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The Exegesis of ἐνιαυτούς in Galatians 4 10 and its Bearing on the Date of the Epistle

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GALATIANS 4 10 reads, *ἡμέρας παρατηρεῖσθε καὶ μῆνας καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἐνιαυτούς*. It should be noted that Tischendorf, Baljon, and von Soden point the sentence as an interrogation, while Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort, the Revisers, and B. Weiss point it with a period. Why it should be pointed with an interrogation it is difficult to see. That there is a question in the preceding verse is clearly indicated by *πῶς*, but there is not only no word in verse 10 to indicate that a question is being asked, but to regard this sentence as a separate question, involves the whole Epistle in numerous and needless difficulties. Rhetorically a positive question is a negative assertion. Paul is surely not asserting here that the Galatians did not observe any of the Jewish sacred seasons, not even the sabbath, for that would be a concession on his part that they had not departed from "Christ unto a different gospel, which was not another gospel" as he asserts that they had (1 6, 7). Neither can it be supposed that Paul asked a question here in order to ascertain whether the Galatians actually observed the Jewish sacred seasons, for the indignation with which he writes clearly shows that he knew that they had actually gone over to a Judaistic form of Christianity. Nor can it be a sarcastic question, for Paul is not the man, when he had definite knowledge such as he must have had about a part of the matters included in this

question, to pretend that he had none.¹ The only justification that can consistently be found for making the verse a question is the supposition that a second πῶς is understood at its beginning. Just as in the preceding verse he had said, "Now that ye are known of God, how do ye turn again to the weak and beggarly elements?" he would then say here, "how [also] do ye observe days and months and seasons and years?" If this is the interpretation given to the passage by those editors who point it with an interrogation mark, they agree with the others that Paul asserts that the Galatians are keeping the Jewish sacred seasons.

Taking the words, then, as an assertion, they state that the Galatians observed "days", *i. e.* sabbaths, "months", *i. e.* the festivals of the new moon, "times", *i. e.* the stated Jewish feasts, *καιρούς* being the Greek word by which מועדים in Lev. 23 4 is translated. What, then, does "years" mean? Wieseler² as long ago as 1859 saw that it must have reference to a sabbatical year, and this view is also held by Hausrath.³

This obvious meaning of ἐνιαυτοῦς has, however, been rejected with great unanimity by modern interpreters. Bernhard Weiss⁴ interprets μῆνας new moons, *καιρούς*, as other feasts, and ἐνιαυ-

¹ Meyer's contention (*Commentary on Galatians, ad loc.*), that the Galatians were not keeping the Jewish law, because they had not yet been circumcised, is not borne out by ch. 5 2, 3, 12, 6 12, 13 which he cites in its support. Paul's wish (5 12), that those who were preaching circumcision might circumcise the whole member off, has no bearing on the point. The future condition in 5 2 implies only that not all the Galatians had yet been circumcised. The positive statement of 5 3 implies that some of them were already submitting to circumcision, *περιτεμουμένοι* = becoming circumcised (Burton, *N. Test. Moods and Tenses*. § 125). All that is implied in 6 12, 13 is that the process of Judaizing was still in progress. These are just the conditions under which such a letter as the Epistle to the Galatians could be composed. Under any others, it would have been impossible. Some Galatians had been circumcised and were keeping the law, or there would have been no occasion for the letter; all had not yet done so, or to have written the letter would have been of no avail.

² In his commentary on Galatians, which is not accessible to me.

³ *New Testament Times*, 1895, III, 168 n.

⁴ *Paulinische Briefe*, p. 347.

τούς as the new year's feast. This interpretation can easily be shown to be untenable. The Talmud, Rosh-hashana 12, enumerates the new year's feast along with Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and Tabernacles, counting the great feasts as four. In 13 it counts the great feasts of the year as six, here adding the Feast of the Dedication and Purim. According to Jewish usage, then, סוכות or *καρπός* included the new year's festival. Paul had, accordingly, included that in *καρπός* before he used the word *ἐνιαυτούς*, and it charges him with needless tautology to suppose that he referred to it twice. Moreover the feast of the new year was by no means of sufficient importance for Paul to single it out for special mention. It is neither mentioned in the Old Testament or the New, nor, so far as I have observed, in the Apocrypha, though according to Rosh-hashana 14 its observance antedated the destruction of the temple. For these reasons Weiss's interpretation must be rejected.

Lightfoot⁵ alludes to the work of Wieseler, but dismisses it with the remark, that "the enumeration seems intended as general and exhaustive, and no special reference can be assumed". If the list is intended to be exhaustive rather than a list of real observances, by what witchery does the exegete ascertain the fact? If Paul were in the habit of making his lists exhaustive regardless of the appropriateness of their details, we would have to assume that "years" was added to this list just to make it exhaustive. But were such exhaustiveness a characteristic of his style, all his lists would be alike, when the subject is the same, but this is not the case. In Col. 2 16 he is treating of the same subject that he treats here, and uses the following language: *μη̄ οὖν τις ὑμᾶς κρινέτω ἐν βρώσει καὶ ἐν πόσει ἢ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων*. Here we have only three of the sacred seasons alluded to: the annual feasts, the new moons, and the sabbaths. In writing to the Colossians Paul was treating a comparatively academic matter; he was writing on a hearsay report to a church that he had never seen, and in the verse just quoted was laying down a general rule. Here, if anywhere, one might expect him to make his list exhaustive, but

⁵ *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 171.

he does nothing of the kind.⁶ It is only fair, then, to assume that in writing to the Galatians he used the word ἐνιαυτούς only because it corresponded to a real fact in the life of the Galatian churches.

This conviction is strengthened by the evidence which the first Epistle to the Corinthians affords. Paul, educated in the Jewish ritual, was sensitive to all its demands and religious suggestions. It is clear from 1 Cor. 16 8: "I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost", that he was writing near the time of the Passover. This afforded, as many interpreters have noted, the suggestion of the figure of cleansing away the leaven of wickedness, and allusion to Christ as the Paschal Lamb⁷ in ch. 5 6-8.

All these facts create a strong presumption that the reason why Paul mentions the sabbatical year in writing to the Galatians, and does not mention it when writing on the same theme

⁶ An examination of other lists shows that we cannot assume that he ever wrote simply to make a list complete. Thus:

| Gal. 5 19 f. | Rom. 1 29 f. | Rom. 13 13 |
|---------------|--------------|------------|
| πορνεία | πονηρία | κῶμοι |
| ακαθαρσία | πλεονεξία | μέθαι |
| ἀσελγεία | κακία | κοίται |
| εὐδωλολατρεία | φθόνος | ἀσελγεία |
| φαρμακεία | φόνος | ἔρις |
| ἐχθραὶ | ἔρις | ἕλληες |
| ἔρις | δόλος | |
| ἕλληες | κακοψύχεια | |
| θυμοὶ | ψευδιστής | |
| ἐριθείαι | | |
| διχοστασίαι | | |
| αιρέσεις | | |
| φθόνοι | | |
| φόνος | | |
| μέθαι | | |
| κῶμοι | | |

Neither of these lists is exhaustive when measured by the others. Zahn's contention (*Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, 1907, p. 211), that no real observance of the sabbatical year is referred to, but that Paul only means that the Galatians have entered upon a course that would lead to such observance is, therefore, improbable though he is right in calling ἐνιαυτούς a "plural of category".

⁷ So, for example, Meyer, Weiss, and Findlay in *Expositor's Greek Test*.

to the Colossians, is that, when he wrote to the Galatians, a sabbatical year was in progress, or had just passed, and, when he wrote to the Colossians, the sabbatical year had passed so long ago, that it did not occur to his mind.⁸

Another consideration makes it probable that *ἐνιαυτός* refers to a real observance of the sabbatical year on the part of the Galatians. Indignant though Paul was with them for believing the slanders that had been uttered against his apostleship, he nevertheless wished to win them back to a non-Judaic type of Christianity. It is accordingly hardly to be supposed that one, who made it a practice to "become all things to all men that he might by all means save some", was so tactless in this case as to unnecessarily anger the Galatians by attributing to them a fault of which they were not guilty. To run the risk of further estranging them through their natural resentment of an unjust charge—a charge, too, made just to round out a sentence sonorously—is to credit Paul with less self-control on this occasion than he showed at any other point in his career of which we have record.

We are thus compelled to conclude that Wieseler and Hausrath are in all probability right in seeing in *ἐνιαυτός* a chronological datum.

Such a definite chronological datum is most welcome, for in recent years a wide divergence of opinion has developed as to the time of the composition of Galatians. It is generally agreed by scholars, on the basis of Gal. 4 13 that Paul had made two visits to Galatia when this Epistle was written, but since the South Galatian theory has become popular, there is no agreement as to when these visits occurred. Lightfoot⁹ and Steinmann¹⁰ regard the two visits to Galatia as those of Acts 16 6 and 18 23 and so reach a date later than the year 54. Lightfoot, indeed, dates it in 57, but his removal of it so far from the year 54 is on account of its likeness to the Epistle to the

⁸ As shown below a sabbatical year fell in 53-54, and in 60-61. If Colossians were written about 63, it would be sufficiently long after the sabbatical year for that not to be vividly present in the Apostle's mind.

⁹ *Galatians*, p. 171.

¹⁰ *Leserkreis des Galaterbriefes*, 1908, p. 231.

Romans. McGiffert¹¹ and Lake,¹² who hold the South Galatian theory, regard the two visits as those mentioned in Acts 13 14 ff. and 14 20 ff., and believe that the Epistle was written from Antioch. Lake believes that it was written just before Paul started for the Apostolic Council described in Acts 15, while McGiffert thinks it was written just after it. McGiffert dates the Apostolic Council in 45 or 46 A. D., thus making the Epistle very early.¹³

Zahn¹⁴ and Bacon,¹⁵ one an advocate of the pan-Galatian theory, the other of the South Galatian, hold that the two visits are those of Acts 13 14 ff. and 16 6 and believe that the Epistle was written during Paul's residence at Corinth during the years 52 or 53.¹⁶ These examples indicate sufficiently the impossibility of dating the Epistle from its references to Paul's visits to Galatia, though a far larger number of divergent opinions might be cited.¹⁷

If, however, the Galatians observed a sabbatical year about the time the Epistle to them was composed, it is possible to reach a definite opinion as to the date. It is stated in 1 Macc. (cf. 6 16 with 6 49, 53) that a sabbatical year fell in the 149th year of the Seleucid era. This 149th year began in the spring of 164 B. C. It is stated in the Talmud (Rosh-hashana 8 a), that the sabbatical year began with the month Tishri (Oct.-Nov.). It follows, then, that this sabbatical year extended from the autumn of 164 to the autumn of 163 B. C.

Josephus states twice (*Antiq.* 14: 16 2, 15: 2), that, when Herod,

¹¹ *Apostolic Age*, 226 f.

¹² *Earlier Epistle of Paul*, pp. 265-304.

¹³ The inscription from Delphi, which fixes the proconsulship of Gallio in 51-52 A. D. (see Deissmann's *St. Paul*, 235-260) proves the chronology of Harnack and McGiffert to be too early. The Apostolic Council must have occurred in 48 or 49 A. D.

¹⁴ *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, I, 138-141.

¹⁵ *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*, 25 ff.

¹⁶ Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and Rom. Citizen*, 191, holds that the Epistle was written from Antioch in the summer of the year 53, just before Paul started on his third missionary journey. Ramsay follows a chronology of his own. To suppose that he wrote it just as he was going to visit them is not in harmony with Gal. 4 20.

¹⁷ Cf. Moffat, *Introduction to the New Test.*, p. 101 f. for other opinions.

the Great, besieged and captured Jerusalem and thus began his reign, a sabbatical year was in progress. It follows, therefore, that the year 38-37 B. C. was a year of rest. This fits in exactly with the proper succession of such years, counting from the year 164-163.

There is, however, some doubt about this succession for the year 136-135. According to 1 Mac. 16:14 Simon, the Maccabee, was assassinated by his son-in-law, Ptolemy, in the month Shebat (Jan.-Feb.) of the 177th year of Seleucid era, *i. e.* Jan.-Feb. of the year 135 B. C. Josephus twice states (*Antiq.* 13:81 and BJ 1:24) that the war between John Hyrcanus and Ptolemy which followed dragged along, apparently for some months, until the sabbatical year came on when they were compelled to stop hostilities. This would seem to show that the sabbatical year fell in 135-134 B. C., a year later than it should have come.¹⁸

Two considerations make one hesitate to draw this conclusion. Josephus is frequently in error, and his statement, that the sabbatical year compelled Hyrcanus to raise his siege of Ptolemy, implies that in a sabbatical year active labor had to stop as it did on a sabbath day, whereas it was only the land that had rest from tillage. It seems possible that Josephus, knowing that a sabbatical year occurred about this time, may have dated it a year too late, and wrongly associated it with the raising of the siege.¹⁹

Schürer (p. 36) seems puzzled by the fact that a statement of Josephus (*Antiq.* 18:83) seems to show that 40-41 A. D. was not a sabbatical year; he thinks that on this cycle it should be. On this cycle, however, the sabbatical year would be 39-40. In

¹⁸ Cf. Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, 1901, p. 35, n.

¹⁹ It is, of course, possible, that the mistake is in the text of Maccabees. As the war with Ptolemy must, if Simon was put to death before the sabbatical year, have extended into the 177th year of the Seleucid era, possibly the date of Simon's death was accidentally made a year too late. The author of 1 Maccabees was, however, a more careful historian than Josephus, and stood nearly 200 years nearer to the events; the error is not likely, therefore, to have been his. Wieseler endeavors to evade the difficulty by supposing that the Seleucid year began, like the Roman, with Jan., but that cannot be established.

view of this fact the statement of Josephus, that the Jews continued to fight Petronius, the representative of Caligula, even when the time for sowing came, thus leaving their fields untilled, gives all the greater emphasis to their religious zeal. The previous year they had had no crop because of the sabbatical year, and still they left their fields untilled.

So far as our data go, then, they establish a definite cycle of sabbatical years. The doubt about 136-135 is not sufficient to disprove the cycle. According to this cycle the year 53-54 A. D. was such a year.²⁰ Probably, therefore, the Epistle to the Galatians was written in the year 54 or 55.²¹

If thus the date of the Epistle is fixed, it remains to ask where Paul was at this time. The fragmentary inscription from Delphi, which has been made accessible in the last two years, necessitates a slight revision of the generally accepted chronology of this part of Paul's life. It is probable from that inscription that Gallio became proconsul in Corinth in the summer of the year 51, and Paul had been preaching in Corinth for some time before this (Acts 18 1-12). Deissmann²² thinks, as does O. Holtzmann, that the text of Acts implies that Paul had been in Corinth eighteen months before Gallio came. Even, if the whole eighteen months had not passed, the text of Acts would imply that a considerable portion of that period had elapsed before the coming of Gallio. Paul could not, accordingly, have reached Corinth later than the summer of the year 50, and it may have been earlier. The eighteen months of his stay must have ended before the close of the year 51, and he may, as Deissmann thinks, have left Corinth as early as August or September of that year. Allowing time for his voyage to Syria and his visit to Jerusalem (Acts 18 18-22) the summer of the year 52 would find him travell-

²⁰ Wieseler, *Chronologische Synopse der vier Evangelien*, p. 204, to whose calculation of the sabbatical years Lightfoot, Ramsay, and Zahn all refer, makes the sabbatical years one year too late. He counted the starting point of his argument in 1 Macc. 6 incorrectly. This he afterward corrected.

²¹ Sabbatical years began in the autumn of the following years: 164, 157, 150, 143, 136, 129, 122, 115, 108, 101, 94, 87, 80, 73, 66, 59, 52, 54, 45, 38, 31, 24, 17, 10, 3, 4 A. D. 11, 18, 25, 32, 39, 46, 53, 60 and 67.

²² See Deissmann, *St. Paul*, 257.

ing through Galatia again (18 23), and by the autumn of 52 he was settled in Ephesus for his three years sojourn there. We conclude, accordingly, that the letter was written from Ephesus toward the close of the year 54 or the beginning of 55 A. D.

These results agree with those of Gregory, who, on other grounds, thinks the Epistle was composed during Paul's three years of residence at Ephesus.²³

²³ *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 662.