THE EPISTLE TO THE
GALATIANS

A Commentary on the Greek Text

by

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in admiration, friendship
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FOREWORD

While there have been many series of commentaries on the English text of the New Testament in recent years, it is a long time since any attempt has been made to cater particularly to the needs of students of the Greek text. It is true that at the present time there is something of a decline in the study of Greek in many traditional theological institutions, but there has been a welcome growth in the study of the New Testament in its original language in the newer evangelical schools, especially in North America and the Third World. It is hoped that The New International Greek Testament Commentary will demonstrate the value of studying the Greek New Testament and help towards the revival of such study.

The purpose of the series is to cater to the needs of students who want something less technical than a full-scale critical commentary. At the same time, the commentaries are intended to interact with modern scholarship and to make their own scholarly contribution to the study of the New Testament. There has been a wealth of detailed study of the New Testament in articles and monographs in recent years, and the series is meant to harvest the results of this research in a more easily accessible form. The commentaries will thus include adequate, but not exhaustive, bibliographies. They will attempt to treat all important problems of history and exegesis and interpretation which may arise.

One of the gains of recent scholarship has been the recognition of the primarily theological character of the books of the New Testament. This series will, therefore, attempt to provide a theological understanding of the text, based on historical-critical-linguistic exegesis. It will not, however, attempt to apply and expound the text for modern readers, although it is hoped that the exegesis will give some indication of the way in which the text should be expounded.

Within the limits set by the use of the English language, the series aims to be international in character; the contributors, however, have been chosen not primarily in order to achieve a spread between different countries but above all because of their specialized qualifications for their particular tasks. This publication is a joint venture of The Paternoster Press, Exeter, England, and Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, USA.

The supreme aim of this series is to serve those who are engaged in the ministry of the Word of God and thus to glorify his name. Our prayer is that it may be found helpful in this task.

I. Howard Marshall
W. Ward Gasque
PREFACE

Paul’s letter to the churches of Galatia has been to me for many years a document of special interest and study. Accordingly, when I was invited to contribute to The New International Greek Testament Commentary, it was with alacrity that I undertook to write the volume on Galatians.

In general studies and lectures on Galatians, it is possible to pass rather lightly over certain minor cruces of interpretation. When one writes a commentary, however, it is necessary to examine them with care and reach some kind of conclusion about them, after considering all the reasonable options. Now that I have fulfilled my undertaking, I am indeed glad that I gave it. The writing of the commentary has been a richly rewarding experience.

I am, of course, greatly indebted to many earlier commentators and others who have written on Galatians. Joseph Barber Lightfoot and Ernest DeWitt Burton call for specially honourable mention here; so, among our contemporaries, does Hans Dieter Betz, whose Hermeneia volume appeared when my work was well on its way to completion; it has already established its right to stand among the really great commentaries on this epistle.

The substance of most of my Introduction was originally delivered in the form of public lectures in the John Rylands University Library, Manchester; these were subsequently published in the Bulletin of the Library between 1969 and 1973 as a series entitled ‘Galatian Problems’. This material is reproduced here by kind permission.

The Greek text on which this commentary is based is that of the third edition of The Greek New Testament published by the United Bible Societies (1975); it is practically identical with that of the twenty-sixth edition of Nestle’s Novum Testamentum Graece, edited by K. and B. Aland (1979).

F. F. B.
INTRODUCTION

I

GALATIANS AMONG THE LETTERS OF PAUL

By common consent, Galatians is one of the four ‘capital’ epistles of Paul (the others being 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans) and one of the best authenticated. When the claims of other letters to Pauline authorship are under consideration, the standard of assessment is this fourfold group, and pre-eminently Galatians. Denial of the genuineness of Galatians, such as was made in the Dutch school of W. C. van Manen, is recognized as a critical aberration in the history of NT study. From the first gathering together of the Pauline writings into a corpus, early in the second century AD, Galatians had a secure place among them.

The traditional criterion in the canonical arrangement of the Pauline letters, as far back as it can be traced, appears to have been descending order of length. But Marcion, who about AD 140 was the first person (so far as is known) to compile a ‘closed’ canon of Christian writings, deviated from this principle of arrangement by taking Galatians out of its stichometric sequence and giving it pride of place at the head of his Apostolikon. Tertullian, our first witness for Marcion’s order, agrees with him to this extent, that he too holds Galatians to

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1. Luther reckoned those NT documents which set forth the gospel plainly to be the right certain capital books—in particular, John and 1 John, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians and 1 Peter ‘teach all that it is necessary and blessed for you to know, even if you never see or hear any other book or any other doctrine’ (Preface to German NT, 1522, WA, Die deutsche Bibel 6.10). In the Tübingen tradition of F. C. Baur and his colleagues the designation ‘capital epistles’ (Hauptbriefe) is reserved for Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans, which ‘bear so incontestably the character of Pauline originality, that there is no conceivable ground for the assertion of critical doubts in their case’ (Baur, Paul, 1. 246).


3. In one form of early arrangement epistles with the same address were lumped together as one for this purpose; thus, in Marcion’s canon, after Galatians (which was given programmatic primacy) 1 and 2 Corinthians together were placed first. Other principles of arrangement are discernible in early lists: in the Muratorian canon, for example, Romans comes last among Paul’s letters to churches, perhaps because it was recognized as a summa of his teaching.

4. InAdv. Marc. 5.2–21 Tertullian undertakes to refute Marcion from his own Apostolikon, taking up the epistles one by one in Marcion’s sequence. Cf. Epiph. Haer. 42.9.
be ‘the primary epistle against Judaism’ (principalem aduersus iudaismum epistulam). Marcion’s placing of the epistle has not prevailed, but its primacy of importance among the writings of Paul has been widely, though not universally, acknowledged from that day to this.

Among the writings of Paul it is with the letter to the Romans that Galatians has the closest affinity. ‘The Epistle to the Galatians’, wrote J. B. Lightfoot, ‘stands in relation to the Roman letter, as the rough model to the finished statue; or rather, if I may press the metaphor without misapprehension, it is the first study of a single figure, which is worked into a group in the latter writing.’ Two dominant themes in Galatians which are given equal emphasis in Romans are the insistence on justification before God by faith, apart from legal works, and the presentation of the Spirit as the principle of the new life in Christ which believers enjoy as freeborn children of God. If there are features in Romans which have no parallel in Galatians, Galatians has features which are unparalleled in Romans, such as the autobiographical section in Gal. 1:11–2:14, with its defence of Paul’s apostolic liberty. Romans must not be made the standard for interpreting Galatians: Galatians must be read and understood in its own right.

There is little or nothing of the urgent note of polemic in Romans that pervades Galatians; for a repetition of that note we turn rather to 2 Cor. 10–13 or to Phil. 3. The people attacked in 2 Cor. 10–13 and Phil. 3 are not necessarily identical with the ‘trouble-makers’ against whom Paul polemicizes in Galatians, but he recognized their teaching and activity as similarly constituting a threat to the truth of the gospel, and used similar language in warning his converts against them.

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5. Adv. Marc. 5.2.

6. Its importance has not been reckoned so great by those who consider the doctrine of justification by faith to be a ‘subsidiary crater’ within the rim of the main crater of the Pauline volcano—the main crater being ‘the mystical doctrine of redemption through the being-in-Christ’ (A. Schweitzer, Mysticism, 225); see pp. 50f.

7. Lightfoot, Galatians, 49. The relation between the two letters is not adequately presented when a sequence of parallel passages is drawn up, if attention is not paid to the features which are peculiar to each and unreproduced in the other. U. Wilckens in particular gives an unsatisfactory impression by simply presenting two parallel tables of chapter-and-verse references as evidence that Romans is, with respect to the doctrine of justification, ‘a reproduction of the letter to the Galatians’ (Römer, 48).

II

THE GALATIAN CHURCHES

The Epistle to the Galatians is so called because it is explicitly addressed 'to the churches of Galatia' (1:2); moreover, the addressees are apostrophized in the course of the letter: 'O foolish Galatians!' (3:1). The question before us is: Where were these churches and who were these Galatians? Should we locate them in the territory of the former kingdom of Galatia or somewhere else in the more extensive Roman province of Galatia, which included the former kingdom and much additional territory? Were the recipients of the letter Galatians in the ethnic sense, or only in the political sense, as inhabitants of the Roman province of that name?

1. From kingdom to province

The Greek word Γαλάται is a variant form of Κέλται or Κέλτοι, 'Celts' (Latin Galli). When we first meet the Celts, they are resident in Central Europe, in the Danube basin. Some place-names in that area retain Celtic elements to the present day; Vienna (Latin Vindobona) is a good example. From the Danube basin they migrated in a westerly direction into Switzerland, South Germany and North Italy, and then into Gaul and Britain; they also migrated in a south-easterly direction and settled in North-Central Asia Minor, giving their name to their new homeland as they also did to Gaul (Latin Gallia, Greek Γαλατία).

Those Celts who migrated towards the south-east ravaged Thrace, Macedonia and Thessaly, and invaded Greece itself, but they got no further than Delphi, from which they were repulsed in 279 BC. The following year (278–277 BC), a large body of them crossed the Hellespont into Asia Minor at the invitation of Nicomedes, king of Bithynia, who thought he could use their services against his enemies. For a generation they menaced their neighbours in Asia Minor, until a series of defeats at the hands of Attalus I, king of Pergamum (c. 230

1. The first element is Celtic *windos, 'white' (cf. Welsh gwyn, Gaelic fionn).
2. Livy (Hist. 38.12), Strabo (Geog. 12.5.1) and other writers give Galatia the alternative name Gallograecia (i.e. the land of the Greek-speaking Gauls).
BC), confined them within fixed limits, in territory which had formerly belonged to Phrygia. This territory, a broad strip of land stretching over 200 miles from south-west to north-east, between the longitudes of 31° and 35° E. and the lattitudes of 39° and 40° 30' N., was occupied by the three tribes of which the invading force consisted—the Tolistobogii in the west, with their centre at Pessinus, the Trocmi in the east, with their centre at Tavium, and the Tectosages between them, around Ancyra, which in due course became the capital of the kingdom of Galatia (as today, under its modern name Ankara, it is the capital of the Turkish Republic). Each tribe comprised four tetrarchies. The Galatians settled as overlords, with a subject population of Phrygians. As time went on they adopted the Phrygians' religion and culture, but not their language. The Phrygian language died out in Galatia, whereas it survived for some centuries in the neighbouring Phrygian territories. The Galatian speech also survived for several centuries, although the Galatians inevitably came to use Greek as the language of commerce and diplomacy.

In 190 BC a body of Galatian mercenaries fought on the side of the Seleucid king Antiochus III against the Romans at the battle of Magnesia. Their presence attracted Roman reprisals against the Galatians, who were subjugated the following year by the consul Manlius but were allowed to retain their independence under their own rulers on giving a pledge of good behaviour for the future.

Henceforth Roman influence was paramount in Asia Minor, apart from the period (88–65 BC) during which Mithridates VI of Pontus dominated the peninsula. The Galatians quickly appreciated the wisdom of keeping on good terms with Rome. With Roman permission or connivance they augmented their territory during the second century BC. They suffered severely under Mithridates because of their friendship with Rome, but when he was finally defeated by Pompey in 64 BC their loyalty was rewarded by Galatia's receiving the status of a client kingdom, and so she remained for nearly forty years. When her last king, Amyntas, fell in battle against the warlike Homonades, who raided Galatia and other neighbouring states from their home base in the northern Taurus, Augustus reorganized the kingdom as an imperial province, governed by a legatus pro praetore (25 BC).

By this time the kingdom of Galatia had expanded considerably beyond its original limits. In 36 BC, for example, Mark Antony presented Amyntas with Iconium, a city of Phrygia, together with part of Lycaonia and Pamphylia. Some time after taking over Amyntas's kingdom, Augustus reduced its size by transferring Eastern Lycaonia and Cilicia Tracheia, which it had included, to the

3. Pessinus was not occupied by the Galatians until after 205 BC. When in that year the Romans, through the good offices of the Pergamene king Attalus I, sent to procure the image of the Magna Mater from Pessinus, it was still a Phrygian city (Liv., Hist. 29.11.14).
4. Polybius, Hist. 5.77ff., 111; Livy, Hist. 38.16; Strabo, Geog. 12.5.1–4.
6. Polybius, Hist. 22.16; Livy, Hist. 38.12ff.
8. Dio Cassius, Hist. 49.32. About 400 BC Xenophon calls Iconium 'the last city of Phrygia' (Anab. 1.2.19). Pliny the Elder (d. AD 79) assigns it to Lycaonia (Nat. Hist. 2.25), as do many writers from Cicero onwards. But c. AD 163 Hierax, one of Justin Martyr's co-defendants, describes himself as a slave 'torn away from Iconium in Phrygia' (Acts of Justin 3).
sovereignty of his ally Archelaus, king of Cappadocia. Even so, the province of Galatia comprised much territory to the south which had never been ethnically Galatian—Pisidia and the adjacent region which Strabo calls ‘Phrygia towards Pisidia’, with Isaurica and Western Lycaonia. Rome inherited from Amyntas the task of crushing the Homonades, who were a constant menace to ‘Phrygia towards Pisidia’ in particular. They were ultimately subjugated by P. Sulpicius Quirinius, governor of Galatia, in the years following 12 BC.\textsuperscript{10}

In 6 BC inland Paphlagonia, on the north, was added to the province of Galatia, as three or four years later were some areas to the north-east which had formerly belonged to Pontus. These latter areas were henceforth known as Pontus Galaticus.\textsuperscript{11} By analogy with this it has been inferred that (for example) those parts of Phrygia and Lycaonia which were included in the province were known respectively as Phrygia Galatica and Lycaonia Galatica, to distinguish them from that part of Phrygia which lay within proconsular Asia (Phrygia Asiana) and from Eastern Lycaonia (Lycaonia Antiochiana)\textsuperscript{12} which, from AD 37 to 40, and again from AD 41 onwards, belonged to Rome’s ally Antiochus IV, king of Commagene. These terms are convenient enough, but without proper attestation we cannot assume confidently that they were part of the official Roman nomenclature.

In our period, then, Provincia Galatia stretched from Pontus on the Black Sea to Pamphylia on the Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{13} Paul’s ‘churches of Galatia’ might theoretically have been situated anywhere within these limits. The question is: Were they situated in the original Galatian territory (‘North Galatia’) or in Phrygia Galatica and Lycaonia Galatica (‘South Galatia’)? The latter alternative identifies them with the churches planted by Paul and Barnabas during their so-called first missionary journey (Acts 13:14–14:26)—in the Phrygian cities of Pisidian Antioch (modern Yalvaç) and Iconium (modern Konya) and in the Lycaonian cities of Lystra (modern Zostera, near Hatunsaray)\textsuperscript{14} and Derbe (modern Kerti Hüyük, c. 15 miles NNE of Karaman, the ancient Laranda, or Devri Şehri, 2½ miles SSE of Kerti Hüyük). Derbe must have lain on the frontier between the Roman province of Galatia and the client kingdom of Commagene, if indeed it did not lie beyond the frontier (as Laranda did from AD 41 onwards).\textsuperscript{15}

2. The ‘North Galatian’ hypothesis

The ‘North Galatian’ hypothesis held the field almost unchallenged until the eighteenth century. That it should have been taken for granted in the patristic

\textsuperscript{9} Strabo, Geog. 12.8.13: ἦ πρὸς Πισιδίαν [Φονύγα].
\textsuperscript{11} E.g. in CIL III.6818 Pontus Galaticus (distinguished from Pontus Polemonianus) is specified in a list of the regions over which the legate of Galatia exercised command.
\textsuperscript{12} CIL V.8660.
\textsuperscript{13} Cf. Pliny, Nat. Hist. 5.147: ‘Galatia touches on Cabalia in Pamphylia.’
\textsuperscript{14} Cf. M. H. Ballance, MAMA VIII (Manchester, 1962), xiff.
age was natural. In the second century (c. AD 137) Lycaonia Galatica was
detached and united with Cilicia and Isaurica to form an enlarged province of
Cilicia, and late in the third century (c. 297) the remainder of South Galatia
with some adjoining territories became a new province of Pisidia, with Pisidian
Antioch as its capital and Iconium as its second city. The province of Galatia
was thus reduced to North Galatia, and when the church fathers, in their study
of our epistle, read of ‘the churches of Galatia’, they understood ‘Galatia’ without
more ado in the sense familiar in their day.

The Marcionite prologue to the Epistle to the Galatians does indeed begin
with the surprising statement ‘Galatians are Greeks’; but this may simply mean
that the recipients of the letter were Greek speaking—which could be inferred
from the fact that Paul wrote to them in Greek, not to mention the continuing
designation Gallo Graecia. Whether in actual fact the inhabitants of the reduced
province of Galatia in the Marcionite author’s day spoke Greek or Celtic is
probably not a question in which he would have been greatly interested.

The linguistic question, however, did interest one Latin commentator on
Galatians. In the preface to the second book of his commentary on this epistle
Jerome tells how, in addition to Greek, the Galatians of his day (late fourth
century AD) spoke a vernacular which he recognized as similar to that which
he used to hear at Trier, where he had stayed for some time in his early twenties.
Whether indeed the Celtic of North-Central Asia Minor and that spoken on the
banks of the Moselle were mutually intelligible in Jerome’s time, when their
speakers had been so far separated for six and a half centuries or more, may be
doubted; Jerome may have recognized a resemblance between some words for
specific objects or actions.

In the same preface Jerome quotes the Christian writer Caecilius Firmianus
Lactantius as saying that the Galatians were so called because of the whiteness
of their skin, as though their name was derived from Greek γάλακτα (‘milk’).
More has been made of his quotation from a poem by Hilary of Poitiers, of
Gallic origin himself, in which the Gauls were described as ‘unteachable’ (Latin
indogiles); ‘no wonder, then,’ says Jerome, ‘that the Galatians were called “foolish”
and slow of understanding’.21

John Calvin in his commentary on Galatians (1548) followed his predeces-
sors in holding the North Galatian view, but curiously combined it with the

16. Asterius, bishop of Amaseia in Pontus (d. AD 410), seems to understand ‘the Galatian
region and Phrygia’ of Acts 18:23 as meaning ‘Lycaonia and the cities of Phrygia’ (Homilia VIII in
SS Petrum et Paulum; Migne, PG 40.293D). W. M. Ramsay thought he represented a persisting
although scantily attested South Galatian tradition (‘The “Galatia” of St. Paul and the “Galatian
‘Pisidian Antioch’ (cf. Acts 13:14, ‘Ἀντιόχειαν τήν Πισιδίαν) was so called not because it was
in Pisidia but because it was, as Strabo calls it (Georg. 12.6.4), ‘Antioch near Pisidia’ (tīn . . .
(‘Ἀντιόχειαν τής Πισιδίας, interpreted by AV as ‘Antioch in Pisidia’), reflects the fourth-century
situation.
18. See p. 20.
20. Ibid. 379B-C.
21. Ibid. 380C.
view that the epistle was written before the Jerusalem council of Acts 15.22 (He identified Paul and Barnabas’s Jerusalem visit of Gal. 2:1ff. with the famine-relief visit of Acts 11:30.) One wonders when he supposed the evangelization of North Galatia to have taken place.

The first scholar known to us who held that the recipients of the Epistle to the Galatians at least included the churches planted by Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey appears to have been J. J. Schmidt23 in 1748, followed in 1825 by J. P. Mynster, whose position might be described as ‘Pan-Galatian’ rather than either North or South Galatian.24 In the nineteenth century (apart from its last decade) the South Galatian view was championed mainly by French scholars, such as Georges Perrot, who argued for it in De Galatia Provincia Romana (1867),25 and Ernest Renan, who assumed it rather than argued for it in his Saint Paul (1869).26 The majority of others continued to propound the North Galatian view, and among these others J. B. Lightfoot stands out with special distinction.27

Lightfoot’s commentary on Galatians first appeared in 1865; it remains a standard work which no student of the letter can afford to overlook—and there are not many commentaries over a hundred years old of which this sort of thing can be said. He recognized the ambiguity in the phrase ‘churches of Galatia’, but rejected the view that they were the churches of Pididian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe in favour of locating them at Ancyra, Pessinus and perhaps Tavium (possibly also at Juliopolis, the ancient Gordion). His arguments against the South Galatian view are mainly to the effect that the churches planted during Paul and Barnabas’s first missionary journey are not called Galatian churches in Acts—but Luke’s usage is not necessarily Paul’s.

His positive arguments for the North Galatian view include the consideration that the ‘Galatic region’ of Acts 16:6 and 18:23 is most probably ethnic Galatia, that Paul’s two visits to the region mentioned in these passages coincide with his two visits to Galatia which he thought to be implied in Gal. 4:13, and especially that the temperament of the Galatian Christians reflected in the letter harmonizes (a) with the testimonies to the fickleness of the Gauls found in classical authors (especially Caesar)28 and (b) with the fact that the Gauls were (Caesar again being witness) ‘a superstitious people given over to ritual observances’29 and that Deiotarus, king of Galatia in the mid-first century BC, was characterized by an ‘extravagant devotion to augury’.30

The weight laid by a scholar of Lightfoot’s calibre upon these alleged affinities between the recipients of Paul’s letter and the Celts known to Caesar and

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22. Calvin, Galatians, 24f.
24. I.e. he propounded what Kümmel (loc. cit.) prefers to call the Provinzhypothese as against the Landschaftshypothese (Kleine Theologische Schriften; Copenhagen, 1825).
27. Lightfoot, Galatians, 19ff.
28. Caesar, De Bello Gallico 2.1; 4.5.
29. De Bello Gallico 6.16.
30. Lightfoot, Galatians, p. 16, referring to Cicero, Div. 1.5; 2.36f.
his contemporaries is surprising. Caesar is not an entirely objective witness where the Gauls are concerned and, for the rest, the argument seems to reduce itself to a syllogism of this order:

   The Gauls were fickle and superstitious.
   Paul's Galatians were fickle and superstitious.
   Therefore: Paul's Galatians were Gauls.

The undistributed middle is not hard to recognize; the argument would be valid only if fickleness and superstition were not characteristic of other nations than the Gauls (and Galatians). We have to look no farther than the Galatians' Phrygian neighbours for another reputed example, while Luke's account of Paul's adventure at Lystra suggests that fickleness and superstition were not wanting among the Lycaonians.

3. The 'South Galatian' hypothesis

Nevertheless, Lightfoot's dismissal of the South Galatian view in favour of the traditional one was natural; when he wrote, the South Galatian view had not yet been placed on a sufficiently sound basis. The scholar by whom this was achieved was W. M. Ramsay (1851–1939), whose statement of the case in *The Church in the Roman Empire* (1893)31 and *A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (1899) was founded on his systematic survey of Central Asia Minor on the spot, coupled with his comprehensive and detailed study of epigraphy and classical literature.

Ramsay's greatest work was accomplished in the 1880s and 1890s. It was his researches in those years that laid the archaeological foundation for the South Galatian hypothesis, and laid it so firmly that to many of his disciples it is no longer a mere hypothesis.32 When he began his exploration of Asia Minor he accepted (mainly on Lightfoot's terms) the North Galatian view, as he also accepted F. C. Baur's reconstruction of the course of primitive Christian history. He abandoned the one view, as he abandoned the other, because of the compelling evidence of facts as he faced them *in situ*. The whole organization of Asia Minor in the first-century Roman Empire, he held—its administration and communications—pointed inexorably to the South Galatian destination of our epistle. In the preface to the fourth edition of *The Church in the Roman Empire* (1896) he tells his readers that they will find all the evidence for the South Galatian view in the first part of his *Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia* (1895), although the view is neither mentioned nor discussed there. But the solid evidence for the South Galatian view is contained in such studies as his *Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia* and his earlier *Historical Geography of Asia Minor* (1890)—studies conducted with no thought of the Epistle to the Galatians or of establishing or demolishing any theory about its destination.

In these earlier works Ramsay carefully avoided appealing to the usual

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32. Cf. J. A. Findlay, 'It is significant that all those who know the geography of Asia Minor well are "South Galatianists" to a man' (<i>Acts</i>. 166).
series of ambiguous arguments in favour of the South Galatian view.33 Such arguments are:

1. Paul habitually uses Roman imperial nomenclature—but then any inhabitants of the province of Galatia, including the ethnic Galatians, would have been 'Galatians' to him.

2. Paul addresses his Galatians in Greek—but Greek would have been familiar in Ancyra and Pessinus at least.

3. Paul mentions Barnabas (Gal. 2:1ff.), who was personally known to the South Galatians but not (so far as we can tell) to the North Galatians—but he mentions him also in 1 Cor. 9:6, and there is no evidence that he was personally known to the Corinthians.

4. Paul's travel-companions in Acts 20:4, who presumably were carrying their churches' contributions to the Jerusalem fund, include South Galatians (Gaius of Derbe and Timothy of Lystra) but not North Galatians—but such an argument from silence is precarious (no Corinthian representative is named).

5. The presence of Jewish emissaries is more probable in South Galatia than in North Galatia—but they might make it their business to visit any city where Paul had planted a church.

6. Paul's Galatians received him 'as an angel of God' (Gal. 4:14), which is a remarkable coincidence with his identification with Hermes by the Lystrans (Acts 14:11ff.)—but the coincidence is somewhat spoiled by the Lystrans' later murderous attack on him (Acts 14:19).

He based his case rather on the facts of historical geography, coupled with his interpretation of Paul's policy as one of concentration on the main roads and centres of communication in the Roman provinces. The main line along which Christianity advanced in Asia Minor was the road from Syria through the Cilician Gates to Iconium and Ephesus, and so across the Aegean. There were two subsidiary lines: one following the land route by Philadelphia to Troas, and so across to Philippi and the Egnatian Way, and the other leading north from the Cilician Gates by Tyana and Cappadocian Caesarea to Amisos on the Black Sea. These are in fact the principal lines of penetration from the Cilician Gates into the peninsula, and none of them led through ethnic Galatia. The southern side of the Anatolian plateau was more important than the northern under the earlier Roman Empire; the full development of the northern side did not take place until Diocletian transferred the centre of imperial administration to Nicomedia in AD 292. In Ramsay's view, the South Galatian hypothesis was the one which agreed best with the facts of the historical geography of Asia Minor.34

The North Galatian case, however, has never lacked defenders, especially in Germany, but few of these have dealt adequately with Ramsay's positive arguments. Among those who have dealt with them most seriously were P. W. Schmiedel, in the section which he contributed to the article 'Galatia' in the Encyclopaedia Biblica (1901),35 and J. Moffatt, in his Introduction to the Lit-

33. He lists ten (including the six mentioned here) in The Church in the Roman Empire3, 97ff.
34. The Church in the Roman Empire3, 10f.; cf. Historical Geography of Asia Minor (London, 1890), 197ff.
35. §§ 8–13, following on W. J. Woodhouse's defence of the South Galatian view in §§ 5–7.
erature of the New Testament (1911).\textsuperscript{36} Moffatt's arguments are about the weightiest ever presented for the North Galatian view after Ramsay's presentation of the evidence for South Galatia.\textsuperscript{37} He appreciates the weakness of some traditional arguments for North Galatia—e.g. the appeal to the Galatians' alleged fickleness—and points out some weaknesses in Ramsay's case. Did Paul always follow the main roads and evangelize the principal centres of communication? Then what took him to Lystra and Derbe? In Ramsay's own words: ‘How did the cosmopolitan Paul drift like a piece of timber borne by the current into this quiet backwater?\textsuperscript{38} On the other hand, Ancyra in North Galatia, the provincial seat of administration, was, on Ramsay's own showing, ‘one of the greatest and most splendid cities of Asia Minor’.\textsuperscript{39}

Even so, many of Moffatt's arguments, like Schmiedel's before him, and Lightfoot's still earlier, concern the interpretation of Acts and not of our epistle, like the argument that Luke's 'Galatic region' is ethnic Galatia, as against Ramsay's view that the 'Phrygian and Galatic region' of Acts 16:6 is Phrygia Galatica and the 'Galatic region' of Acts 18:23 Lycoonia Galatica. Moffatt admits that this is so: 'Luke's usage, it may be retorted, is not decisive for Paul. This is perfectly true, but Paul's use of Παλατίνα corresponds to the inferences from Acts.'\textsuperscript{40}

4. The evidence of Acts

The issue of the destination of the Epistle to the Galatians is strictly independent of the references to Galatian territory in Acts. Granted that Paul usually adopts Roman provincial nomenclature—as when, for example, he repeatedly refers to Achaia in the Roman sense, as including Corinth, and not in the traditional Greek sense, of a territory in the North-Western Peloponnese, to which Corinth did not belong—it might be argued that Luke prefers the more popular geographical terms and so would use Galatia in the ethnic sense.\textsuperscript{41} But what are the facts?

\textsuperscript{36} J. Moffatt, Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament\textsuperscript{3} (London, 1918), 90ff.
Moffatt commends, in addition to Schmiedel's treatment, the defence of the North Galatian view in A. Steinmann's 'thoroughgoing essays' in Die Abfassungszeit des Galaterbriefes (Münster, 1906) and Der Leserkreis des Galaterbriefes (Münster, 1908).

\textsuperscript{37} One may justly take exception to Moffatt's remark that the identification of the Jerusalem visits of Acts 11:30 and Gal. 2:1ff. 'has found favour with several South Galatian advocates in their manipulation of the Lucan narratives' (\textit{INT}, 102)—the word 'manipulation' conveys an unworthy innuendo.


\textsuperscript{39} Moffatt, \textit{INT}, 97; cf. Ramsay's words: 'Ancyra was quite a Romanized city, civilized and rich' (\textit{HDB II}, s.v. 'Galatia', 84). But the earliest clear reference to Christianity at Ancyra is dated AD 192 (Eusebius, \textit{Hist. Eccl.} 5.16.3), although it had no doubt been planted there a century earlier. Indeed, Ramsay himself, interpreting an entry in the early Syriac Martyrology with the aid of a Byzantine milestone inscription at Barata in Lycoonia, argued (somewhat precariously) for a large-scale martyrdom of Christians at Ancyra at the end of the first century AD or the beginning of the second ('Two Notes on Religious Antiquities in Asia Minor: I. Gaianus, Martyr at Ancyra of Galatia', \textit{Exp Tim} 21 [1909–10], 64ff.).

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{INT}, 94.

\textsuperscript{41} Paul was not reverting to Homeric usage, in which all the Greeks are Achaians. Luke uses 'Achaia' in Acts 18:12 where he reproduces Gallio's official title, but 'Greece' in Acts 20:2.
There are two relevant passages in Acts. The first is in Acts 16:6, where Paul and Silas, having journeyed on their westward way from Syria and the Cilician Gates through Derbe and Lystra and co-opted Timothy as their travelling companion at the latter place, ‘went through the Phrygian and Galatean region (τὴν Φονίγαν καὶ Γαλατικὴν χώραν),42 having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.’ Accordingly, instead of proceeding west to Ephesus, ‘they came opposite Mysia (κατὰ τὴν Μυσίαν)43 and attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them, so, passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas’—and from there crossed over to Macedonia. Where, having regard to this fairly detailed itinerary, should we locate the ‘Phrygian and Galatean region’ through which the missionary party passed after receiving the prohibition to evangelize Asia? Ramsay, as we have seen, identified it with Phrygia Galatica—the part of Phrygia included within the province of Galatia, Strabo’s ‘Phrygia towards Pisidia’. Lightfoot’s suggestion was that it denoted ethnic Galatia, because that area had once been Phrygian (before the second half of the third century BC) but had subsequently become Galatian.44 But such an antiquarianism is uncharacteristic of Luke. Kirsopp Lake, who in his Earlier Epistles of St. Paul (1911) had followed Ramsay’s interpretation,45 reviewed the evidence afresh for his note on ‘Paul’s route in Asia Minor’ in Volume V of The Beginnings of Christianity. Part I (1933), and concluded that the most probable explanation was that Paul, instead of going west from Iconium along the Lycus and Maeander valleys,

went north through Phrygia and territory where Galatians were numerous. If this view be accepted ‘Phrygian and Galatian country’ means territory in which sometimes Phrygian and sometimes Gothic was the language of the villagers. His route may have been through Laodicea, Amorion, and Orkistos (surely a Gothic place)47 to Nakoleia and perhaps to Dorylaeum. Neither Nakoleia or Dorylaeum might be said to be κατὰ τὴν Μυσίαν. He was also on the direct road to Nicea, and certainly from Nakoleia and probably from Dorylaeum there was a straight road to Troas, ‘skirting’ Mysia—if that be the meaning of παραφέλειθών. In one or the other of these places he was once more prevented

42. The non-repetition of the article before Γαλατικὴν χώραν (except in the Byzantine text) suggests that this, and not ‘Phrygian and the Galatean region’, is the proper translation. Φονίγαν appears as an adjective of both two and three terminations but predominantly of three, even in later Greek; Φονιγίαν is therefore most probably an adjective here, and not a noun, as (e.g.) E. Haenchen asserts (Acts, 483). For the present construction cf. Lk. 3.1, τῆς Ἰουρωπᾶς καὶ Τραχωνίτιδος χώρας (‘the Iuraean and Trachonitid region’). See C. J. Hemer, The Adjective ‘Phrygia’’, JTS n.s. 27 (1976), 122–126; ‘Phrygia: A Further Note’, JTS n.s. 28 (1977), 99–101; ‘Luke the Historian’, BJRL 60 (1977–78), 45f.

43. ‘When they had reached such a point that a line drawn across the country at right angles to the general line of their route would touch Mysia’ (Ramsay, Church in the Roman Empire5, 75 n.); W. M. Calder suggests ‘in the latitude of Mysia’ (letter dated 18 February 1953).

44. Galatians, 22; he recognized that Φονίγαν and Γαλατικὴν were both adjectives qualifying χώραν (cf. his Colossians, 23).


46. He means Gallic or Galatian; Gaelic is a Q-Celtic language, whereas Gallic was P-Celtic.

47. Presumably taking it as cognate with Latin porcus, with normal Celtic loss of Indo-European *p (cf. Orkades, ‘Orkneys’). But Orkistos, in the province of Asia, was Phrygian speaking (cf. Calder in MAMA VII, 3).
by revelation from working as he had intended—this time in Bithynia—and so he turned to the left and went through Mysia to Troas.\textsuperscript{48}

This route, as Lake remarks, does not differ substantially from that postulated by Ramsay, apart from the interpretation of the ‘Phrygian and Galatian region’. But the aspect in which it does differ from Ramsay’s comes to grief on the hard facts. The frontier between Galatian Phrygia and ethnic Galatia has been delimited much more precisely than it was in Ramsay’s day;\textsuperscript{49} it ran due west from a point near the northernmost part of Lake Tatta (Tuz Gölü) to Orkistos (where the Sangarius divided the province of Asia from the province of Galatia)—say from 32° 50’ E. and rather north of 39° N. Since Paul’s plan, according to Acts 15:36, was to visit all the cities which he and Barnabas had evangelized in South Galatia a year or two earlier, he and his companions probably intended to travel west from Lystra through Iconium and Pisidian Antioch. The prohibition against preaching in Asia was probably communicated at Lystra;\textsuperscript{50} the Pastoral Epistles contain reminiscences of prophetic utterances given on the occasion when Timothy joined the apostolic company.\textsuperscript{51} Now they had to follow some other road than that which led to Ephesus, but it was necessary to go on to Iconium in any case. If by this time they thought of Bithynia they could cut out Pisidian Antioch and take the road to Phrygia Paroreios (the territory lying north and south of the range of Sultan Dağ), or they could go on to Pisidian Antioch and reach Phrygia Paroreios from there by crossing Sultan Dağ. In either case they would arrive at Philomelium. Leaving Philomelium by either of two possible routes for the north-west, they passed at once into Phrygia Asiana: they would not touch ethnic Galatia or pass through any village where the Celtic language would be heard.

The ‘Phrygian and Galatian region’ cannot be understood in the sense suggested by Lake: it can only mean the territory through which Paul and his friends passed after leaving Lystra, the territory in which Iconium and Pisidian Antioch were situated. Even if they by-passed both these cities and made straight for Mysia after receiving the divine monition at Lystra, they would still have crossed from Lycaonia Galatica into Phrygia Galatica and continued in the latter region until they reached the frontier of the province of Asia. To reach a road which would take them through territory where the Phrygian and Celtic tongues would both be heard, they would have had to go straight north from Lystra until they reached the latitude of 39° N. (without hearing a word of Celtic) and then turn west through a series of villages, remote from any contact with city life. There indeed they would have heard Phrygian on their left and Celtic on their right. But why should Paul make a detour to visit such a district ‘unless he had a prophetic vision of what Lake was going to say in the fulness of time, and some interest in proving him right?’\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{48} BC. I. 5, 236.


\textsuperscript{50} Ramsay unnecessarily followed J. B. Lightfoot (\textit{Biblical Essays} [London, 1893], 237) in adopting the inferior Byzantine reading διελθόντες instead of διελθόν, thus making the prohibition come after their passing through Derbe and Lystra (\textit{SPT}, 195f.). The prohibition was given in good time to enable the missionaries to change their plans without inconvenience.

\textsuperscript{51} 1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14 (cf. 2 Tim. 1:6).

\textsuperscript{52} W. M. Calder, letter, 18 February 1953.
The narrative of Acts 15:41–16:8 is certainly more intelligible if the ‘Phrygian and Galatic region’ is that part of Phrygia included in the province of Galatia. Although there were naturally lines of communication linking the various regions of the province, the cities of North Galatia were not readily accessible from the road leading from the Cilician Gates through Lystra. Any one proposing to evangelize North Galatia would have been better advised to set out from some other place than Lystra.

The second passage in Acts which is relevant to our subject is 18:23, where Paul, having paid a hasty visit to Palestine after his Corinthian ministry (probably in the summer of AD 52), returned to the west to begin his evangelization of Ephesus and ‘went from place to place through the Galatic region and Phrygia (τὴν Γαλατίαν καὶ Φρυγίαν), strengthening all the disciples’. It may be that by this geographical phrase Luke means much the same as the ‘Phrygian and Galatic region’ of Acts 16:6. Ramsay thought the ‘Galatic region’ of Acts 18:23 was Galatic Lycaonia, in distinction from that part of Lycaonia which belonged to the kingdom of Commagene (Lycaonia Antiochiana), but this is uncertain. The ‘Galatic region’ might be Galatic Lycaonia and Galatic Phrygia while ‘Phrygia’ on this occasion could include Asian Phrygia. The reference to Paul’s ‘strengthening all the disciples’ indicates that he was not pioneering but retracing his former footsteps. If the expression in Acts 16:6 could cover ethnic Galatia, so could the expression in Acts 18:23; if ethnic Galatia is excluded from the former passage, it is excluded here too. It is simplest to understand Acts 18:23 in the sense of Paul’s passing once more through Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch. In Acts 19:1 he is said to have passed through ‘the upper country’ (τὰ ἄνωτερα μέση) on his way to Ephesus. More or less any part of inland Asia Minor could have been called ‘the upper country’ in relation to Ephesus: here the reference may be to the road leading due west from Pisidian Antioch, reaching Ephesus by the north side of Mount Messogis, instead of the main road farther south following the Lycus and Maeander valleys.⁵⁴

5. Other references

Other NT references to Galatia or the Galatians can be disposed of quickly. The ‘churches of Galatia’ which, according to 1 Corinthians 16:1, had received Paul’s instructions about the collection for Jerusalem, are no doubt identical with the ‘churches of Galatia’ addressed in Gal. 1:2. If Paul’s companions on his last journey to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4) were the delegates of the contributing churches, it may be relevant that they include two South Galatians, Gaius of Derbe and

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⁵³ Church in the Roman Empire, pp. 90ff.
⁵⁵ The Western text has ‘Gaius of Doberus’ (in Macedonia), perhaps by way of harmonization with ‘Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul’s companions in travel’ (Acts 19:29, where Μακεδόνες immediately followed by συνεκδήμους may be a dittography for Μακεδόνα, which would then refer only to Aristarchus, called in Acts 27:2 ‘a Macedonian from Thessalonica’).
Timothy (of Lystra), but no North Galatians; as has been said above, however, the list of companions may not be exhaustive.56

The ‘Galatia’ to which Crescens went (2 Tim. 4:10) is not easily identified; its significance is the more complicated because of the variant (but improbable) reading ‘Gaul’ (Γαλλίαν for Γαλατίαν).57

As for ‘Galatia’ in 1 Pet. 1:1, that seems to denote the province in general, as it is named along with other Anatolian provinces—Pontus, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia—as an area in which ‘exiles of the dispersion’ (i.e. Christians) lived.58

6. The present state of the question

The debate on the location of Paul’s Galatians does not appear to be carried on today as seriously as it once was. R. M. Grant holds that in general ‘Acts does not assist us in locating these churches’ but suggests that the Spirit’s prohibition in Acts 16:6 ‘may well be a theological expression of one aspect of Paul’s illness’59 which, according to Gal. 4:13, occasioned Paul’s first visit to Galatia. We have been accustomed to hearing the argument pressed against the South Galatian view that there is no hint in Acts 13:13ff. that Paul was ill when he first visited Pisidian Antioch and the other cities of Galatian Phrygia and Lycaonia, and the answer readily presented itself that equally there is no hint of illness in the record of his passing through the Phrygian and Galatian region of Acts 16:6. But the force of this answer (negative as it was) is now threatened. Even so, Grant’s interpretation of the Spirit’s prohibition is no more probable than Ramsay’s suggestion that Paul went up from the Pamphylian coast to the highlands of Pisidian Antioch (3,600 feet above sea level) because of an attack of malaria (which he identified with the ‘splinter in the flesh’ of 2 Cor. 12:7).60

Grant’s understanding of the Spirit’s prohibition in the light of Gal. 4:13, along with the unlikelihood that Paul would address as ‘Galatians’ (Gal. 3:1) people who spoke Lycaonian (Acts 14:11),61 leads him to conclude ‘that the letter was addressed to a group of communities near Ancyra’62—a conclusion which is sustained with difficulty when the journey of Acts 15:41–16:8 is plotted on the map.

It is disquieting to see how superficially the North Galatian hypothesis is defended by many of its champions nowadays, when we think of the careful arguments adduced by scholars of two and three generations ago—especially disquieting to see how little attention is paid to the relevant data of historical geography. Thus in Willi Marxsen’s Introduktion to the New Testament we read:


57. See Codd. K C and a few other authorities; cf. Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. 3.4.8.


60. Church in the Roman Empire4, 62ff.; SPT, 92ff.

61. But the point is that (on the South Galatian view) Paul’s addressee included people who were not Lycaonians linguistically, but who were ‘Galatians’ politically (see p. 16 below).

‘If Paul meant by “Galatia” the Roman province, he could have been in the southern part of the province even on the first missionary journey—although not in the “region of Galatia”, as Acts always calls it.  
This implies that the Гαλατική χώρα—an expression which occurs but twice in Acts (16:6; 18:23)—can refer only to ethnic Galatia; in fact the adjective Гαλατικός (Latin Galaticus) is well attested for those regions of the province which were not ethnically Galatian, and also for the province as a whole, but not at this period for ethnic Galatia.

Marxsen continues: ‘The South Galatian hypothesis, however, is extremely improbable.’ In support of this statement three arguments are adduced:

1. ‘The assertion that is often made, that Paul always uses the names of the Roman provinces, is incorrect.’

If anyone said that Paul always uses the names of the Roman provinces, he would be imprudent; the fact is that Paul normally uses them. There may be deviations from this norm, but they will be recognizable deviations, and the burden of proof lies on those who understand Гαλατία and Гαλάται in his writings in another than the provincial sense.

2. ‘Besides, Paul would hardly have been able to say in 1:21, “Then I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia”, for this is the Pauline parallel to the first missionary journey in Acts. According to the South Galatian hypothesis he must have founded the Galatian churches at that time but there is no mention of this.’

This argument seems to imply that Paul might have included the churches of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe in ‘the regions of Syria and Cilicia’ (if Acts 13–14 rightly makes him evangelize these cities at this stage), but not those which he calls ‘the churches of Galatia’; the latter would therefore be different from the four churches of Acts and be located in North Galatia. That Paul would have included the South Galatian churches in ‘the regions of Syria and Cilicia’ is incredible; Gal. 1:21 is parallel, not to the ‘first missionary journey’ of Acts 13–14 but to the interval between Acts 9:31 and 11:30, when

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64. E.g. Pontus Galaticus (cf. p. 5 n. 11).
65. E.g. in CIG 3991, where an official entrusted with the delimitation of boundaries c. AD 54 is called ‘procurator of the Galatian province’ (Γαλατικῆς ἐπαρχείας).
66. About AD 150 Arrian (Anab. 2.4.1) can describe Alexander the Great as setting out ‘for Galatian Ancyra’, or ‘for Ancyra of the Galatian territory’ (ἐπ’ Ἀγκυρῆς τῆς Γαλατικῆς), meaning the land which was to become ‘Galatia’ in the century after Alexander; by Arrian’s time the province of Galatia had begun to shrink back to its ethnic limits. (There is a variant reading, preferred by the Loeb edition: τῆς Γαλατίας, ‘of Galatia’.)
67. He refers to E. Haenchen’s note on Acts 16:6 to the effect that ‘the assertion that Paul always uses the Roman names for the provinces has, without foundation, wellnigh become a dogma’ (Haenchen, Acts. 483 n. 2). If this were so, it were a grievous fault in a situation which calls for evidence, not dogma. Haenchen is right in pointing out that a number of terms occurring in Paul could be used either in the technical Roman sense or more generally and traditionally (e.g. Macedonia, Asia), but this argues neither for nor against the technical Roman sense in other instances.
68. Marxsen may mean, like H. H. Wendt, Die Apostelgeschichte (Göttingen, *1913), 242f. (an earlier edition of which is cited by Ramsay, Church in the Roman Empire, 106ff.), that Paul was inaccurate in Gal. 1:21, but that the North Galatians would not have noticed this, whereas the South Galatians would have done so since it concerned them. Even if Paul was inaccurate, does a man perpetrate inaccuracies only when he knows that his readers or hearers will not notice them?
Paul was active first in Tarsus and then in Antioch—the two leading cities of the united province of Syria-Cilicia. 69

3. ‘Finally it seems unlikely that Paul would address the inhabitants of Pisidia and Lycaonia as “Galatians”’ (3:1: “O foolish Galatians”). This can only be a racial term and cannot refer to the inhabitants of a Roman administrative district.’

This argument, which is sometimes reinforced by the consideration that to address Christians who were not ethnic Galatians as ‘Galatians’ would be psychologically disastrous, 70 will hardly stand up to investigation. What comprehensive term could have been used (other than ‘Galatians’) to address Pisidians (or rather Phrygians) and Lycaonians together? We may reflect that the one comprehensive term which is acceptable when Englishmen, Welsh, Cornish and Scots are referred to or addressed together is ‘British’, which ‘ethnically’ is appropriate only to the Welsh and Cornish (and the Bretons, who are part of another political unit). The name Britain, or Great Britain, to denote the whole island, is a political expedient; yet Highland and Lowland Scots would much rather be called British (which they are not ‘ethnically’) than English (which is applicable to them only linguistically, and even so is unacceptable). 71

If Paul’s readers found anything objectionable in being called ‘foolish Galatians’, the objection arose from the adjective ‘foolish’ rather than from the substantive ‘Galatians’. If they were South Galatians, some of them lived in Phrygia and some in Lycaonia, and in addition to Phrygians and Lycaonians they included Jews, Greeks and perhaps Romans (since Pisidian Antioch was a Roman colony). The one political feature which they shared in common was their residence within the frontiers of the province of Galatia; the only political term that could be applied to them all was Galatians. Ramsay’s judgment may be quite soundly based: ‘I can entertain no doubt that about AD 50 the address by which an orator would most please the Iconians, in situations where the term “Iconians” was unsuitable, was ἄνδρες Γαλαταί, “gentlemen of the Galatic province.”’ 72 Even ‘Phrygians’ might not have been very acceptable to the Iconians, because of its currency in a sense practically synonymous with ‘slaves’ or ‘cowards’ 73 (and it would have been in every way inapplicable to the people of Lystra and Derbe). As for the people of Pisidian Antioch, they might well have preferred the designation ‘Galatians’ to either ‘Phrygians’ or ‘Pisidians’, for if ‘Phrygians’ was tantamount to ‘slaves’ or ‘cowards’, ‘Pisidians’ (which the people of Antioch were not in any case) would have been little better than ‘barbarians’.

W. G. Kümmel’s *Introduction to the New Testament*, in which the North Galatian designation is upheld, similarly lays weight on the reference to ‘the

69. Syria and Cilicia were united to form one province in 27 BC; cf. J. G. C. Anderson, ‘Provincia Cappadocia,’ CR 45 (1931), 189ff., and in CAH X (1934), 279. See pp. 102f. below.


71. In an inscription of AD 57 a man of Apollonia in Phrygia Galatia thanks Zeus for bringing him back safely, ‘to my home in the land of the Galatians’ (Γαλατῶν γὰρ ἔγωγες ἐστι πατρίδος). See MAMA IV (Manchester, 1933), 8140, for the text of the inscription.

72. *Church in the Roman Empire*, 43; cf. *HDB* II, 92 (s.v. ‘Galatia’).

regions of Syria and Cilicia' in Gal. 1:21 and the address 'O foolish Galatians' in Gal. 3:1; but the defence of the North Galatian hypothesis deserves weightier arguments than these.

In fact, more recent statements of the North Galatian case represent no advance on Lightfoot and fall short of the statements of Schmiedel and Moffatt. This may be due in some measure to the fashion of paying more attention to the style of Luke's narrative than to the narrative itself; besides, if the narrative is regarded as a partly fictitious and in any case idealized construction by a writer of a later generation, detailed study of its historical geography is not of the first relevance. Against this fashion it must be recognized that Luke's narrative is true to its dramatic date, and in this regard the study of its historical geography is of the utmost importance.

In recent years especially there has tended to be a correlation between acceptance of the South Galatian view and a high estimate of the historical reliability of Acts, on the one hand, and between acceptance of the North Galatian view and a more sceptical assessment of Acts on the other. This correlation may be little more than coincidental: it is neither necessary nor deliberate. An exception is provided by R. H. Fuller's Critical Introduction to the New Testament in the Duckworth series. There, as in the identically entitled volume by A. S. Peake which Fuller's work has replaced, the South Galatian view is adopted but (in contrast to Peake's treatment) there is a lower estimate of the historical value of Acts. 'The motive, conscious or unconscious, behind the North Galatian theory', says Fuller, 'seems to be the desire to avoid making Gal. the earliest Pauline letter'. This is doubtful, because by no means all South Galatianists make Galatians the earliest Pauline letter: those who infer from the reference to the 'former' or 'first' visit (τὸ πρότερον) in Gal. 4:13 that Paul had visited the South Galatian churches twice before he wrote to them must date his letter after Acts 16:6. Fuller undertakes to satisfy the North Galatianists' difficulty by taking the first missionary journey of Acts as a duplicate of the second, so that Paul's visit to South Galatia in Acts 16:1–6 was really his first (after the Council of Jerusalem), and the visit of Acts 18:23 was his second. Galatians is then dated during Paul's Ephesian ministry. But this dating of the epistle is independent of Fuller's view of the structure of Acts: it was held, for example, by T. W. Manson, who accepted Luke's narrative of the first and second missionary journeys as it stands and favoured the 'South Galatian' theory.

The question of the North or South Galatian destination of our epistle is not one in which it is proper to take up partisan attitudes or indulge in dogmatic

74. W. G. Kümmel, INT, ETr, 193.
79. 'The Problem of the Epistle to the Galatians', BJRL 24 (1940), 59–80, reprinted in Studies in the Gospels and Epistles (Manchester, 1962), 168–189. Before Manson, E. D. Burton held that the balance of probability favoured the South Galatian view of the epistle's destination and a date for it during Paul's Ephesian ministry (Galatians, xlvi, xlix); a similar position is preferred by J. A. T. Robinson, Redating the NT (London, 1976), 55–57.
assertions; and it ill becomes champions of either view to disparage the rival view or those who maintain it. The fact that so many competent scholars can be cited in support of either position suggests that the evidence for neither is absolutely conclusive. But the weight of the evidence, it seems to me, favours the South Galatian view. If the Epistle to the Galatians was indeed addressed to the churches of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, then we have important historical, geographical, literary and epigraphic data which will provide material for its better understanding.
III

THE GALATIAN PROBLEM

1. The occasion of the letter

The occasion of the letter was Paul’s receiving news of people who had visited his Galatian mission-field and were persuading his converts there to accept a different form of teaching from that which he had given them. He refers to these people as ‘trouble-makers’ (ταραχοσοντες, 1:7; 5:10) or ‘agitators’ (ἀναστασαλαντες, 5:12). According to the information reaching Paul, they were trying to impose on the Galatian Christians some requirements of the Jewish law, preeminently circumcision; there is also some word of the observance of special days, presumably those of the Jewish sacred calendar (4:10). It might have been expected that Jewish food-restrictions would also have figured in the new teaching; if so, Paul makes no reference to their doing so, although insistence on those food-restrictions by some Christians is implied in his account of Peter’s withdrawal from table-fellowship with Gentiles at Antioch (2:11–14).

The new teaching is denounced by Paul as a perversion of the true gospel of Christ (1:7), and the Galatian Christians who pay heed to it are warned that to submit to it is to turn away from God (1:6), to be severed from Christ, to fall from grace (5:4). The trouble-makers are incurring a curse because they substitute a spurious message for gospel truth (1:8f.); they are exposing themselves to the certainty of divine judgment (5:10). Even if they demand only a token measure of law-keeping from the Galatians, any such demand involves acceptance of the principle of justification by works of the law. This principle is clean contrary to the gospel of justification by faith—even if it were practicable, which it is not (3:11). Persuasive as the new teaching may be, it does not come from God (5:8), as did the original message which brought salvation to the members of the Galatian churches (1:6); the two are incompatible.

It is clearly implied, moreover, that the ‘trouble-makers’ tried to gain credence for their teaching among Paul’s converts by disparaging him and casting doubt on his apostolic credentials. In consequence, the Galatians who lent a ready ear to this teaching had a sense of estrangement from Paul, not to speak of hostility to him (4:16)—the fruit of an uneasy conscience.
Paul therefore judges it necessary in his letter to dwell at some length on the divine authority of his gospel and of his commission to preach it: he embarks on an autobiographical sketch of the first fourteen or seventeen years of his apostleship with the aim of establishing his independence in particular of the leaders of the Jerusalem church (1:11–2:10).

We do not know how precisely Paul learned of the trouble-makers’ activity in Galatia—whether by letter, or by first-hand information brought by a visitor or visitors from there, or at second hand. Our only source of knowledge about their teaching is Paul’s letter; if (as some have supposed, without any positive warrant) Paul himself was inadequately informed about it, we have no means of correcting or supplementing his information.¹

What then can be said about this ‘other gospel’ which the Galatian Christians were disposed to embrace, or about the identity and motives of those who pressed it on them? These questions constitute what has been called ‘the singular problem of the Epistle to the Galatians’.²

2. The early consensus

Why speak of a ‘singular problem’? To many readers of the letter, from the second century onwards, the nature of the ‘other gospel’ has been self-evident, and the character of its proponents not greatly in doubt. The second-century Marcionite prologues to the letters of Paul³ began with the prologue to Galatians, which runs thus:

The Galatians are Greeks.⁴ They at first received the word of truth from the apostle, but after his departure they were tempted by false apostles to turn to the law and circumcision. The apostle calls them back to the true faith,⁵ writing to them from Ephesus.

In this prologue the ‘law’ to which the Galatians were being tempted to turn was the Jewish law; this is indicated by its collocation with ‘circumcision’, as well as by the plain meaning of the repeated references to law in the letter itself.

The same understanding of the argument of Galatians recurs throughout the patristic literature. For example, Marius Victorinus, the earliest Latin commentator on the letter, puts it thus:

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¹. See p. 25.
². See p. 24.
⁴. See p. 6.
⁵. Or ‘to belief in the truth’. 
The sum of the letter is as follows: the Galatians are going astray because they are adding Judaism to the gospel of faith in Christ, observing in a material sense the sabbath and circumcision, together with the other works which they received in accordance with the law. Disturbed by these tendencies Paul writes this letter, wishing to put them right and call them back from Judaism, in order that they may preserve faith in Christ alone, and receive from Christ the hope of salvation and of his promises, because no one is saved by the works of the law. So, in order to show that what they are adding is wrong, he wishes to confirm [the truth of] his gospel.6

In the Reformation period we find no significant change, except that the Reformers pressed an analogy between the situation with which Paul dealt and that of their own day. Luther begins his preface to the epistle thus:

The Galatians had been brought by St. Paul to right Christian belief, from the law to the gospel. But after his departure there came the false apostles, who were disciples of the true apostles, and turned the Galatians back again to believe that they must attain blessedness through the work of the law, and that they were sinning if they did not hold the work of the law, as according to Acts 15 certain highly-placed people in Jerusalem insisted.7

This is expanded as follows in his commentary on the epistle:

St. Paul goeth about to establish the doctrine of faith, grace, forgiveness of sins, or Christian righteousness, to the end that we may have a perfect knowledge and difference between Christian righteousness and all other kinds of righteousness. . . . For if the article of justification be lost, then is all true Christian doctrine lost. . . .

Christ [says Paul] hath mercifully called you in grace, that ye should be freemen under Christ, and not bondmen under Moses, whose disciples ye are now become again by the means of your false apostles, who by the law of Moses called you not unto grace, but unto wrath, to the hating of God, to sin and death. . . .

Hereby it may easily be gathered, that these false apostles had condemned the Gospel of Paul among the Galatians, saying: Paul indeed hath begun well, but to have begun well is not enough, for there remain yet many higher matters; like as they say in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts: It is not enough for you to believe in Christ, or to be baptized, but it behoveth also that ye be circumcised; 'for except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved'. This is as much to say, as that Christ is a good workman, which hath indeed begun a building, but he hath not finished it; for this must Moses do.8

Luther goes on to draw a parallel with the 'fantastical spirits, Anabaptists and others' of his day as well as with the 'Papists'.9

According to John Calvin (1548), Paul

had faithfully instructed them [the Galatians] in the pure gospel, but false apostles had entered in his absence and corrupted the true seed by false and corrupt dogmas. For they taught that the observance of ceremonies was still necessary. This might seem trivial; but Paul fights for it as a fundamental article of the Christian faith. And rightly so, for it is

9. Ibid., 63ff.
no light evil to quench the brightness of the gospel, lay a snare for consciences and
remove the distinction between the old and new covenants. He saw that these errors were
also related to an ungodly and destructive opinion on the deserving of righteousness. . . .

The false apostles, who had deceived the Galatians to advance their own claims,
pretended that they had received a commission from the apostles. Their method of infil-
tration was to get it believed that they represented the apostles and delivered a message
from them. But they took away from Paul the name and authority of apostle. . . . In
attacking Paul they were really attacking the truth of the gospel.10

In other words, the Galatian converts were being urged to observe ceremonies
of the OT law as integral to the gospel and to accept a doctrine of justification
by personal merit. Since Paul's preaching excluded all this, it must be under-
mined by an attempt to diminish his status in the eyes of his converts.

This understanding of the situation prevailed into the nineteenth century,
when it was taken up by the Tübingen school of F. C. Baur and his associates,
who integrated it into their account of primitive Christian history. 'What led the
Apostle to write this Epistle to the Galatian Churches', wrote Baur, 'we learn
very clearly from the Epistle itself'. The Galatians' falling away from the gospel
as Paul preached it

was due to the influence of strange teachers who . . . represented to them that, as a first
step to the Christian salvation, they must submit to circumcision (v. 2, 11). Here we first
meet with those Judaising opponents with whom the Apostle had to maintain so severe
a struggle in the churches which he founded, and they appear here quite in the harsh and
uncompromising Judaistic character which marks them as opponents of Pauline Chris-
tianity. . . . In one word, they were Jews or Jewish Christians of the genuine old stamp,
who could so little understand the more liberal atmosphere of Pauline Christianity that
they would have thought the very ground of their existence was cut from under them if
Judaism were no longer to have its absolute power and importance.11

In principle, according to Baur, the declared opponents of Pauline Chris-
tianity were in agreement with the leaders of the Jerusalem church; indeed, those
leaders 'are themselves the opponents against whom the Apostle contends in
refuting these principles'.12 But their reluctant recognition, at the Jerusalem
conference, that Paul and Barnabas had been entrusted with the gospel for the
Gentiles, tied their hands and compelled them to take the position of non-
belligerents. Other members of the Jerusalem church, however, were not so
bound, and they were the infiltrators or trouble-makers who endeavoured to
subvert Paul's teaching and apostolic authority among his Gentile converts, in-
cluding the churches of Galatia.

Bishop Lightfoot sums the matter up concisely:

The Epistle to the Galatians is especially distinguished among St. Paul's letters by its
unity of purpose. The Galatian apostasy in its double aspect, as a denial of his own
authority and a repudiation of the doctrine of grace, is never lost sight of from beginning
to end.13

10. J. Calvin, Galatians, ETr, 4f.
11. F. C. Baur, Paul: his Life and Works, ETr, i (London, 1876), 251–253; cf. his Church
History of the First Three Centuries, ETr, i (London, 1878), 49–60.
12. Baur, Paul, i, 121.
13. J. B. Lightfoot, Galatians, 63.
This ‘apostasy’, as he calls it,

was a Judaism of the sharp Pharisaic type, unclouded or unrelieved by any haze of Essene mysticism, such as prevailed a few years later in the neighbouring Colossian Church.\textsuperscript{14} The necessity of circumcision was strongly insisted upon. Great stress was laid on the observance of ‘days and months and seasons and years’. In short, nothing less than submission to the whole ceremonial law seems to have been contemplated by the innovators. At all events, this was the logical consequence of the adoption of the initiatory rite.\textsuperscript{15}

But far from accepting the Tübingen interpretation, Lightfoot regards the Epistle to the Galatians as refuting it most conclusively, ‘for it shows the true relations existing between St. Paul and the Twelve’.\textsuperscript{16} Far from agreeing in principle with the judaizing propagandists, the Jerusalem leaders agreed in principle with Paul; if Paul at Antioch charged Peter with ‘play-acting’\textsuperscript{17} when he withdrew from table-fellowship with Gentile Christians, it was precisely because Peter on this occasion was acting in a manner at variance with his real principles.

Lightfoot’s account of the situation in the Galatian churches calls, in my judgment, for very little modification. But during the present century variant accounts of the situation have been put forward by highly reputable scholars, and these accounts merit serious assessment.

3. Other explanations

In 1919 Wilhelm Lütgert published a monograph with the title \textit{Law and Spirit}\textsuperscript{18} in which he argued that in the Galatian situation Paul had to wage war on two fronts simultaneously. Not only had he to deal with the attempt to impose on his converts circumcision and other obligations of the Jewish law; he had also to deal with radicals of the opposite stripe to the Judaizers, with those who wished to sever the gospel from its OT roots and who held that the new life in the Spirit gave them the entrée into a realm of knowledge which dismissed the ‘things of the flesh’ as irrelevant and had little regard for those ethical distinctions on which Paul—inconsistently, to their way of thinking—insisted. It was against these people, said Lütgert, and not against the Judaizers, that Paul had to defend his claim to apostolic authority in independence of Jerusalem. By their standards, any one who was dependent on Jerusalem was insufficiently emancipated from the old order of Judaism; hence Paul’s emphatic assertion that he had received his commission and his message from no human source—least of all from the Jerusalem ‘pillars’—but by direct revelation from the exalted Lord. These were the people, too, who needed the warning not to turn their Christian freedom into licence (5:13); the Judaizers, on the contrary, had to be warned not to exchange their freedom for the ‘yoke of slavery’ (5:1).

\textsuperscript{14} Cf. J. B. Lightfoot. \textit{Colossians and Philemon}. 73ff., 349ff.
\textsuperscript{15} Lightfoot. \textit{Galatians}. 27.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{17} Gal. 2:13.
\textsuperscript{18} W. Lütgert. \textit{Gesetz und Geist: eine Untersuchung zur Vorgeschichte des Galaterbriefes} (Gütersloh, 1919).
Lütgert’s thesis was elaborated (with modifications) ten years later by James Hardy Ropes, in his monograph entitled *The Singular Problem of the Epistle to the Galatians*. Ropes attempted, by means of a short commentary on Galatians included in his monograph, to show that this thesis illuminated each successive section of the epistle. In Gal. 3:6–29, for example, the radicals who wished to forget the OT antecedents of the gospel had to be reminded that, Gentiles as they were, they were children of Abraham by faith in Christ—children of Abraham in the sense that mattered most.

Ropes also argued that the Galatian Judaizers need not have been influenced by intruding visitors from Judaea; ‘all that we need suppose is that certain gentile Christians had proved susceptible to the efforts of local synagogue Jews, and had tried to persuade the churches as a whole to accept Jewish rites, including circumcision’.

In an article published in 1945 F. R. Crownfield undertook to do justice both to the arguments of Lütgert and Ropes and to those pointing to the traditional identification of the trouble-makers as straightforward Judaizers by representing the trouble-makers as syncretistic Jews, for whom legalism was a means to the end of higher enlightenment.

Johannes Munck, Professor of New Testament in Aarhus, Denmark, pronounced a novel line in the interpretation of our epistle when in 1954 he maintained that the Judaizers in the churches of Galatia were not Jewish Christians, not visitors from Judaea, not local synagogue Jews, but Gentile Christians, Paul’s own converts. All that they knew about Jewish Christianity and the Jerusalem church they knew from Paul. ‘His words about Jerusalem and the Judaean churches were full of sympathy and understanding’. Knowing that the Jerusalem Christians were circumcised and kept many of the ordinances observed by the Jews among whom they lived, some of Paul’s converts concluded that he had only half-evangelized them and that they should conform to Jerusalem practice. Moreover, Paul taught his converts to use the Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures as their Bible. While he was with them he showed them how those scriptures spoke of the salvation of the Gentiles, but when he had left them they read in those same scriptures much that spoke of Abraham and his posterity as the recipients of God’s blessing, much that spoke of the glory of Israel and the subjection of the Gentiles, much that spoke of the keeping of the law as a condition of enjoying divine approval. Was it strange, then, that they should draw those practical conclusions which so horrified Paul when he heard of them?

But there are several indications throughout the letter that the trouble-makers in the Galatian churches were incomers, not some of Paul’s Gentile converts. He refers to them throughout in the third person, while he addresses his converts

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24. Ibid., 132.
in the second person. In his letters to the Corinthians offenders within the church of Corinth are rebuked in the second person, while interlopers from elsewhere are denounced in the third person. So we may conclude that it is outsiders whom Paul has in view when he says to the Galatian Christians. ‘The persons I have referred to are paying court to you, but not with honest intentions: what they really want is to bar the door to you so that you may pay court to them’ (4:17, NEB margin).

Walter Schmithals, in an article published in 1956,25 put forward a simpler account than that of Lütgert and Ropes: Paul was not waging a war on two fronts; the sole target of his attack was a body of Jewish Christian Gnostics such as Schmithals had already identified with the target of Paul’s attack in the Corinthian correspondence.26 But Gnosticism has really to be read into the teaching of these people as reflected in Paul’s attack on them before it can be read out of it.27 And it is begging the question to argue, as Willi Marxsen does, that this is due to Paul’s own failure to understand properly what they were teaching28 (he heard that they were teaching circumcision and assumed too hastily that they were straightforward Judaizers, whereas they were in fact ‘introducing something new—a Christian-Jewish-Gnostic syncretism’).29 if we cannot determine the nature of their teaching from Paul’s refutation of it, we have no other evidence to guide us.

There is nothing improbable per se in Paul’s having to defend the gospel on two fronts at once; he certainly had to do so at Corinth.30 But there is no substantial evidence of his having to do so in the churches of Galatia. No doubt he realized the necessity of warning his converts there, as elsewhere, against misinterpreting his message of liberty in an antinomian sense: they must not turn their freedom into licence to indulge in the ‘works of the flesh’, but rather live in mutual love, the first ‘fruit of the Spirit’ (5:13f., 22). But while he reminds them that those who manifest the works of the flesh ‘will never inherit the kingdom of God’ (5:21), this is not the main thrust of his letter. The ‘work of the flesh’ which posed the most deadly threat in the churches of Galatia appears to have been a quarrelsome spirit; hence Paul’s warning in 5:15: ‘But if you go on fighting one another tooth and nail, all you can expect is mutual annihilation’. The course which he recommends to them is a larger measure of that faith which is ‘active in love’ and in that love to ‘be servants to one another’ (5:6, 13).

4. Against whom does Paul defend himself?

Paul’s insistence on his independent authority over Jerusalem is quite intelligible as part of his argument against Judaizers whose main appeal was to the Jerusalem

28. W. Marxsen, INT, 55, 58.
29. Ibid., 56.
leaders. These Judaizers argued: ‘The Jerusalem leaders are the only persons with authority to say what the true gospel is, and this authority they received direct from Christ. Paul has no comparable authority: any commission he exercises was derived by him from the Jerusalem leaders, and if he differs from them on the content or implications of the gospel, he is acting and teaching quite arbitrarily. In fact’, they may have added, ‘Paul went up to Jerusalem shortly after his conversion and spent some time with the apostles there. They instructed him in the first principles of the gospel and, seeing that he was a man of uncommon intellect, magnanimously wiped out from their minds his record as a persecutor and authorized him to preach to others the gospel which he had learned from them. But when he left Jerusalem for Syria and Cilicia he began to adapt the gospel to make it palatable to Gentiles. The Jerusalem leaders practised circumcision and observed the law and the customs, but Paul struck out on a line of his own. omitting circumcision and other ancient observances from the message he preached, and thus he betrayed his ancestral heritage. This law-free gospel has no authority but his own; he certainly did not receive it from the apostles, who disapproved of his course of action. Their disapproval was publicly shown on one occasion at Antioch, when there was a direct confrontation between Peter and him on the necessity of maintaining the Jewish food-laws.’

To this Paul replies: ‘At no time did I derive any commission from the Jerusalem leaders. My call to apostleship and the gospel I proclaim were alike received by me “through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:12). My apostleship was to be discharged among the Gentiles; the gospel which I received by revelation was to be preached among the Gentiles, and the Jerusalem leaders recognized this when they “acknowledged that I had been entrusted with the gospel for Gentiles as surely as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for Jews; for God, whose action made Peter an apostle to the Jews, also made me an apostle to the Gentiles” (2:7ff.). If it is a question of defining the content or the implications of the gospel so far as it affects Gentiles, I speak with authority—not I indeed, but the Lord, who called and commissioned me. As for the confrontation with Cephas (Peter) at Antioch, that came about because Peter, under pressure from visitors from Judaea, went back on his established practice of eating at the same table as uncircumcised Gentile Christians. This action of his was a virtual denial of the gospel which both he and I preached—the gospel which made no distinction between believers in Christ, whether they were Jews or Gentiles’ (2:11–14).

Paul, indeed, did not differ from the Jerusalem leaders with regard to the essential content of the gospel: it was based on the facts of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection, and these were proclaimed equally by both sides (cf. 1 Cor. 15:11). But there might well be differences of opinion with regard to the practical implications of the gospel in the lives of Gentile believers, and in this sphere Paul, commissioned by Christ to be the Gentiles’ apostle, would brook no interference from those whose apostolate was to the Jews, and still less from people who claimed to speak in their name.

But what of his words in Gal. 5:11: ‘And I, my friends, if I am still advocating circumcision, why is it I am still persecuted’? What was the point of charging Paul with advocating circumcision, and what was meant by this
charge? The point of the charge was probably this: ‘Don’t listen to Paul when he says you must not be circumcised; he preaches circumcision himself’. This was contrary to the Galatians’ experience of Paul’s preaching, but if (as was suggested) Paul was a trimmer, adapting his preaching to his environment, then plainly he need not be taken too seriously. That this sort of thing was actually suggested may be implied in Paul’s indignant words in 1:10: ‘Does my language now sound as if I were canvassing for men’s support? . . . Do you think I am currying favour with men? If I still sought men’s favour, I should be no servant of Christ’.  

But what was meant by the charge that Paul himself advocated circumcision? Was there anything in his teaching or action that lent it colour? We can well imagine how readily such an action as his circumcision of Timothy could be appealed to in this way; but perhaps all that was meant was that, true to his policy of living like a Jew among Jews, he did not discountenance the practice of circumcision among Jewish Christians. There is a relevant passage in Acts 21:21, where Paul, on his last visit to Jerusalem, is told by the elders of the mother-church that rumours have reached Jerusalem ‘that you teach all the Jews in the gentile world to turn their backs on Moses, telling them to give up circumcising their children and following our way of life’. The elders make it plain that they know these rumours to be unfounded, and the narrative goes on to represent Paul as acquiescing in their suggestion that he should give a public demonstration that they were unfounded. There is no need to regard this as an example of Luke’s policy of making the gulf between Paul and the Jerusalem church less unbridgeable than, according to the Tübingen tradition, it actually was; there is nothing in Paul’s letters which contradicts the picture given of him in Acts 21. Even in Galatians, his most uncompromising deliverance on this subject, his concern is solely with the imposing of circumcision on Gentile Christians; whether Jewish Christians continued to circumcise their children or not was probably a matter of small importance in his eyes, on a par with their continued observance or non-observance of the sabbath and the levitical food-laws, so long as it was not made a ground of justification before God.

5. The circumcision question

The most certain feature of the false gospel was its insistence on circumcision. In itself circumcision was neither here nor there so far as Paul was concerned: he says so twice in this very letter (5:6; 6:15). What disturbed him was the enforcement or acceptance of circumcision as a legal obligation, as though it were essential to salvation or to membership in the community of the people of God. There is nothing inconsistent with Paul’s principles in his circumcision of Timothy, as a matter of expediency, according to the record of

32. Or of Titus, if this is indeed implied in Gal. 2:3—but see pp. 111ff.
Acts 16:33—although it is easy to appreciate how this action could have been misrepresented or misunderstood. But in the situation which obtained in the churches of Galatia it was a very different matter: ‘Mark my words: I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision Christ will do you no good at all. Once again, you can take it from me that every man who receives circumcision is under obligation to keep the entire law’ (Gal. 5:2f.). If circumcision was accepted because it was required by the law of Israel, it was impossible to stop there: every part of that law was of equal obligation. But none of those who were disposed to accept circumcision as a legal obligation, nor any of those who pressed them to do so, contemplated keeping the whole law: as for the latter, says Paul, ‘they only want you to be circumcised in order to boast of your having submitted to that outward rite’ (6:13). Any one who admitted the principle of salvation by keeping the law and did not take seriously the consequent obligation to keep it in its entirety would incur the doom invoked by the law itself: ‘A curse is on all who do not persevere in doing everything that is written in the book of the law’ (3:10, quoting Dt. 27:26). When that curse had been incurred, the only way to be delivered from it was through the redemptive death of Christ: ‘Christ bought us freedom from the curse of the law by becoming for our sake an accursed thing; for Scripture says, “A curse is on everyone who is hanged on a gibbet”. And the purpose of it all was that the blessing of Abraham should in Christ Jesus be extended to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith’ (3:13f., quoting Dt. 21:23). It was preposterous for those who had experienced this deliverance to expose themselves to the sanctions of the law all over again by acknowledging a token obligation to keep it—just as preposterous as it would be for people set free from the yoke of slavery to place their necks voluntarily and deliberately under that yoke anew. The gospel of salvation by grace and the doctrine of salvation by law-keeping were mutually exclusive: to accept the latter was to renounce the former. ‘When you seek to be justified by way of law, your relation with Christ is completely severed: you have fallen out of the dominion of God’s grace’ (5:4).

It is not certain that in all schools of Jewish thought at this time circumcision was insisted on as a *sine qua non* for admission into the commonwealth of Israel. Philo seems to know of those who argued that, provided the spiritual significance of circumcision was maintained, it was permissible to dispense with the external rite; and he opposes them: ‘let us not abolish the law of circumcision on the ground that circumcision signifies the cutting away of pleasure and passions of every sort and the destruction of ungodly conceit’. About AD 40 Ananias, the Jewish instructor of King Izates of Adiabene, assured him that he could worship God according to the Jewish law without being circumcised; but later, when Izates was persuaded by another Jew, Eleazar by name, that he could not hope

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33. Timothy’s circumcision is recorded quite incidentally; there is no further reference to it, and it betrays no ‘tendency’ on Luke’s part. As the son of a Jewish mother, who had been brought up by her in the Jewish faith, he was a Jew in everything but circumcision, which had not been performed because his (late) father was a Greek, as the local Jews knew. Presumably Paul judged it advisable to make him a thorough-going Jewish Christian, but the precise point of the phrase ‘out of consideration for the Jews who lived in those parts’ is somewhat obscure. See A. E. Harvey, *The New English Bible: Companion to the New Testament* (Oxford and Cambridge, 1970), 459.

to be a true proselyte and win divine approval without circumcision, he submitted
to the rite.\textsuperscript{35} In debates with the school of Shamai, some members of the
school of Hillel maintained that, for Gentiles to become proselytes of Judaism,
the initiatory baptism was sufficient apart from circumcision\textsuperscript{36}—but this is more
likely to have been a position defended in debate than a matter of practice. Those
Gentiles who went all the way in the direction of Judaism but stopped short of
circumcision were treated as God-fearers, still outside the Jewish fellowship,
and not admitted as proselytes to membership within it.\textsuperscript{37}

Paul’s line was not that of those Hillelites who argued that circumcision
was not essential to a Gentile’s becoming a Jew, if he underwent proselyte
baptism. He was not concerned to make Gentiles into Jews, but to introduce
Jews and Gentiles alike into a new community through faith in Jesus as Lord.
In this new community circumcision was irrelevant, and any attempt to treat it
as essential was inadmissible. Circumcision, with many other features of the law
of Israel—food-restrictions, sacred seasons, and the like—had traditionally kept
Jews and Gentiles apart; such things had no place in the ‘new creation’ (6:15)
where there was ‘no such thing as Jew and Greek’ (3:28). Any attempt to impose
them was to put the clock back to the time before the coming of Christ.

6. The ‘elements’ of the world

Together with circumcision, the Galatians were observing special ‘days and
months and seasons and years’ (4:10). And what was wrong with that? In itself,
nothing. To Paul, the observance or non-observance of a sacred calendar was
religiously indifferent, just as circumcision was. ‘This man regards one day
more highly than another, while that man regards all days alike. On such a point
everyone should have reached conviction in his own mind’ (Rom. 14:5). Accord-
ing to the record of Acts, Paul regulated his own movements in some mea-
sure according to the Jewish calendar, especially in arranging his visits to
Jerusalem,\textsuperscript{38} and this was in complete accord with his settled policy, as set out
in 1 Cor. 9:19ff., to conform to Jewish ways in Jewish company and to Gentile
ways in Gentile company, so as to commend the gospel to Jews and Gentiles
alike. But to observe sacred occasions as a matter of religious obligation, as
though this were of the essence of gospel faith and church membership, was a
retrograde step, back from liberty to bondage; it was, in fact, a token of sub-
mission to the ‘elements (or elemental forces) of the world’ (Gal. 4:3, 9).

Whatever dictated Paul’s choice of the word ‘elements’ (οτορχεία) in this
context (see pp. 193ff.), it is plain that the observance of the Jewish law is here
interpreted as submission to them (pp. 203ff.). ‘During our minority’, says Paul,
‘we were slaves to the stoicheia of the universe’ (4:3). If the Galatians accept

\textsuperscript{35} Josephus, \textit{Ant.} 20.34ff.
\textsuperscript{36} b. Yebamot 46a \textit{(baraita)}.
\textsuperscript{37} Like Cornelius of Caesarea, who, despite his piety (Acts 10:2ff., 22), was still classed as
an uncircumcised Gentile, with whom no observant Jew could have table-fellowship (Acts 10:28;
11:3).
\textsuperscript{38} Cf. Acts 18:21 (Western text); 20:16 (cf. 27:9); also 1 Cor. 16:8.
the Jewish law as a religious obligation, they will be subject to this slavery, but curiously, although the Galatians are Gentiles, Paul says they will revert to this slavery. ‘Formerly, when you did not acknowledge God, you were the slaves of beings which in their nature are no gods’.\(^{39}\) But now that you do acknowledge God—or rather, now that he has acknowledged you—how can you turn back to the mean and beggarly stoicheia? Why do you propose to enter their service all over again?’ (4:8f.). Is Paul equating his own former Judaism and their former paganism as both alike consisting in the service of the stoicheia? Plainly he is.

It is immediately after these words that he reproaches them for keeping special ‘days and months and seasons and years’. Three of these four terms appear in the Greek version of Gn. 1:14, where it is recorded that the heavenly luminaries were appointed ‘for signs and for seasons and for days and years’.

Among the objects of pagan worship the deities who shared their names with the planets were particularly prominent. In the faith of Israel such deities were included among the b’nê ’lôhîm, members of the heavenly court of God Most High.\(^ {40}\) The Jews did not worship those beings as the Gentiles did. If, in the age before Christ, they regulated their religious life by ordinances imposed through the agency of these beings, that was in keeping with the stage of spiritual infancy through which they were then passing. But for believers who had been emancipated by Christ and attained their spiritual majority through faith in him to revert to such ordinances was little short of apostasy and scarcely to be distinguished from relapsing into pagan worship.

It was in the light of the gospel that these stoicheia were ‘mean and beggarly’: Christ had exposed their bankruptcy. For those who did not live in the good of Christian freedom the stoicheia were ‘principalities and powers’, keeping the souls of men in bondage.\(^ {41}\) Their overthrow by Christ on the cross is depicted in the Epistle to the Colossians, the only other writing in the Pauline corpus where the stoicheia figure—and figure in much the same way as they do in Galatians (although the ‘heresy’ which Paul combats in Colossians is apparently a more complex form of syncretism than the ‘other’ gospel which he denounces in Galatians).\(^ {42}\)

According to Paul, pagan worship was always culpable because it involved idolatry and the vices which followed from idolatry;\(^ {43}\) Jewish worship in the pre-Christian stage of God’s dealings with men was far from being culpable—it was divinely instituted—but it had the character of infancy and immaturity as compared with the coming of age into which men were introduced by faith in Christ. Just as a minor required the direction of tutors, guardians or slave-attendants, so the people of God in the days of their minority were under the control of the stoicheia. But for believers in Christ to put themselves under the control of these stoicheia afresh was not just reverting to infancy; it was tantamount to a declaration that the death of Jesus had no redemptive power: ‘I will not nullify the

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39. An echo of Dt. 32:17 (cf. 1 Cor. 10:20).
40. Cf. Dt. 32:8 (reading ‘sons of God’ rather than MT ‘sons of Israel’).
42. Col. 2:15.
grace of God; if righteousness comes by law, then Christ died for nothing’ (Gal. 2:21). Paul could hardly have expressed himself with greater urgency or severity had his converts been on the point of relapsing into paganism. We may compare the attitude of the writer to the Hebrews towards another group that was in danger of giving up its distinctive Christian standing and merging in its former Jewish environment: this, he warns, would be downright apostasy, desertion from the living God (Heb. 3:12).

7. The preferred solution

The simplest interpretation of Galatians, on the basis of its internal evidence, agrees remarkably with the statement in Acts 15:1 that, some time after the extension of the gospel to Asia Minor, ‘fierce dissension and controversy’ arose in the church of Syrian Antioch because ‘certain persons who had come down from Judaea began to teach the brotherhood that those who were not circumcised in accordance with Mosaic practice could not be saved’. If such persons also visited Antioch’s daughter-churches in Galatia with this same teaching, and found some acceptance for it there, the stage would be set for the Epistle to the Galatians—whether such a visit was paid about the same time or later.

While the ‘trouble-makers’ were no doubt moved by religious zeal, there are hints of another kind of motivation. Paul charges them with the aim of avoiding persecution ‘for the cross of Christ’ (6:12). Moreover, he implies that if he himself preached circumcision (as some alleged he still did), he would not be persecuted as he was. So far as Paul was concerned, his public proclamation of the law-free gospel must have given offence to Jewish communities wherever he went; but necessity was laid upon him—he had no option but to preach the gospel, the law-free gospel (1 Cor. 9:16). But why should the trouble-makers be so anxious to avoid persecution? Could they not have avoided it by staying at home and minding their own business?

An illuminating suggestion was made by Robert Jewett in an article published in 1971.44 There was a resurgence of ‘zealot’ activity in Judaea under the governors Tiberius Julius Alexander (c. AD 46–48), who crucified two insurgent leaders, sons of Judas the Galilaean (Jos., Ant. 20.102), and his successor Ventidius Cumanus (c. 48–52), during whose period of office disorders increased (Ant. 20.105–136; War 2.223–246). Zealot vengeance was liable to be visited on Jews who fraternized with Gentiles, and Jewish Christians who shared table-fellowship with their Gentile brethren were exposed to such reprisals. If Gentile Christians could be persuaded to accept circumcision, this (it was hoped) would protect Jewish Christians against zealot vengeance. The persuasion would be more effective if Gentile believers were assured that circumcision was a condition required by God from all men who wished to be accepted by him.45

This, then, could have been a further motive for those people who visited

the churches of Galatia and tried to persuade Paul's Gentile converts there that unless they received circumcision and other customs of Jewish religion they could not hope to win recognition from the church of Jerusalem and other fellow-believers of Jewish birth—that in their eyes they would have at most the status which Gentile God-fearers had in the eyes of the synagogue. The 'full' gospel included circumcision as an indispensable requirement; the gospel which they had received from Paul was a truncated gospel. To which Paul replied that such a 'full' gospel, denying as it did the all-sufficiency of Christ, was no gospel at all, and in so far as it involved a reversion to legal bondage it undercut the message of justification by faith, disallowed the claim that Jesus by his death and resurrection had inaugurated the messianic age which superseded the age of law and thus in effect disallowed his title to be the Messiah. Far from being a gospel in any sense, such teaching was plain apostasy from Christ. Hence, no matter who its propagator might be, anathema estō.
IV

THE TRUTH
OF THE GOSPEL

1. Galatians and the primitive message

The letter includes in its opening salutation words which are commonly recognized as drawn from an early Christian confession of faith, which Paul did not formulate although he subscribed to it. The Pauline greeting, 'Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ', is followed by a construction with article and participle (equivalent to an adjective clause) in which Christ is described as the one 'who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen' (Gal. 1:4f.). Two pieces of common and primitive Christian belief find expression here: (a) that Christ 'gave himself for our sins'—with which we may compare 1 Cor. 15:3, 'Christ died for our sins', or Rom. 4:25, 'who was delivered up for our trespasses'—and (b) that the purpose of his so doing was our deliverance 'from the present evil age'. This presents the Christian reinterpretation of the current Jewish doctrine of the two ages, the transition between the present age (the epoch of wickedness, as it is called in the Qumran texts) and the age to come (the age of new life and righteousness) being marked by the Christ-event—historically in his death and resurrection and existentially in the experience of his people when by faith they enter into union with him.1 To these two items should be added one that appears earlier in the salutation, where 'God the Father' is qualified by the participial phrase 'who raised him [i.e. Jesus] from the dead' (Gal. 1:1), a phrase recurring throughout the NT epistles, as in Rom. 4:24; 8:11; 10:9; 2 Cor. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:21.

Further extracts from the common stock of primitive Christianity appear in Gal. 4:4, 'When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman'—possibly with the further phrase 'born under law', but the following words, 'to redeem those that were under law, that we might receive adoption as sons' (Gal. 4:5), are characteristically Pauline. Yet when Paul goes on to link

1. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17.
this adoption of believers into the family of God with their receiving from God ‘the Spirit of his Son’, he adduces as a demonstration of this their invocation of God as ‘Abba! Father!’ (Gal. 4:6). From the earliest times, it appears, Greek-speaking Christians took over from the Aramaic-speaking church the word Abba which Jesus had used in addressing God or speaking about him (cf. Mk. 14:36), adding to it the Greek equivalent ὁ πατήρ (cf. Rom. 8:15). Thus Paul weaves his distinctive teaching around a core of primitive usage.

The same is true of the death of Christ, which evidently played a central part in the message first brought to the Galatians, ‘before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified’ (Gal. 3:1). Paul’s elaboration of the doctrine of Christ’s passion is seen in his argument in Gal. 3:10–14 that, by enduring the form of death upon which the divine curse had been pronounced in the law (Dt. 21:23), Christ had redeemed his people from the curse which the law pronounced on those who failed to keep it perfectly (Dt. 27:26). A further Pauline insight into the significance of the cross of Christ appears in Gal. 6:14 where, playing on a double meaning of the verb συνεχόμοιο, he says that it constitutes a fence separating him from the kosmos.

Baptism was the common sign of initiation into the Christian fellowship; in addition to its primitive association with repentance, cleansing and the remission of sins, Paul views it as the token of incorporation into Christ: ‘as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ’ (Gal. 3:27). Through membership in Christ, who is Abraham’s offspring, they too—even Gentiles—become Abraham’s offspring and heirs of the promises made to the patriarch by God (Gal. 3:29).

The reception of the Spirit in the Galatian churches, as elsewhere in the early apostolic age, was attended by mighty works (Gal. 3:5), but Paul elaborates the doctrine of the Spirit along lines of his own, contrasting life under the Spirit’s leadership with life under law in terms of freedom as opposed to bondage (Gal. 5:1, 18).

Most of the OT testimonia quoted in Galatians are characteristically Pauline, and some are peculiar to this letter. We shall be cautious, therefore, in assigning them to the common stock of primitive Christian testimonia. C. H. Dodd suggests that two of them may be so assigned: (a) the conflation of Gn. 12:3 and 22:18 in Gal. 3:8, ‘in you shall all the nations be blessed’ (cf. Acts 3:25 for a different conflation of the same two texts), and (b) the statement of Hab. 2:4, quoted in Gal. 3:11 (as in Rom. 1:17) in the sense, ‘he who is righteous (justified) by faith will come to life’, which (in the light of its different usage in

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2. Cf. A. M. Hunter, Paul and his Predecessors (London, 1961), 50, where Paul’s acquaintance with the Lord’s Prayer is suggested; see also J. A. T. Robinson’s comments on Christian baptism, adoption and the reception of the Spirit as reflecting ‘the association at the baptism of Jesus of the gift of the Spirit with the declaration of Sonship’ (‘The One Baptism as a Category of New Testament Soteriology’, SIT 6 [1953], 262).
Heb. 10:38) he thinks may have been a testimonium to the coming of Christ even before Galatians was written. I should mention two more.

In Gal. 3:13 Paul, as we have seen, quotes Dt. 21:23 (LXX), ‘cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’ (κρημνόμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου) and expounds it along with Dt. 27:26 by means of the rabbinical device of gezerah shawah. But it appears that Dt. 21:23 had already been applied to the crucifixion of Christ, if we consider the use of the phrase ‘hanging him on a tree’ (κρημνόμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου) in two speeches in Acts (5:30; 10:39) which there is no reason to regard as free Lukan compositions, since each is a summary of primitive kerygmatic motifs. Quite early Jesus’ followers came to terms with the fact that their Master died the death on which the law pronounced a curse, although Paul, more suo, relates the fact to Jesus’ satisfaction and abrogation of the Torah.

Again, the application of Is. 54:1 in Gal. 4:27, where the ‘barren one’ is interpreted of the Gentile church by contrast with the married woman, here understood as ‘the present Jerusalem’, might well be regarded as original to Paul. But at least it is taken from one of the most fertile fields of testimonia, Is. 40–66, which appears to have been given an extensive Christian interpretation at an early date. If Is. 54:1 had already received a Christian interpretation, Paul certainly adapts it to his current argument; one may wonder if this text suggested to him his allegorical exegesis of the Genesis story of Hagar and Sarah, with their respective sons, rather than vice versa.

Be that as it may. If we try to summarize the primitive Christian message proclaimed by Paul and his predecessors alike, as it is presupposed in the letter to the Galatians, the result might be somewhat as follows:

Jesus our Lord, the Son of God, was sent into the world by his Father when the due time came. He was born into the family of Abraham and lived under the Jewish law. He was crucified by his enemies, but in his death he gave himself for his people’s sins. God raised him from the dead, to be the Saviour of all who believe in him; he has sent his Spirit into their hearts, enabling them to call God ‘Father’ as Jesus did, to exhibit his love in their lives and to look forward confidently to the realization of their hope.

2. The standard of judgment

When Paul charges his Galatian converts with turning away so quickly to follow ‘a different gospel’ which could not properly be called a gospel at all, and anathematizes all who preach any other gospel than that which those converts had received from him (Gal. 1:6–9), was there (we may ask) any objective

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7. According to the Scriptures, 50f.
8. See p. 34.
9. See p. 165 below.
11. The attempt by V. Burch in J. R. Harris, Testimonies, II (Cambridge, 1920), 32ff., to ascribe this use of Is. 54:1 to a pre-Pauline ‘testimony’ collection, is based on too ready an assumption of the primitiveness of the Cyprianic Testimonium adversus Iudaeos; Cyprian’s citation of Is. 54:1 in Testimonium 1.20 is much more likely to be dependent on Gal. 4:27. See pp. 222f. below.
12. The primitive message also proclaimed him as Son of David but, although Paul was aware of this (cf. Rom. 1:3; 15:12), it naturally played no significant part in his Gentile mission.
standard by which judgment could be pronounced between his gospel and the 'different gospel'? Can we be as sure as he was that his version was genuine and the other spurious? Certainly, with the benefit of hindsight we can agree that, if Christianity was to become a universal faith, a version like Paul's was more likely to achieve this end than that of his opponents; but how did the situation look when the letter to the Galatians was written? Was there any general consensus regarding the 'authentic' gospel in reference to which other self-styled 'gospels' might be exposed as false?

We can appreciate how slender Paul's case for the gospel he preached must have appeared if he was the only one who preached it. Paul was a latecomer to the Christian faith, as every one knew. He had not been a companion of Jesus on earth as the original apostles had been; and when he first made contact with the followers of Jesus it was as a persecutor, not as a champion. What reason was there to accept such a man's interpretation of the message of Jesus in preference to that of others?

Paul finds it necessary to answer this question, and the necessity of doing so places him in a delicate situation. He wants to maintain that the leaders of the Jerusalem church recognize the authenticity of the gospel which he preaches; he wants (perhaps even more) to maintain his personal independence of the authority of the Jerusalem leaders. Accordingly, he asserts his independence of their authority before he (after a fashion) appeals to their authority. 'In my early zeal for the ancestral traditions of Judaism', he says (if his words may be summarized), 'I devastated\textsuperscript{13} the church, until God (who had designated me from birth for my apostolic service) revealed his Son in me so that I might be his herald among the Gentiles.\textsuperscript{14} I embarked on this ministry at once, without consulting either the Jerusalem apostles or anyone else. Not until three years had elapsed did I go to Jerusalem to visit Cephas; the only other apostle I met was James, the Lord's brother. That was all the contact I had with Jerusalem in my early Christian days; after two weeks there I went off into Syria and Cilicia to preach the faith I had once endeavoured to overthrow. Not until fourteen years had elapsed did I go up to Jerusalem again' (Gal. 1:13–2:1a). This narrative is designed to support his claim that he derived the gospel which he preached from no human intermediary but by the revelation of Jesus Christ granted him at Damascus.

Then comes the account of the conference held in Jerusalem between Paul and Barnabas on the one hand and the Jerusalem leaders on the other (Gal. 2:1–10).\textsuperscript{15} Paul is still careful to maintain his independence—'those men of repute', he says, 'added nothing to me (Gal. 2:6), whether in relation to the content of the gospel or the authority to preach it; but they acknowledged the genuineness of the gospel which I was already preaching.' This acknowledgement on their part is implied in his statement that he 'laid before them' the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles (2:2). Far from criticizing it or finding it defective, they agreed that, as they themselves had been commissioned to carry the gospel to the Jews, Paul and Barnabas had been commissioned to carry

\textsuperscript{13} See pp. 90f.
\textsuperscript{14} See p. 92.
\textsuperscript{15} See pp. 106ff. below.
it to the Gentiles. 16 Two separate constituencies are distinguished, but there is no suggestion that there were two distinct versions of the gospel for the respective constituencies. In the light of Paul's solemn imprecations in Gal. 1:8f., it is evident that he would have dismissed the possibility of such a thing as preposterous. 17 No doubt the approach and emphasis would differ: a considerable body of background knowledge could be assumed in Jewish audiences which pagan audiences lacked. Without prejudging the nature of the sermons in Acts, we can see that Luke takes this for granted: Paul's address in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16–41) presupposes familiarity with a long stretch of sacred history which would have been unintelligible had it been introduced into his Areopagitica at Athens (17:22–31). Again, the circumcision issue did not arise in the mission to Jews, who were circumcised already. It is conceivable that, when Paul and Barnabas shook hands with the Jerusalem leaders on the demarcation of their respective spheres of activity, too much was taken for granted on both sides, and trouble arose when those unventilated questions came into the open. Paul assumed that Cephas saw eye to eye with him on the status of Gentiles in the church, and indeed his assumption was not unfounded if Cephas, on his first coming to Antioch, practised table-fellowship with Gentiles as Paul assures us he did. All the greater was Paul's sense of disillusionment when Cephas withdrew from this table-fellowship at the instance of one or more who 'came from James' (Gal. 2:12) and when subsequent attempts were made by people claiming authorization from Jerusalem to intervene in Paul's mission-field. But worse still in his eyes was the urging of circumcision on his Gentile converts as a religious obligation apart from which they could not become genuine children of Abraham and be admitted into the true covenant-community.

Those who urged circumcision on the churches of Galatia no doubt felt quite sincerely that if this practice went by default, even for Gentile believers, the continuity of the history of salvation was interrupted. If the Jerusalem leaders were disposed to waive the circumcision requirement, that simply stamped them as compromisers. As for Paul, who refused to have his Gentile converts circumcised, it was he who was the heretic and they themselves who were orthodox, for they remained faithful to the terms of the unchangeable covenant, which Paul repudiated. One may say, with Otto Kuss, that 'faithfulness in matters of factual detail need not amount to faithfulness in regard to the genuine content of the message'; but this simply brings us back to the question of how the genuine content of the message was to be ascertained. 18

That salvation was to be found in Jesus Christ was a proposition to which

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17. Cf. Rom. 3:30, 'God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised through their faith.'

18. Auslegung und Verkündigung. I (Regensburg, 1963), 30. Kuss adds immediately that it is from the standpoint of faith that the genuine content of the message is to be certainly determined. It is from such a standpoint that his pupil, J. Eckert, says at the end of his monograph Die urchristliche Verkündigung im Streit zwischen Paulus und seinen Gegnern nach dem Galaterbrief (Regensburg, 1971): 'As highly as the apostle's striving for unity with the Jerusalem church and its 'men of repute' is to be valued, ... so little must his fight against the 'other gospel' in Galatia—a fight which, in the last analysis, was concerned with the proclamation of the salvation to be found in Jesus Christ alone—lose its exemplary significance' (238).
Paul and his judaizing opponents would equally have subscribed. They might even have agreed that salvation was to be found in him alone. But on what conditions was the salvation found in Christ alone to be secured? This was the crucial question. No doubt Jesus did sit very loose to the traditions of the elders, but when it was a question of the admission of Gentiles to the fellowship of his disciples, could Paul or any one else adduce a single utterance of his which suggested that circumcision could be dispensed with? (Indeed, when we consider the important part played by the circumcision question in the development of the early church, we may be impressed by the absence from our gospel tradition of any attempt to find a dominical ruling to which one side or the other could have appealed.) Paul might have appealed to the spirit of Jesus' teaching, or (as he did) to the logical implication of the gospel, but people like his opponents would be satisfied with nothing less than verbatim chapter-and-verse authority; and this was not forthcoming.

3. Paul's gospel and the teaching of Jesus

From the perspective of nineteen centuries' distance, despite our ignorance of many elements in the situation that were well known to the protagonists, we can probably present an objective argument in defence of Paul's claim that the message he preached was the authentic gospel of Christ. It is this: two things on which Paul pre-eminently insisted—that salvation was provided by God's grace and that faith was the means by which men appropriated it—are repeatedly emphasized in the ministry of Jesus, and especially in his parables, regardless of the strata of gospel tradition to which appeal may be made. When we reflect on the complete lack of evidence in Paul's letters that he knew the parables of Jesus, we may wonder how Paul managed to discern so unerringly the heart of his Master's message. We may suspect that this discernment was implicit in the 'revelation of Jesus Christ' which, according to him, was the essence of his conversion experience.

The response of faith regularly won the approval of Jesus, sometimes his surprised approval, as when it came from a Gentile, and was a sure means of securing his help and blessing; in face of unbelief, on the other hand, he was inhibited from performing works of mercy and power. 'Faith as a grain of mustard seed' was what he desired to see, but too often looked for in vain, even in his own disciples.

As regards the teaching of the parables, the point we are making can be illustrated from two, belonging to two quite distinct lines of tradition—Luke's special material and Matthew's special material.

In the Lukan parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11–32), the father might very well have adopted other means for the rehabilitation of his younger son.

21. Cf. Mt. 8:10/Lk. 7:9.
than those described (with approval) by Jesus. When the black sheep of the family came home in disgrace, the father, having a father's heart, might well have consented to give him a second chance. Listening to his carefully rehearsed speech, he might have said, 'That's all very well, young man; we have heard fine phrases before. If you really mean what you say, you can buckle to and work as you have never worked before, and if you do so, we may let you work your passage. But first you must prove yourself; we can't let by-gones be by-gones as though nothing had happened.' Even that would have been generous; it might have done the young man a world of good, and even the elder brother might have been content to let him be put on probation. But for Jesus, and for Paul, divine grace does not operate like that. God does not put repentant sinners on probation to see how they will turn out; he gives them an unrestrained welcome and invests them as his true-born sons. For Jesus, and for Paul, the initiative always rests with the grace of God. He bestows the reconciliation or redemption; men receive it. 'Treat me as one of your hired servants,' says the prodigal to his father; but the father speaks of him as 'this my son'. So, says Paul, 'through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir' (Gal. 4:7).

In the Matthean parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard (Mt. 20:1–16), the last-hired workmen did not bargain with their employer about their pay. If a denarius was the fair rate for a day's work, those who worked for the last hour only might have expected a small fraction of that, but they accepted his undertaking to give them 'whatever is right' and in the event they received a denarius like the others who had worked all day. The grace of God is not to be parcellled out and adjusted to the varieties of individual merit. There was, as T. W. Manson pointed out, a coin worth one-twelfth of a denarius. 'It was called a pondion. But there is no such thing as a twelfth part of the love of God.'

This is completely in line with Paul's understanding of the gospel. If law is the basis of men's acceptance with God, then the details of personal merit and demerit are of the utmost relevance. But the great blessings of the gospel had come to the Galatian Christians, as they knew very well, not by the works of the law but by the response of faith—the faith which works by love. And when we speak in terms of love, we are on a plane where law is not at home.

During the ministry, Jesus' action and attitude supplied the parables with a living commentary sufficient to convey their meaning to those who responded in faith; later, the church felt it necessary to supply its own verbal commentary. The eschatological note which sounds in the parables is heard in Paul's teaching about justification by faith. 'The law was our custodian until Christ came', says Paul, 'that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are

24. T. W. Manson, The Sayings of Jesus (London, 1949), 220. It should not be overlooked that a very different emphasis is found in some other parts of the material peculiar to Matthew, which indeed have lent themselves to a directly anti-Pauline interpretation, such as the criticism in Mt. 5:19 of the man who 'relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so' (on this also see T. W. Manson, The Sayings of Jesus, 25, 154).


26. For the thesis that Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God and Paul's teaching on justification by faith are but different ways of setting forth one and the same message see E. Jüngel, Paulus und Jesus (Tübingen, 1962).
no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith' (Gal. 3:24–26). In other words, as he says to the Romans, 'Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified' (Rom. 10:4).27 Already, with the coming of Christ and the completion of his redemptive work, the age of law had come to an end for the people of God. They had not reached the absolute end (the end of 1 Cor. 15:24), but they had reached its threshold—that period 'between the times' during which the presence of the Spirit in their lives confirmed to them their status and heritage as sons and daughters of God (Gal. 4:6): 'through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness' (Gal. 5:5).

When Paul calls Christ 'the end of the law' he is expressing a theological insight. But this insight was based on sound historical fact: many of Paul's fellow-Pharisees who engaged in debate with Jesus during his ministry must have felt that, on a practical level, his conduct and teaching involved 'the end of the law'—not only because of his rejection of their oral traditions but because of the sovereignty with which he treated such elements of the written law as the sabbath institution and food regulations. True, as we have seen, he does not appear to have made any pronouncement on the circumcision question. But when we consider how he related the law as a whole to the basic requirements of love to God and love to one's neighbour, and insisted on the paramountcy of heart-devotion, 'truth in the inward parts', righteousness, mercy and faith,28 the conclusion is inescapable that he would not have included circumcision among the weightier matters of the law. If no word of his on the subject has survived (apart from the incidental *ad hominem* argument in the course of a sabbath debate in Jn. 7:22f.), it is simply because the issue did not arise in the situation of his ministry. When, later, it did arise in the situation of the Gentile mission, it is difficult to deny that Paul's position was in keeping with Jesus' general attitude to the externalities of religion.

Paul, like Jesus, shocked the guardians of Israel's law by his insistence on treating the law as a means to an end and not as an end in itself, by his refusal to let pious people seek security before God in their own piety, by his breaking down of barriers in the name of the God who 'justifies the ungodly' (Rom. 4:5) and by his proclamation of a message of good news for the outsider. In all this Paul saw more clearly than most of his Christian contemporaries into the inwardness of Jesus' teaching.

4. The law of Christ

After the relegation of law to the status of an outmoded order in the main body of the letter, it might strike one as something of a paradox towards the end of the letter when Paul speaks of 'the law of Christ'. 'If you are led by the Spirit', he has said, 'you are not under law' (Gal. 5:18), but now: 'Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfil the law of Christ' (Gal. 6:2). Yet we

28. Mt. 23:23; cf. Lk. 11:42.
have been prepared for this: the law in the form in which Paul served it in his pre-Christian days has been replaced by something better, but the law as interpreted in the teaching and example of Christ is still in force. The difference for Paul was that the law as he previously knew it was a yoke of bondage, whereas the law of Christ was the way of freedom. ‘You were called to freedom, my brothers’, he writes; ‘only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants one of another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself” ’ (Gal. 5:13f.).

On the law as summarized in this ‘one word’ from Lv. 19:18, together with its twin commandment of love to God in Dt. 6:5, Jesus said the whole law and the prophets depended (Mt. 22:40). But the nature of law is radically transformed when it is interpreted in terms of love; and it is this transformation which is involved when, in Paul’s language, legal bondage gives way to the freedom of the Spirit.

Paul might have heard in the school of Gamaliel something to the effect that the whole law was comprehended in the commandment of love to one’s neighbour—in an earlier generation Hillel had summarized it in the injunction, ‘Do not to another what is hateful to yourself’—but since he speaks of ‘the law of Christ’ it is a reasonable inference that he knew of the use which Christ had made of Lv. 19:18. ‘Bear one another’s burdens’ seems to be a generalizing expansion of the particular instance mentioned in Paul’s preceding exhortation: ‘if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness’ (Gal. 6:1). This is strangely reminiscent of a dominical injunction preserved only in Matthew’s special material: ‘If your brother sins, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother’ (Mt. 18:15).

It is not so clear in Galatians as it is in some of the other letters of Paul that he fills out the details of ‘the law of Christ’ by drawing on a body of ethical catechesis widely used throughout the churches of his day. It has been pointed out that the recurring triad ‘faith, hope, love’, which seems to have been included in this catechesis, appears in Gal. 5:5f.: ‘For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love’. But the three members of the triad are so independently integrated into the context here that it is doubtful if the triad would be, or was intended to be, recognized as such. We may observe, however, that this passage contains the only reference to the parousia in Galatians (for ‘the hope of righteousness’ is the hope to which the justification of believers points them forward) and the only reference to the rôle of the Spirit as the guarantee of this hope.

As for ‘faith working through love’, Paul held that the faith by which men

33. The added words ‘against you’ (D W Θ fam.13 etc.) are probably an early gloss, restricting the original intention.
34. Cf. A. M. Hunter, Paul and his Predecessors, 33ff.
35. Elsewhere called ‘the hope of salvation’ (1 Thes. 5:8) and ‘the hope of glory’ (Col. 1:27).
36. Expounded fully in Rom. 8:9–25.
and women are justified before God finds practical expression in lives which exhibit the law of love. The law of love cannot be enforced by penal sanctions; the fruit of the Spirit, as Paul enumerates its ninefold variety—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control—37—is not produced by legal enactments but simply because it is the nature of a life controlled by the Spirit to produce such fruit. As Paul says, curiously echoing an Aristotelian remark,38 'There is no law dealing with such things as these' (Gal. 5:23). 'The Spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus', as he calls it elsewhere (Rom. 8:2), has little more than the term 'law' in common with that from which the gospel has liberated him and (he trusts) his Galatian converts.39

Galatians is the most 'Pauline' of all the Pauline letters—so much so, indeed, that those who derive their understanding of Paulinism exclusively, or even mainly, from this letter are apt to present a lop-sided construction of the apostle's teaching—to become 'more Pauline than Paul',40 like Marcion in the second century. Against the danger of such a lop-sided construction Paul himself provides the necessary safeguards in other letters. But even in this most Pauline letter the careful student may discern how much of the essential gospel Paul had in common with those who were apostles before him and, above all, how much he had in common with Jesus himself.

37. Gal. 5:22f.
38. See pp. 255f.
39. The law belongs to the former αἱ ὁμολογία, from which the gospel has delivered believers (Gal. 1:4).
40. H. Küng, '“Early Catholicism” in the NT as a Problem in Controversial Theology', The Living Church, ET (London, 1963), 268f.