : but by reason of the pretended brethren——." The sentence was never completed. Paul breaks off, being carried away by the tide of his thought ; and he never resumes the interrupted thought—perhaps avoiding, in the hurry and rush of his ideas, the repetition of a matter, which was doubtless known in a general way to the Galatians. Paul completes their knowledge by adding some less known details ; but does not repeat the public and familiar facts.

Perhaps the right clue is furnished by Acts xvi. 3 : " because of the Jews that were in those parts." In *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 158 f., the close parallelism between Acts xv. 1 f. and Gal. ii. 12 f. is pointed out, and the parallelism is used to date the incident described in those two passages. That date now stands fast on the earlier dating of the letter ; but the parallelism with the language of the Acts extends further. There is a certain analogy between the case of Titus in Galatians ii. 3 f. and of Timothy in Acts xv. 3.

Each was an uncircumcised Hellene ; and each had to be treated in some way " because of the Jews in those parts." *διὰ τοὺς Ἰουδαίους* is exactly parallel to *διὰ τοὺς ψευδαδέλφους*. Two possibilities seem to be open as regards the case of Titus.

(1) Not even Titus was *compelled* to be circumcised, but because of the sham brothers who came about to spy upon our actions—he voluntarily accepted the rite, though we (viz. Barnabas and I) did not for a moment yield by deferring to their demands and requiring him to comply : his conduct was purely voluntary, and arose through his desire to avoid anything that might wound their feelings and produce enmity or strife. In that case Titus, by his unselfish devotion, served as a model for the case of Timothy ; and Paul, by accepting his devotion, might be said by enemies to have become a preacher of circumcision. That this was actually said in Galatia by his enemies is fully admitted by himself (Gal. v. 11 ; compare i. 8–10) ; and it is of course clear that their account was founded on some acts or words of Paul's, even though the acts or words were, according to him, misrepresented.

This theory has some advantages. It well explains the words of v. 11, and i. 8–10, (which otherwise constitute rather a difficulty as we shall see below, when the early date of Galatians is accepted).¹ It puts Paul's conduct on a uniform plane throughout ; he acted towards Timothy as he had consented to Titus's voluntary action some years before : he was always willing to go a very long way practically in concession to Jewish prejudices and customs. It has one very great advantage in respect of v. 2 f. : " I,

¹ When the later date of *Gal.* is accepted, these passages are naturally understood as a reference to the case of Timothy ; and to my mind that has always constituted the strongest argument in support of the later dating.

Paul, say unto you that, if ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing. Yea, I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole Law. Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the Law; ye are fallen away from grace." This passage would be an ugly one, if it were taken *au pied de la lettre*; but, as it was written to correspondents into whose ears the case of Titus, as now interpreted by the theory we are considering, had been dinned by the insistence of Paul's emissaries, there was no danger of their taking it in the extremest sense, and no question of Paul's intending it in that sense. They would know at once that Paul was not condemning Titus, whose conduct he has just been explaining and justifying. They would catch Paul's real meaning, that if you get yourselves circumcised as a rite necessary for salvation and incumbent on every Christian, who desires to be in the fullest sense a Christian, then you are asking that the Law, not Christ, should be your means of justification; but if you accept the rite as a concession to the feeling of others, this is an act of love and sympathy.

The objection to this way of supplying the suppressed thought is that it requires such strong emphasis to be laid on the verb "was compelled." It has, however, been maintained by a number of exegetes, and must be admitted, that this strong emphasis is quite possible grammatically, and not inconsistent with the force of the Greek language.

Considerable difficulty was experienced from early time with this passage and with the facts of the case. *Oùdê* in Galatians ii. 5 is omitted in the Western text and by many Fathers, though the difference on this matter does not determine or depend upon their opinion whether Titus was actually circumcised (as a good many careful authorities have maintained).

(2) Not even Titus was forced to be circumcised; but

because of the sham-brethren—he retired from Jerusalem, in order to avoid outraging their scruples, and to facilitate the success of our mission—though we personally did not for a moment yield to their demand that Titus should be circumcised. The advantage of this interpretation is that it explains the statement of Acts xi. 30, xii. 25, in which Titus is not mentioned as a delegate ; and thus it produces perfect harmony between the two accounts of this second visit. It has perhaps no other advantages ; and it makes the verb “ was compelled ” rather feeble : one asks why, on that interpretation, Paul did not say *περιετμήθη* in place of *ἠναγκάσθη περιτμηθῆναι*.

On this interpretation we cannot determine, except by pure conjecture, what parts of Paul’s teaching and conduct it was that had been construed by his opponents as implying the concession and admission that Gentiles should be circumcised ; no word or act previous to the case of Timothy is recorded on the part of Paul, from which the teaching of circumcision by Paul could by any twisting be elicited. But, of course, conciliatory teaching in general on Paul’s part, may be assumed as having always been his way.

Further, the strong words of Galatians v. 2–4 would be more liable to be interpreted by Galatian readers in the extreme and most literal way. There would not remain any case (known to us) in which Paul had in practice demonstrated his opinion that a converted pagan might voluntarily and justifiably, in courteous and sympathetic consideration for Jewish custom and feelings, accept the rite as a concession to them.

We should have to explain both v. 2–4 and v. 11, i. 8–10 by the same supposition, that in his early Galatian teaching Paul had laid great stress on the duty of making concession to Jewish feeling—which is of course quite probable in itself, though not actually recorded—and had said that for

this purpose any might accept the Jewish rite. In the latter part of the supposition, however, there is the difficulty that it carries back the beginning of the question and the controversy to an earlier time. Luke certainly conveys the impression that the question first emerged when the emissaries from Jerusalem came to Antioch, Acts xv. 1.

(3) It cannot be admitted that there is any third alternative. Either Titus retired from Jerusalem and relieved the delegation of the difficulty caused by his presence, and thus the question was shelved for the time ; or Titus submitted voluntarily in deference to Jewish prejudices. It cannot for a moment be regarded as possible either that the strait-laced Jews of Jerusalem submitted quietly to the continued presence of the unclean Gentile among them, or that Paul and Barnabas consented to dissimulate their relations with Titus and their feelings towards him. If Titus stayed on in Jerusalem uncircumcised, the whole question must have been raised. "They of the circumcision" could not possibly have tolerated the daily presence among them of an uncircumcised Hellene in intimate intercourse with Jews.

If Titus retired from the city, the question might have been quietly postponed, since neither side cared to force it to the front, and both probably thought that time might bring about a solution. The question had threatened to emerge, in the case of Cornelius ; but as Cornelius was far away, it did not become active, and was left undecided (Acts xi. 1 ff.). Not until some of the strictest class of Jewish Christians, "they of the circumcision," found themselves daily confronted by this question in Acts xv. 1, Gal. ii. 11, did a final and authoritative decision become necessary. So Luke clearly intimates, and nothing that Paul says is discrepant.

It is not easy to choose between the two open alternatives. The arguments which occur to me are now stated ; and

they tend to favour the former alternative, that Titus accepted the rite. This seems to make history more harmonious ; and it explains well the text of Galatians ii. 5 and the remarkable variation there.

The reading of οὐδέ in Galatians ii. 5 is preferable in history as well as in authority and in sense. The omission of the negative is an early error, which disappeared again comparatively early. It arose in the time when the memory still survived that Titus had submitted to be circumcised ; and the apparent contradiction—not really a contradiction—was solved by eliminating the negative word.

Considering what immense importance in this controversy attached to the willingness of Gentiles to make concessions to Jewish feelings, one is surprised to find that in the Apostolic Decree, which decided the question, there is, according to the generally accepted Text, no recognition of what after all was the most powerful force and motive to action in this problem. The Decree is almost harshly anti-Hebrew in this Text. It has not a word except condemnation of the old-fashioned Hebrews. It makes little, if any, allowance for their point of view. The concessions which it commands as necessary are very slight ; and they are called burdens, not concessions. Since that is so, one fails to understand why the Decree does not say anything about the point which to Paul always seemed the most important in this question—the duty of sympathy and wider concession.

In the Western Text, on the other hand, the supreme duty not to do to another what you would not wish to be done to yourself is emphasised. This, beyond all doubt, is a strong point in that Text : it relieves us of a most serious difficulty in the Decree. Those who reject the Western Text as wholly wrong must take refuge in the accompanying verbal message, which is expressly referred to in the Decree,

and which (as may fairly be urged) must be regarded as needed to complete the Decree. Judas and Silas were to convey the Decree, and to complete and explain its terms. They were to show the power and the need of love and brotherly feeling and mutual concession in the give-and-take of ordinary life. Hence Paul, when treating this subject in 1 Corinthians x., and in Romans xii., lays almost the whole stress on love and concession. He was completing the Decree, as the Council had expected that the messengers should complete it. He does not quote the Decree, because it was so completely in his favour: he assumes it as familiar: it is in the minds of all his correspondents like the Ten Commandments: its meaning is what his readers are seeking for, and this he expounds.

Therefore, Paul never quotes the Decree to Corinthians and Romans: he only adds to it the savour and the grace of love. In the letter to the Galatians, on the contrary, he does not add love to it: he rather intensifies the sternness and the bareness of its rebuke to the extremists on the Jewish side.

This is why, on mature consideration, I find myself forced to put the letter before the Decree. The letter was written in the stress of conflict. It states the Pauline side in the strongest form. Though it mentions¹ the duty of love, and condemns quarrels and strife, yet it does not apply love to this question of conduct, and it is open to the criticism of suggesting that the cause of quarrel and strife lay always on the side opposed to his view. It was not written after the victory was gained, and the Decree issued, which requires as a duty that those who carry and comment on it should add what Judas and Silas were commissioned to add orally to the letter.

When the Galatian letter is placed early, the result is

¹ See Galatians v.

that the stages in early Christian development are more clearly marked in history, and the conduct of Paul is always seen clearly to be actuated by the same spirit; he is from first to last full of sympathy and ready to make concession in his attitude to the Jews, so far as practical conduct is concerned, but from first to last he is resolute and uncompromising in his teaching of principles. In this he never hesitated: it is always wrong to make any external act or any bodily mutilation a condition of entry into the fullest rights of the Christian Church. Salvation is a spiritual fact, in the spirit and through the spirit. To abandon that essential principle is to be severed from Christ, and to be fallen away from grace. In practical conduct, however, one should be ready to go very far in self-denial, and even to submit to privation and suffering, in the way of accommodating one's deserved liberty to the scruples and prejudices of a weaker brother.

From this point of view the accepted form of the text of the Apostolic Decree is found to be justified. The Western reading would be an early error, arising so early that it reaches back to the time when the real facts were still in the memory of the Church and the text was accommodated to them. As in Galatians ii. 5, so it is in Acts xv. 29.

I can quite imagine that many, when the case is clearly before them, will refuse to believe that the Apostles' Decree could wholly omit a reference to the duty of being conciliatory, and could leave this to be added orally by messengers. I am not quite sure that I can finally accept this idea myself. All such must be driven to prefer the Western Text of the Decree, not necessarily as exact, but as proving that there has occurred dislocation and mutilation of the original form.

However this may ultimately be determined, the Decree is not a good specimen of legislation for the Universal

Church. The Council had not attained to easy mastery of its own powers. The mere fact that the Decree is not subsequently quoted in the early history shows that it was not found in practice to be sufficient. The congregations could not neglect the duty of being conciliatory to Jewish feelings, yet this duty is either omitted or put in a very vague way, according to the text which is selected as nearest the true form. I imagine that the Corinthians, when they consulted Paul and were answered in his First Epistle, referred to the Decree, and that Paul was expounding what he conceived to be the spirit which actuated the Apostles in framing it.

It seems, then, clear that, during the visit to Jerusalem described in ii. 1-10, the question of the circumcision of Gentile converts did not reach an acute form, and was not discussed publicly.

Nor was the question discussed in the private meeting of Paul and Barnabas with the three leading Apostles, ii. 2. The latter heard the two future missionaries describe their action and attitude in Syrian Antioch. Perhaps this private conversation took place on the eve of Paul's departure, after he had received the command described in Acts xxii. 17-21, and the future mission plans were also indicated. The three fully approved of the division of work: Paul and Barnabas were commissioned to the Gentiles, and they themselves to the circumcision. But in this there is nothing to suggest that the conditions of future intercourse between Christian Jews and converted Gentiles were considered.

Every difficulty was met when it emerged in the early history of the Church. It was met always ¹ in the same way by reliance on the guidance of the Spirit. The Apostles did not go out to meet future difficulties and to discuss ways

¹ *Pictures of the Apostolic Church*, § xiii.

of solving questions that had not yet presented themselves in practice.

Personally, I find myself strongly influenced by the argument which Mr. Still puts in a private letter, and which I restate in my own fashion, as well as I can. The Galatian letter in i. 16 f., ii. 6-9, seems a little ungracious in tone towards the older Apostles, and hardly justifiable as a complete statement of fact, if Paul was carrying with him the Decree in which they speak so cordially and generously of him, and in which they decide a difficult case on his appeal to them.

Could he so emphatically assert his complete independence of them? Could he say, as if this were complete and final, without adding later some qualification and restriction, "I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were Apostles before me," if he had actually gone up to Jerusalem, and had referred to their decision a controversy that had arisen in Antioch? Those words would be correct for the moment referred to, but they had at that later date ceased to be a sufficient statement of the case, and it was urgently necessary that the modification needed after the meeting of the Council should be mentioned. Contrast the tone of Gal. ii. 6 with the words of the Apostles about Paul, Acts. xv. 25 f.

Paul's later statement of his relation to the older Apostles is very strong, but yet it is qualified: 2 Corinthians xi. 5, xii. 11, "I reckon that I am not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles, though I am nothing"; 1 Corinthians xv. 9, "I am the least of the Apostles."

If the Galatian letter is early, this would confirm the confidence expressed in the EXPOSITOR, 1911, II. p. 493, that Paul had thought out his Gospel completely before he went to the Gentiles, and that there is no development in his religious thought from letter to letter. There is

indeed development in his missionary methods. He learned much in that respect through experience. There is also some development in his way of presenting his Gospel to his audience. But, on the whole, the difference between his letters is mainly due to the varying character and needs of his correspondents. In writing to the Thessalonians he was addressing an audience of pagan hearers, from whom he had been torn after a very few weeks of preaching, and who were in their infancy as converts. Their needs and their difficulties were quite different from those of a community where Paul had taught for months or years, and where he had instituted a body of officials charged with oversight of the congregation.

The Galatian letter is the earliest, yet it is perfectly mature in its teaching, and it naturally goes with the Roman and Corinthian letters. Paul had been a long time in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra ¹ (we know little about Derbe, which was less important in Pauline time and throughout Christian history): he returned to those cities and spent some time there, organising them, appointing presbyters and (as we may say with confidence) giving some training to these officials in their congregational duties.

On these two visits he had formed bodies of not merely enthusiastic, but also in some degree matured, converts; and it was to such people that his letter was addressed. Their very error was a sign of thought and of anxious painstaking search for truth, though they had not understood Paul's religious position. It is, however, quite clear that some word or act of Paul's had been misconstrued, and Paul's explanations and recurrence to the topic show that the misunderstanding was easy and not unnatural.

¹ I adhere to the views expressed about times and seasons in my first books on the subject: the first journey lasted from spring 47 A.D. to autumn 49. Mr. Turner would cut the time much shorter.

Those Galatian converts still needed much further training ; but the training was that which was suited for a more mature class than the Thessalonians ; and this training was conveyed to them both in the letter and in two subsequent visits (Acts xvi. 1-6, xviii. 23).

The desire to avoid pressing the South Galatian theory too far long influenced me, and made me shrink from disturbing the general consensus that *Galatians* should go with *Romans* and *Corinthians*. I could not trust myself completely in this matter. I feel, however, that the early date brings out better the conduct of Paul as eagerly seeking after unity from first to last. Only in the very beginning of the controversy, when he was contending as it appeared for the very existence of a Gentile Church, he seems in some small touches to claim too complete independence. But quickly he recognised that such complete independence was inconsistent with the unity of the Church, and he accepted (probably, as I think, he suggested) the reference of the controversy to the senior Apostles and the whole governing body in Jerusalem for an authoritative decision. This was a sacrifice of complete independence, and is therefore subsequent to the Galatian letter, which claims absolute independence.

W. M. RAMSAY.