

# DID PAUL WRITE GALATIANS ?

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As POINTED OUT in No. 12 of the *Hibbert Journal* „New Testament Studies“ (Winter 1966-7), the examination of the Pauline Epistles by electronic computer would seem to confirm what F. C. Baur and the 19th Tübingen school maintained on other grounds: that Paul wrote Romans, I and II Corinthians, and Galatians. However, while the two enquiries are indeed mutually independent, A. Q. Morton shares with his German predecessors a basic assumption which I must question – the Pauline authorship of Galatians.

Baur did not systematically reduce the thirteen letters attributable to Paul from thirteen to four. His sense of history led him to suppose that the adaptation of a primitive Jewish Christian gospel for Gentile consumption must have brought Paul into conflict with the earlier apostles, and Galatians appeared to reflect just such a struggle. In this and other respects, the major epistles seemed enough alike that Baur accepted all four. The Acts of the Apostles, which presents quite a different picture of Paul's relations with Jerusalem, Baur assigned to the second century. By that time – on the Tübingen hypothesis – “ Petrine“ Christianity would have gradually become hellenised, and Paulinism rejudaised, to the point where Luke could obscure the differences which had existed between Peter and Paul themselves. In effect, said Baur, he accordingly rewrote the story of Paul as told in Galatians.

The Tübingen theory is plausible enough, and certain passages of Acts do read like a rewrite of Galatians. Whereas Gal. i, 17-19 refers to a sojourn in Arabia, a return to Damascus and a Pauline visit to Jerusalem „after three years“, Acts ix, 2-6 gives the impression that Paul made straight for Jerusalem on his first and only recorded departure from Damascus. Gal. ii, 1-10 describes an informal meeting with the leaders of the church of Jerusalem „after fourteen years“; in Acts xv, 2, on the other hand, Paul and Barnabas attend an apostolic conference on behalf of the church at Antioch. According to Gal. ii, 11f, Peter bowed to objections to his eating with the Gentiles and „even Barnabas“ followed his example; Acts xv, 36-9 depicts only a personal quarrel between Barnabas and Paul. But for Galatians, one

would suppose that Paul subordinated himself alternately to the apostles at Jerusalem and to the church at Antioch. Several decades before Baur's theory emerged, however, William Paley had studied Galatians and Acts both separately and in conjunction with each other, and certain of his findings point in quite a different direction.

Paul's opponents in Galatia, Paley concludes in *Horae Paulinae*, were not the Jerusalem apostles but Gentile converts – a surmise based on internal evidence, not what ought to have been according to a particular philosophy of history. Gal. vi, 13 refers to those who „desire to have you circumcised“ in such a way as to suggest that they themselves had been circumcised only recently and did not otherwise keep the Law. The earlier apostles would, of course, have been circumcised in infancy; and the Pauline account of the incident in Antioch suggests that all were more zealous for the Law than Paul himself. Moreover, what Paul is now being criticised for is not his neglect of the Law but his continued observance of it, allegedly to escape persecution. „But if I, brethren, still preach circumcision“, is his defence (Gal. v, 11), „why am I still persecuted?“ Obviously the Jerusalem apostles, if they were the circumcision party, would hardly attack Paul for promoting their own aim. Not so clear is whether his actual critics are false Paulinists who claim that they are simply emulating Paul, or anti-Paulinists who complain of inconsistency on his part.

Whether in praise or in blame, elements *within the Galatian churches* represent Paul as treating Jerusalem as the seat of truth and authority. Their intended point could be that this was the right course; but the underlying implication, as Paley observes, is that Paul's own commission was „inferior and deputed“. Accordingly, the first chapter of Galatians emphasizes the divine origin of his apostleship while the second emphasizes Paul's independence of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, in Acts, Paul is very much an „apostle of men“, always either in Jerusalem, going to Jerusalem, or else thinking about Jerusalem.

Had the author of Acts read Galatians, as the Tübingen school was to assume? Manifestly not, in Paley's opinion; otherwise he would not have omitted the Arabian interlude and various meetings between Paul and Peter. As for the interval between Paul's revelation at Damascus and his first contact with Peter, Paley cites the „many days“ of Acts ix, 13 and the „three years“ of Gal. i, 18 as an „undesigned coincidence“: the two expressions are employed synonymously in the Old Testament (I Kings ii, 38-9). A Tübingenist might reply, however, that Luke deliberately expressed the time in days to make it appear that Paul was more interested in reporting to the church in Jerusalem than a three-year delay would suggest. To the same end, he would be inclined to leave out Paul's journey into Arabia and his return to Damascus. Preferring to avoid any reminder of rivalry between Peter and Paul, Luke never allows the two apostles to meet directly, even in Jerusalem, let alone in Antioch. On the other hand, as George Salmon points out in his late 19th century *Historical Introduction to the Books of the New Testament*: „Now a writer of the second century [if Luke was such] would neither have been ignorant of. . . [Galatians] himself, nor could he flatter himself that his readers could be so. Thus the excuse will not serve that he omitted . . . [incidents recorded only in Galatians] in order to conceal from his readers that there ever had

been any variance between Paul and the original apostles . . . the ostrich-like device of being silent about things told in a book which he knew his readers had in their hands“. With Paley, Salmon supposed that Luke was a contemporary of Paul’s. Not having been with the apostle at the time of the Galatian controversy, he would have no first-hand knowledge of the circumstances and would, moreover, be among the last persons to see the letter. All of which would most admirably account for a complete literary gulf between Galatians and Acts, but absolute neglect of Galatians is not the problem. The actual literary problem is Luke’s apparent *relative* neglect of the epistle. How can he have made limited, largely negative use of Galatians, as he seems to have done, without knowing its contents? Was Galatians there for Luke to know, or is it the Pauline writer who makes limited, negative use of Acts? Paley makes some allowance for the latter possibility but rules it out: „ . . . the journey into Arabia, mentioned in the epistle, and omitted in the history, affords full proof that there existed no correspondence between these writers . . . if the epistle had been composed out of what the author had read of St. Paul’s history in the Acts, it is unaccountable that it should have been inserted“. As in his supposed proof that Luke did not know Galatians, Paley cites, as further evidence that the writer of Galatians had not read Acts, the contrasting pictures of Paul in Jerusalem and of the apostolic quarrel in Antioch. But why should a reader of Acts who might undertake to retell the story in Chapters ix and xv in the form of a Pauline letter do so merely in order to confirm Luke’s narrative? Would a more likely motive not be to supplement Acts, or even to correct it?

As he reconstructs from the narrative of Galatians what Paul’s detractors had been saying about him – “possessed only an inferior and deputed commission“, „had himself at other times, and in other places, given way to the doctrine of circumcision“, etc. – Paley might almost be describing the Paul of Acts. To repudiate Luke’s image of Paul, Bruno Bauer was to declare sixty years after *Horae Paulinae*, was part of the purpose of Galatians. Several modern scholars who accept the traditional authorship of Galatians have come remarkably close to saying the same thing. Johannes Weiss (*Earliest Christianity*) suggests that Galatians was directed against some account not unlike Acts. Kirsopp and Silva Lake, in their *Introduction to the New Testament*, observe that Luke seems to perpetuate the very misconception about Paul’s apostleship that Galatians is aimed at. The American scholar John Knox is even „tempted to suggest“, in his *Chapters in a Life of Paul*, that the apostle had „some premonition“ of the nature and influence of Acts. „Why not accept my hypothesis“, Bruno Bauer well might ask if he were alive today, „that Galatians is a direct reply to Acts itself.“

From the summary of his writings in Schweitzer’s *Paul and his Interpreters*, it would appear that Bauer’s hypothesis was largely a by-product of an improbable „ultra-Tübingen“ theory of Christian origins. Christianity was not 1st century, messianic Judaism hellenised by Paul or anyone else, Bauer contended, but an originally Greek religion judaised in the second century. Acts, with its „apostolic decree“ and the like, is an expression of this quasi-Jewish movement and Galatians a literary reaction. That the author of Galatians had read Acts, Bauer evidently never got around to demonstrating in concrete terms. Meanwhile, more

orthodox scholars simply either accepted or rejected the Tübingen view that Luke knew Galatians: not one in ten shows any sign of having examined the evidence himself.

By the present century it was almost universally agreed that Galatians and Acts were mutually independent. The usual excuse for Luke's non-acquaintance with Galatians was that Paul's letters were not collected and circulated until towards the end of the first century, yet many students had come to regard Acts as a 2nd century work. How Luke could have remained ignorant of Galatians and other epistles after their hypothetical rediscovery demanded a fresh explanation, which has not been forthcoming. Only one modern scholar, M. S. Enslin, is known to have systematically compared parallel passages in Luke-Acts and the Pauline literature, and his findings (see the March 1938 *Journal of the American Oriental Society*) are sharply at variance with William Paley's. Enslin concludes that Luke used, misused or just ignored several of the letters – including Galatians – as his purpose required, that purpose being restated in neo-Tübingenistic terms.

Let us tentatively suppose, with Enslin, that Paul's flight from Damascus is most reliably described in II Cor. xi, 33-3; that the account in Acts ix, 23-5 is secondary, the same incident being only barely alluded to in Gal. i, 17. Paul has somehow antagonised the Arabian political authorities and has taken refuge in Damascus. The „governor under King Aretas“ has posted a guard on the city walls, with orders to arrest Paul should he venture outside Damascus, hence his unceremonious escape – not from immediate danger, however, but *through* danger. Luke, wishing to commend Christianity to the Roman authorities as a politically inoffensive movement, represents Paul as the victim of *Jewish* persecution for purely religious reasons. Not only his liberty but even his life is threatened by local Jews, yet in Acts ix, 26 we next find him in Jerusalem. Although Jerusalem would be the least likely destination for a Paul who had fled from Damascus for the reason given in Acts, in the light of II Corinthians – which does not say where he went – it does not seem at all unreasonable. But where does he go in Galatians? Into Arabia – where, on the evidence of II Corinthians, the danger is greatest. Despite the marked similarity of the two epistles, I submit that Galatians comes from a later hand and presupposes the reader's knowledge of II Corinthians. If Paul did go to Arabia, what did he do there and how long did he stay? In the absence of such details, Gal. i, 17 serves no other purpose than to improve on the earlier first-person account and refute Luke's version of his movements between Damascus and Jerusalem.

The remainder of Galatians i is at variance with the first half of Chapter ii of the same letter. In i, 15-19 „Cephas“ (Simon Peter?) and „James the Lord's brother“ emerge as well known apostles; in ii, 2f if they are merely reputed pillars of the church at Jerusalem, and Paul gives the impression of meeting them for the first time. Irenaeus, in his late 2nd century work *Against Heresies*, appears to quote the usual reading of Gal. ii, i – “went up again to Jerusalem“ – but makes no specific reference to the Pauline visit described in i, 18f. Tertullian, in his *Prescription against Heretics*, even alludes to Paul's having gone to Jerusalem to meet Peter but it soon becomes apparent that the author is simply reading his own interest in Peter into the account of the meeting with Peter, James and John. Treating Acts

ix, 26f as the account of Paul's first visit to Jerusalem, he seems to apply both Gal. ii, 1-10 and *an account similar to i, 18f* to the second visit. Moreover, in this instance Tertullian is writing primarily for orthodox consumption; in his early 3rd century anti-Marcionite treatise, where he must meet hostile readers on their own ground, he refers to Paul as going up (not „up again“) to Jerusalem *after fourteen years* „so great had been his desire to be approved and supported by those whom you [Marcion] wish on all occasions to be understood as in alliance with Judaism!“ Obviously Marcion's text of Galatians did not include the account of a previous visit „after three years“ and Tertullian, if indeed he had ever seen such a reading, was not inclined to take it seriously.

According to the original text, then, Paul returned to Damascus after his sojourn in Arabia (Gal. 1, 17) and did not go up to Jerusalem until whatever is implied by „after fourteen years“; whether a full fourteen years later, or in the fourteenth year of his apostleship, makes little difference. A second writer considers an interval of three years sufficient to demonstrate Paul's independence of Jerusalem; he may also have noticed, as William Paley was to do some 1600 years later, that the „many days“ which the Paul of Acts spends in Damascus could have amounted to three years. The author of Gal. 1, 18-24 did not bother to coordinate the second chapter with his own account; perhaps he hoped to displace the earlier Pauline version of Paul's first apostolic contact with the church at Jerusalem. To differentiate between the two visits now recorded, a still later „Paul“ inserts the word „again“ so conspicuously absent from Tertullian's reading of Gal. ii, 1. Perhaps from the same hand comes such incongruities as Peter at the head of a mission to the circumcised (ii, 7-8), anticipating the arrangement to which Peter becomes a party in the verse that follows.

While the narrative of Galatians is more plausible if stripped of known or demonstrable interpolations, the second chapter is still basically nonsensical. It does not become less so in the light of Acts-Luke's fifteenth chapter, the reader's acquaintance with which is tacitly presumed throughout, simply makes the unintelligibility more understandable.

The few modern scholars who even recognize a literary relationship between Acts and Galatians, and the still fewer ones who do not treat the latter as somehow self-authenticating, suppose that had the author of Galatians read Acts he would not have failed to cite its so-called apostolic decree. The same scholars also share the Tübingen view that to record the dispute in Antioch faithfully would have defeated the purpose of Acts – hence Luke's silence about Peter in Antioch, and a personal quarrel between Paul and Barnabas.

The first point is valid only on the old-fashioned hypothesis of a circumcision movement backed by the apostles at Jerusalem, or at least claiming their support. In those circumstances, a Pauline writer might indeed have pointed out that the Jerusalem apostles themselves had declared circumcision unnecessary; that the Gentiles need only „abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity“ (Acts xv, 29). But the supposed „judaisers“ are not even appealing to the authority of Jerusalem. As the narrative of Galatians would seem to indicate, though Paley's point to that effect has largely dropped out of sight, it is allegedly *Paul* who looks to Jerusalem: *they* are looking

to Paul. They would impose circumcision „only in order that they may not be persecuted“ (Gal. vi, 12), claiming that this was Paul’s own practice (v, 11)

According to Acts xv, 5, a party of Christian Pharisees at Jerusalem had maintained that Gentile believers must observe the Law of Moses (xv, s), including its requirement for circumcision. Peter, whom Luke portrays as the Apostle of the Gentiles in all but name, opposes this view in council: circumcised and uncircumcised alike will be „saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus“. The apostolic decree, issued by James, amounts to token observance of the Law and a substitute for circumcision.

The theology of Galatians recognises no substitute for circumcision: the choice lies between the Law in its entirety and salvation by faith alone (v, 2-4). The author of Galatians cannot, of course, denounce the apostolic decree without clearly betraying his knowledge of Acts; instead, he denies by implication that it was ever issued. The leaders of the church at Jerusalem „added nothing“ to Paul’s gospel, he tells us in Gal. ii, 6. Four verses later he mentions that they did add something, to wit that Paul and Barnabas should „remember the poor“ – still no recollection of Jewish food and sex taboos. That the writer nevertheless has the apostolic decree very much in mind, however, becomes evident in his version of the quarrel at Antioch.

„Paul’s“ charge that Peter would „compel the Gentiles to live like Jews“ (Gal. ii, 14) hardly fits any action he has ascribed to Peter, yet the whole incident parallels Luke’s account of the apostolic conference. Peter’s eating with the Gentiles recalls Acts xv, 7f, which depicts him as a champion of Gentile freedom. The objections of „certain men from James“ to Peter’s behaviour (Gal. ii, 12) correspond to James’s ruling in council, which denies the Gentiles the absolute freedom urged by Peter. Although he makes no further mention of him, Luke gives the impression that Peter accepted the apostolic decree – and *that* is how he would impose Jewish customs on the Gentiles, as charged in Galatians. Similarly, „if I build up again those things which I tore down“ (Gal. ii, 18) is a negative allusion to Paul’s alleged part in the broadcast of the decree (Acts xv, 22, 15; xvi, 4).

Peter’s former relations with non-Jewish believers in Antioch, according to Gal. ii, 12, recall not only Peter’s address to the apostolic council of Acts xv but also an earlier incident. „Why did you go to uncircumcised men“, a ‘circumcision party’ in Jerusalem demands to know (Acts xi, 2), „and eat with them?“ Note that „circumcision“ does not necessarily refer to the aim of Peter’s critics but makes sense if employed only in contradistinction to „uncircumcised“. In Gal. ii, 12 the situation is the same but Peter’s companions are referred to as „the Gentiles“. Thus his critics should have become „the Jews“; but the Pauline writer, having paraphrased the one Lucan term, mechanically repeats the other in a context to which it is incongruous.

Whom does the so-called circumcision party of Gal. ii, 12 consist of? In the writer’s mind, probably Judas and Silas, who in Acts xv, 32 deliver the apostolic decree to Antioch. According to certain manuscripts which rarely if ever are identified, however, it was a one-man party; and on that reading I would suggest that that man was John Mark, whose recent return from Jerusalem is implied in

Acts xv, 37. (I suspect that the „John“ of Gal. ii, 9 is also Mark, not the disciple John.)

The Tübingenistic argument that Luke has substituted the question of Mark's reinstatement for the real cause of the estrangement between Paul and Barnabas treats, as the actual reason, the Pauline version of a dispute in which Barnabas sides with Peter. That Peter and Paul ever met – in Antioch, in Rome or even in Jerusalem – seems to me most unlikely. Nowhere in Acts does Peter ever set foot in Antioch, and an early supposed successor to Peter as Bishop of Antioch (Ignatius) shows no acquaintance with the „tradition“. As for Paul's presence at the conference in which the Peter of Acts plays such an outstanding part, Weiss (*Earliest Christianity*) and A. D. Nock (*St. Paul*) have suggested, not without plausibility, that Paul and Barnabas are included only as an editorial afterthought. I am prepared to believe that the author or an editor of Acts invented the apostolic council itself – the terms of the decree emerge, as if for the first time, six chapters and as many years later – though with George Salmon I fail to see how Luke could hope to suppress facts already recorded in a letter of Paul's, if the document in question existed at that time.

The dependence of Galatians ii on Acts xv is by no means the only argument against the Pauline authorship of the epistle. I have touched on the evidence that Galatians and II Corinthians are not by the same writer, and have shown that more than one „Paul“ had a hand in the writing of Galatians. All this, I feel, demands a re-examination of every letter still attributed to Paul.