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INTRODUCTORY PROBLEMS IN THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

INTRODUCTION

The chronology of the New Testament books is often interrelated between the books. No New Testament writing stands in its own vacuum but should be considered in the whole of the New Testament context. That includes the historical events of the period, the key theological issues surrounding the time of the book (the resurrection of Jesus, Jew/Gentile relations, insipient Gnosticism, etc.), and central personalities. The occasion of the ^Bbook of Galatians is [one typically] circumscribed by this kind of contextual scenario. The "introductory" problems associated with this Pauline letter are somewhat intricate though with Edmond Hiebert, "neither the value of the epistle or its interpretation is seriously affected," (Intro. NT, p. 80). ^{footnote} But they form a good corpus of topics for study. This paper shall attempt to sort out some of the difficulties in piecing together the full historical context in which this letter was written. This will be done under four headings. First, the usage of the term "Galatia" will be surveyed, particularly in Luke and in Paul. Second, a look at the views before us as to who the "Galatians" were will be considered, and some kind of hypothesis settled on. Third, an attempt will be made to harmonize the chronology of the

book of Acts (i.e., Chapters 11 and 15) with Paul's account of his Jerusalem visits in Galatians 2. Fourth and finally a date for the writing of the book will be suggested.

USAGE OF THE TERM "GALATIA"

A good place to begin looking for the usage of any New Testament word is the Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon and the Moulton-Milligan Vocabulary book. In this case, however, neither undertakes to conclude on the problem of the meaning of "Galatia," though both acknowledge the controversy over it. B.A.G. does however cite the reference by Memmon, a younger contemporary of Paul, who speaks of the Galatians strictly as the European Celtic immigrants and "would never address the Lycaonians as 'Galatai,'" (B.A.G., p. 150).

Nevertheless, the task still remains to look at how the New Testament uses the word, and its cognate "Galatikos." "Galatias(ai)" occurs four times:

I Cor. 16:1--"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also."

Gal. 1:2--"(Paul) . . . and all the brethren . . . to the churches of Galatia . . ."

Gal. 3:1--"You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you . . .?"

II Tim. 4:10--"Crescens (has gone) to Galatia." [though some mss. read "Gaul"].

"Galatikos" occurs twice, both by Luke:

Acts 16:6--"And they went through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the Word in Asia."

Acts 18:23--"And having spent some time there, he departed and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples."

Since usage within the New Testament is scarce, and since strictly external considerations are not immediately helpful, our examination of the term must turn elsewhere. All scholars agree that Galatia is included somewhere in the region through the middle of Asia Minor (Cole, 16). But obviously Paul's audience was confined to a much narrower sense. Basically, two options have arisen as to defining that narrower sense. They are ethnic Galatia and administrative Galatia. ^{Footnote} [^{start a new paragraph} The northern region of the mid-continent included those who were racially Galatians, of Celtic origin, who migrated to this area during the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. In 189 B.C. they were subjugated to Rome by Consul Manlius Vulso. In 25 B.C. Amyntas, the last king of the Galatian tribes was killed. Caesar Augustus then converted his kingdom into a Roman province called Galatia. The new province, however, included Isauria, part of Lycaonia, the southeastern district of Phrygia, and a portion of the Pisidia. Therefore, the term took on a new political (administrative) sense. It came to retain overall its twofold significance—Luke's usage seems to employ ethnic meanings, not particularly Roman ones; Paul seems to give more meaning in the administrative, Roman sense. Zahn

and Burton hold to this meaning (Hiebert, 73, 74). With these two meanings of the region, the identity of the recipients to the letter must be considered.

WHO WERE THE GALATIANS?

It is not likely that the groups of churches to whom Paul addressed his letter was scattered over both of the above-mentioned regions. It is likely that he had in mind a somewhat small public consisting of the churches of a definite area (Cole, 16). Thus there has^e arisen two prominent theories as to the letter's destination. They are called (appropriately enough) the "North Galatian" theory and the "South Galatian" theory (although Kümmel prefers "territory hypothesis" and "province theory" respectively (Kümmel, 296)).

The North Galatian theory has been the main view held throughout most of Protestant history (and championed by J. B. Lightfoot in his commentary on the epistle). The South Galatian theory, however, has gained acceptance in the last two centuries. It was first proposed by J. J. Schmidt in 1748, and was fully expounded by W. M. Ramsay in the latter part of the 19th century. Six sources were surveyed in collating the support for each view. They were Alan Cole's commentary, Everett Harrison's Introduction, D. E. Hiebert's Introduction, Donald Guthrie's Introduction, W. G. Kümmel's Introduction, and L. M. Petersen's introductory article in the Z. P. E. B. There are 13 reasons offered in support of the North Galatian theory:

1. It was the universal view of the early Church, presumably based on local church traditions now lost to us.

2. The northerners were truly "Galatians" by race and language.

3. It is suggested that the Gallic northerners most aptly fit the characteristics described in the epistle. Also, southerners may well have been offended at the title.

4. The evangelization of the southern area in Acts 14 does not seem to tally with the description in the letter of some of the circumstances of the initial evangelization of "Galatia."

5. Acts at least allows (Moffatt says demands) a missionary journey northward.

6. If most of the Galatians readers were Gentile, that circumstance would be more likely in the northern area.

7. The problem dealt with in the epistle seems more likely to occur in the north.

8. Acts 16:6 indicates two districts, not one (Phrygia and Galatia).

9. Acts 18:23, says Lightfoot, indicates two visits to the northern region, probably predicating his founding of churches there.

10. Pauls' movements after leaving Iconium (Acts 16:6 ff) taken with 18:23, means that he went through the northern area with preaching activity.

11. Paul's having been forbidden (the participle "koluthentes") in Acts 16:6, left Paul no alternative but to go north.

12. The sickness mentioned in Gal. 4:13 is not mentioned in the Lukan accounts of the southern evangelization.

13. Paul doesn't mention in the epistle the southern persecutions (Lystra) that Luke does.

There are nine reasons in support of the South Galatian theory:

1. There are no records of early churches as far north as the northern theory requires.
2. Paul usually uses the provincial name to collective churches.
3. The problem dealt with in the epistle is conversely thought by some to be more likely in the south.
4. The circumstances in the epistle are thought to better fit the southern evangelism accounts in Acts.
5. Barnabas was not mentioned to be in the north, though surely known in the south (he is mentioned in the epistle).
6. Acts 20:4 mentions no northern delegates.
7. Paul concentrated on more heavily populated areas which would be more in the south than north.
8. "Phrygian" should be considered as an objective in Acts 16:6, disallowing a reference to Paul visiting North Galatia (Ramsay vs. Moffatt).
9. Since the Council at Jerusalem is not mentioned, it probably had not yet occurred (it surely would have had bearing). That indicates an early date and therefore supports the southern idea more dominantly.

Both views have their merits, and it would be difficult to cleanly opt for one over the other. There is simply too much evidence on either side to be dogmatic. As Cole observes (p. 20), the "tidy solution" usually obscures the true nature of the problem." Cole and Guthrie lean toward the Southern view, though not decisively. It seems to be the marginal choice. None of the cited reasons for each view seems unreasonable, though a few are used for both theories. While we may secretly hope that Paul and

don't use ^{1st} persons

company did in fact evangelize far north, and at as early a date as possible, we just do not seem to have enough corroborating data. Thus with Duncan (Guthrie, 457), the Epistle seems to undergo a slightly better exegesis overall with the South Galatian theory assumed.

you need to interact with the reasons yourself not simply collate.

Acts 11, 15 and Galatians 2

The problem before us is this. Acts records three visits of Paul to Jerusalem: 9:26, shortly after his conversion; 11:30, the "famine-relief" visit; and 15:4, the Council of Jerusalem visit. Cole notes that there may have been others, but these at least are certain.

Galatians, however, records only two: 1:18, a first visit, and 2:1, a visit with Titus "fourteen years after."

It is probably reasonable to equate both first visits. If the Galatians 2 visit is the same as the third Acts visit (the Council, ch. 15), then it seems strange that the accounts are so different. Rather, it appears more likely that Galatians 2 is Paul's own account of what is just the mention of a "famine-relief" visit in Acts 11:30. Paul is still called Saul here, and the Galatians 2 account bespeaks no particular event (as a Council)--in fact, Paul relates it in somewhat general terms, "after an interval of fourteen years . . ." Also, if the matters which arise in Galatians 2 concerning the law, etc., were so clearly in the minds of those around Paul (as they surely would have been if

he were writing during or after the Council), why would he not appeal in some way to the event of the Council? Therefore, it seems most likely that the letter is of a time somewhat before the official gathering in Jerusalem, equating Galatians 2 with Act 11:30. *see Toussaint's article for more data here.*

The Date of the Book

As stated earlier, introductory problems including chronology, interrelate among themselves. The question of the date of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians depends on the question of the destination (recipients) of the letter, i.e., North or South, and its relation to the Acts chronology. If we have taken (though marginally) the Southern view, then the Epistle is allowed the earliest date possible, while as is reasonable pre-dating Paul's Epistle to the Romans (it is considered by some to be an sketch of Romans). Since the problems in Galatians 2 are not dissimilar from those dealt with at the Jerusalem Council (A.D. 49), it may well have been written shortly before the Council, sometime in A.D. 48. Pinpoint accuracy is impossible, but the most reasonable "envelope" seems to be after the "famine-relief" visit to Jerusalem (Galatians 2 relating the problems leading to the Council) and before the Council, perhaps from Ephesus or Antioch (Cole, 23).

Conclusion

Whichever destination, date and chronology taken from those offered within conservative analysis, the letter's integrity is maintained. With the Southern theory, the letter's early writing is certified making it possibly Paul's earliest extant letter. The position is not without difficulties, but seems best to avoid what would seem an unreasonable hypothesis attendant to the Northern theory, that in declaring visits to Jerusalem, Paul excluded mention of the Apostolic Council.

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