

*THE GALATIANS OF ST. PAUL AND THE DATE
OF THE EPISTLE.*

THE position of the Galatian churches has long been debated by church historians ; but our increasing knowledge of Asia Minor has revived public interest amongst us in this question. When the late Bishop Lightfoot published his edition of the Epistle to the Galatians thirty-nine years ago, the interior was well nigh a sealed book even to the learned. Now that the light of history and geography has penetrated its recesses, it is time to review his conclusion by the aid of this additional light. It is well known that he located those churches in the three chief cities of the Galatian tribes, Pessinus Ancyra and Tavium in north Galatia ; that the late M. Renan identified the Galatia of St. Paul, on the contrary, with the Roman province of that name which stretched across Phrygia Lycaonia and Pisidia as far south as Mount Taurus, and located the churches in the Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe ; and that the Bishop, on publishing his edition of the Epistle to the Colossians eighteen years ago, deliberately reaffirmed his original theory (*Col.*, p. 24 note). Most English students then with good reason accepted the authority of our great church historian as decisive. But if an enlarged knowledge of the facts bids us change our opinion and distrust his verdict, it is no true loyalty to the memory of so fearless and open-minded a seeker after truth to shut our eyes to the growing light, and hold fast by ancient authority.

The journeys of St. Paul across Asia Minor have been carefully traced by Professor Ramsay, the language of the Acts has been much discussed ; but neither the history of Galatia during the century before and after the Christian era, nor the language of St. Paul has yet been sufficiently taken into account. At the outset of any enquiry into the

meaning of the word Galatia stands the material fact that this had been, for twenty-five years or more before St. Paul wrote his epistle, the name of an important Roman province. This *prima facie* evidence of its meaning in the New Testament cannot be disposed of by designating it as a mere official title. For there was nothing unreal or ineffective in the provincial organisation of the Roman Empire. Each province under that centralised despotism formed an administrative unit much more distinct than was ever the case with an English county; the provincial capital was usually the centre of social, judicial, financial, and political life within the area. Nor was the division of Greece or Asia into provinces a mere arbitrary arrangement, like that of squares upon a map. It was firmly based on the history of the past, following the lines of national cleavage, physical geography, and commercial intercourse; the chains of internal communication were formed by urban communities which retained their old municipal privileges, or by new municipalities developed in accordance with the pattern created under the old Hellenic civilization. No one can doubt the real hold which Roman organisation had gained upon the people, who observes the extent to which the Church adopted and embraced it in its own structure. In the particular instance of Galatia we find the Roman province taking the place of a former Galatian kingdom at the death of king Amyntas in 25 B.C. Its headquarters continued still in north Galatia as they had been under the native princes; its boundaries remained practically the same, reaching southwards to the chain of Mount Taurus; there was probably no change in the local authorities, but a Roman governor silently occupied at Ancyra the palace of the Galatian kings. The southern half, which consisted of fragments from ancient states which had long ceased to exist except as geographical or ethnical terms, Lycaonia, Isauria, Phrygia, Pisidia, rose to importance under the early Cæsars

on account of the main road which traversed it and connected Syria and the East with Greece and Italy, and it was in consequence studded with Roman colonies and intersected by military roads; but it had gained a unity and name of its own before it was included in the Roman province, as part of a Galatian kingdom.

Nor can I discover in the national history any sufficient warrant for the limitation of the name to north Galatia or for drawing an arbitrary line of separation between the two halves of the province. It is quite true that the three principal clans which formed the ancient federation were grouped round the three centres, Pessinus Ancyra and Tavium, and that the nucleus of Galatian power lay in the north, but little is known of its southern limits; and their history does not justify any precise restriction of these. They were never a settled people dwelling peacefully within their own boundaries, but an adventurous race of warriors subsisting by the profits of war and conquest. For ninety years they levied contributions and rendered military service throughout every part of Asia Minor. In 189 B.C. Roman intervention forced them to respect the peace of the Roman province of Asia, and for the next hundred years they disappeared from general history. But they retained their warlike habits, and maintained a virtual independence on the borderland between the Roman province and the eastern kings; until in 88 B.C. they emerge from obscurity as the most energetic and successful allies of Rome in her Mithradatic wars. Throughout the previous hundred years they were a dominant race in north Galatia ruling over a subject Phrygian population, whose religion they had adopted in early times; and though southern Phrygia was not yet formally subject to their rule, it may be presumed that enterprising Galatian chieftains did not in those days scrupulously respect the liberty of the kindred Phrygian race in the south; for even the last Galatian king, Amyntas,

rose to wealth and power in the extreme south of the province in Lycaonia, and mastered Isaura before he succeeded to the Galatian sovereignty. The establishment of a powerful Galatian kingdom and the union of all the Galatian tribes under a single sovereign was the immediate result of the Mithradatic wars; and the formal extension of their dominion to southern Phrygia can hardly be put at a much later date.

History then leads me to the conclusion that the Galatians had gradually established themselves as a dominant race in southern Galatia long before it passed under Roman rule, and had already stamped their name upon the country. There as elsewhere the Romans accepted and confirmed a name which had already become current among the people. If so, the churches of Antioch and Iconium, Derbe and Lystra, were properly designated as churches of Galatia, and it was perfectly natural that St. Paul should address them as Galatians. It was their only common name—a name which the citizens of Roman colonies like Antioch and Lystra, and of favoured cities like Iconium and Derbe on which the Emperor Claudius bestowed the names of Claudiconium and Claudioderbe, might alike be proud to accept; for the Galatians had long been local masters of the country and fast allies of Rome.

It is true that the old local names survived also; for the province was large, and comprised divisions of considerable size, Lycaonia, Pisidia, Isauria in the south, Paphlagonian and Pontic districts in the north. It cannot therefore surprise the reader of the Acts to find Derbe and Lystra designated as cities of Lycaonia, and Antioch as Pisidian, though their citizens may be addressed collectively as Galatians. Such language presents an exact parallel to a description of Manchester as in Lancashire and Sheffield in Yorkshire, while their citizens are known as Englishmen.

That St. Paul did mean to include the four southern

churches under the designation *churches of Galatia* is strongly suggested by his language in all the epistles of that period. For he names but four groups of churches, and designates all alike by the names of Roman provinces—Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia.¹ It seems unreasonable to deny to Galatia the interpretation which is admitted without question in the three other cases. Nor was this coincidence of name a mere accident; it resulted directly from the deliberate policy which he adopted in the propagation of the Gospel. He followed the main lines of internal communication, and created church centres in the great cities; and was thus led to found his system of church expansion on the same principles on which the Romans founded their system of provincial administration.²

The connexion of the churches of Galatia with the Pauline fund for the benefit of the saints at Jerusalem furnishes a further argument for the comprehension of the four southern churches under that name. When the apostle first conceived that scheme at Ephesus, the two groups to which he addressed himself were those of Galatia and Achaia (1 Cor. xvi. 1). Subsequently the churches of Macedonia and Asia joined in the contribution, and it is certain that the apostle laid great stress on the union of his churches for this object, and risked his life in order to present the united deputation in person at Jerusalem. Now, if by Galatia be understood the province, the list contains an exhaustive description of the Pauline churches; if, on the contrary, it be understood as limited to its northern portion, all traces disappear of any invitation addressed to the four southern churches on the subject. They were the oldest and best established of all, they were comparatively close to St. Paul at Ephesus, one of their

¹ In 1 Pet. i. 1 Galatia is similarly classed with the other provinces of Asia Minor north of Mount Taurus.

² This subject is more fully treated in THE EXPOSITOR of last November.

members was his devoted minister at the time ; yet we are asked to believe that they were studiously ignored, while the remote and little known churches of north Galatia were associated with those of Greece and Asia. I cannot conceive such a view to be correct ; and the list of deputies given in Acts xx. 4 confirms my belief that 1 Corinthians xvi. 1 does refer to them ; for besides Timothy of Lystra, it includes Gaius of Derbe, who is not otherwise known as an associate of St. Paul, while it specifies no deputies from north Galatia.

The Epistle itself contains little precise information about its recipients. It has been noted that their impetuous and fickle disposition corresponds to the Celtic temperament, but this seems equally true of the Phrygian races, who were so closely blended with the Celtic in these parts ; and certainly the people of Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra presented a notable exhibition of these qualities in their treatment of St. Paul. More distinct and material to the present issue is the evidence that these Galatian converts were disciples of the synagogue, deeply imbued with its spirit, and familiar with the Old Testament in its Greek version. Such a body existed undoubtedly along the high road from Syria to the West, where Jews and Greeks mingled freely in the pursuits of commerce, and were drawn by constant contact of mind with mind into a considerable amount of religious sympathy ; but it is extremely doubtful whether the Celtic population of northern Galatia, who lived at this time remote from any great stream of traffic and retained their own language, were really accessible to Greek teaching or interested in the Jewish scriptures.

The references to Barnabas have been set aside as unimportant because he is twice mentioned in other epistles of St. Paul. But the reference in this Epistle to his cooperation in the Jerusalem mission as a well known fact, and the stress laid on his subsequent defection from the cause, imply

distinctly some personal knowledge of the man and of his position ; whereas the north Galatians were utter strangers to Barnabas, and were not even converted till after he had completed his mission, and definitely relinquished any share in the evangelisation of Asia Minor.

The date of the Epistle remains to be considered. It is well known that Lightfoot determined this almost exclusively by consideration of its style and character. He presented in striking language its close resemblance to the second Epistle to the Corinthians and to the Epistle to the Romans, especially to the latter, and argued from it confidently that it was written between these two in the autumn of 57. But it is one thing to note in two letters familiar workings of the same mind, and another to identify their dates on the ground of that resemblance. The force of such a presumption depends largely on circumstances ; a man may well repeat the same thoughts and the same expressions at considerable intervals, if the intervening tenor of his life and his environment continue constant. And the tenor of St. Paul's life after his conversion had been in one respect singularly uniform. He was engaged for many years in a prolonged controversy with Judaism, wherever he went. The doctrines of faith and works, of law and grace, which fill so large a space in the two Epistles to the Galatians and Romans, had been stamped on his mind once for all by a sudden revulsion against his rigid Pharisaic training ; they are asserted in his first recorded address (Acts xiii. 38, 39) in the same language as in these epistles. As a matter of fact, however, the controversy with Judaism had almost died out in the Pauline churches before 57 by the progress of events, as appears from the two Epistles to the Corinthians. His decisive breach with the synagogue, first at Corinth, then at Ephesus, reveals the growing strength of the Gentile element, which it did so much to foster ; and in 57 the apostle was directing his

energies towards a closer union of his own churches with those of Judæa. The Epistle to the Romans reflects the temper of that time in its pathetic yearning for the reconciliation of God's ancient people to Christ; but this sentiment finds no echo in the Epistle to the Galatians, which breathes the vehemence of earlier conflicts, just as its comparative immaturity of thought points to a much earlier date than is assigned to the Epistle to the Romans.

But the known facts of 57 supply a further objection to that particular date. Early in that year St. Paul wrote to the churches of Galatia and Achaia, instructing them to institute weekly collections for the church of Jerusalem. These letters were the sequel of a previous correspondence, and Achaia had responded the year before (*ἀπὸ πέρυσι*, 2 Cor. ix. 2), while Galatia had anticipated its sister churches (1 Cor. xvi. 1). The collections at Corinth were not completed in the autumn of 57, and the fund was not presented at Jerusalem till Pentecost, 58. In the meantime, every epistle and every speech of St. Paul testifies his deep interest in the fund. Yet the Epistle to the Galatians attributes the desire to remember the poor in Judæa to the Jerusalem apostles; it mentions St. Paul's ready acquiescence only in the abstract (Gal. ii. 10), and admonishes them in general terms to do good to the household of faith (Gal. vi. 10), but makes no allusion whatever to the fund then in progress, either by way of commendation or of dispraise. This silence is to me inexplicable on the hypothesis that it was written after the letters of 56-57. It belongs surely to an earlier time, when the thought of such a fund was working silently in the mind of the writer, and had not yet borne fruit in action.

I find further in the Epistle three distinct notes of time: (1) It was written after the Jerusalem conference and the subsequent collision at Antioch, and apparently soon after, if we may judge from the vividness of the narrative; (2) it

was written after a second visit to Galatia, for in Gal. iv. 13 the evangelisation of Galatia is described as *the former occasion* (τὸ πρότερον), implying one later visit; (3) it was probably written not long after this second visit; for in Gal. i. 4 the apostle describes the present revolt against his doctrine and apostolic authority as a rapid change, contrasting it apparently with the loyalty which he had hitherto found amongst his converts.¹ Now the date of the second visit to the Galatian churches depends entirely on the view adopted as to their locality. For St. Paul paid his second visit to Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch during the summer of 51, crossing Taurus after May, and sailing from Troas before the winter season; whereas he certainly did not found churches in north Galatia before that year, if at all, nor pay his second visit till three years later. The alternative presented therefore for our choice is of an epistle written to the converts in south Galatia in 51-2, or to those in north Galatia in 54-5. The verdict of history appears to me decisive in favour of the earlier date. In 51 the Galatian churches were still weak and isolated, largely leavened with Judaism, dependent for most of their teaching on the synagogue, and not yet assured of complete freedom from the bondage of the Law. For it was but a year since Judaising teachers had gained a hearing at Antioch, the mother of Gentile Christianity and the centre of Pauline authority. Paul and Barnabas had been forced to appeal against them to the decision of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. Even the formal verdict of the Church had not silenced the opposition, nor prevented the reactionary party from rallying at Antioch in defence of Jewish exclusiveness. They had succeeded in branding Gentile

¹ Lightfoot interprets this passage as denoting a period of several years perhaps after their conversion. It seems to me more natural to understand it of a change within a few months after the end of his last ministry among them, during which he had found them unchanged.

Christians with a social stigma as unclean, and had gained the countenance of Peter and Barnabas for the intrigue. The vigorous protest of Paul against the inconsistency of his brother apostles had checked this formidable movement; but when he had departed into south Galatia, it was sure to lift its head once more; and if so, it could hardly fail to follow in the track of the apostle along the high road to the West. Now here we have the exact *raison d'être* of the Epistle. *There be some that trouble you*, it is written—doubtless emissaries of the intolerant party at Jerusalem, who troubled the peace of Galatia, as *certain who came from James* did the peace of Antioch. The example of Peter and Barnabas was the most powerful argument which these agitators could employ in defence of their claims: and their misuse of apostolic authority accounts for Paul's elaborate vindication of his own independence. If the revolt of the Galatian churches followed close upon the events at Antioch as their natural sequel, we can at once understand the motive which prompted him—almost forced him—to enter on that recital. But the reproduction of that painful collision three or four years later can scarcely be reconciled with the spirit of harmony that prevailed between apostles. For the march of events had by that time effectually defeated the efforts of the circumcision against the authority of St. Paul in Greece and Asia Minor. In the churches of Macedonia and Achaia he reigned supreme,¹ he had already gained a footing in Asia, and begun that successful ministry at Ephesus which linked the churches of Galatia in one continuous chain with those in Europe. The secession of the church of Corinth from the synagogue in 52, and of Ephesus in 54, secured the independence of the Pauline churches much more decisively than the council of Jerusalem had done, and relegated its decrees to the domain of

¹ I have not forgotten that there were parties in the Church of Corinth; but it is clear that there was no real question of the apostle's supreme authority.

past history so completely that St. Paul in his next Epistle, though true to its spirit, entirely ignores its regulations as to unclean food (1 Cor. x. 27). The real danger of the Pauline churches was by that time not of Gentile bondage to the Law, but of schism between them and the Churches of the Circumcision. It is difficult to understand how churches of north Galatia, situated in the heart of Asia Minor and surrounded by Pauline churches could set up the rival authority of the Twelve as late as 54; and I have no hesitation in viewing the Galatian agitation as a last effort of the Judaising party in 51.

If this decision be accepted, the Epistle must have been written from Corinth. For the apostle knew not, when he left Galatia in 51, whither the Spirit was leading him; and could receive no tidings from those churches till he had sent back word from Macedonia of his movements; and the answer could not well reach him before his flight from Macedonia. It seems certain that Timothy and Silas were not with him when he wrote, as their names are not added in the greeting; and their absence suggests that he wrote during the earlier period of his stay, while he was still struggling single-handed against Jewish opposition in the synagogue. The reference to the marks of Jesus branded on His body in Gal. vi. 17 becomes singularly apposite, if He was still scarred with the wounds inflicted by the rods of the Philippian magistrates, as He had once been by the cruel stones of the Lystra mob. In that case the Epistle is the earliest now extant of St. Paul's Epistles.

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