

GALATIAN PROBLEMS

4. THE DATE OF THE EPISTLE¹

By F. F. BRUCE, M.A., D.D.

RYLANDS PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM AND EXEGESIS IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

OF all the letters in the Pauline corpus, there is none which, by general consensus, is more certainly Paul's authentic composition than the Epistle to the Galatians. It may seem strange, therefore, that it is one of the most difficult of his letters to date precisely—more difficult than any of the other "capital letters" (not excluding 2 Cor. x-xiii). But so it is. The date of the epistle most certainly ranks as a "Galatian problem", if indeed it does not contribute to what one scholar has called "the anomaly of Galatians".²

The question is where and when, in the course of Paul's apostolic career, this letter was written. The traditional way of handling this question is to ask at what point in the record of Acts it should be placed. More important, however, is to try to establish where it stands, chronologically and otherwise, in relation to Paul's other letters.

I

We shall consider the traditional approach first because, while it is of relatively secondary importance, it is by no means to be dismissed as irrelevant. Our estimate of its relevance, indeed, will depend on our estimate of the historical accuracy of the record of Acts. In the first lecture of the present series on "Galatian Problems" some reasons were briefly given for treating the evidence of Acts seriously and using it critically,³ and they need not be repeated here. It is plain, however, that this is a subject which may one day have to be taken up more systematically all over again. The recent publication of the

¹ A lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library on Wednesday, the 10th of November, 1971.

² C. E. Faw, "The Anomaly of Galatians", *Biblical Research*, iv (1960), 25 ff.

³ BULLETIN, li (1968-69), 292 ff.

English translation of Ernst Haenchen's magnificent commentary on Acts,¹ which builds on the work of Martin Dibelius² and Hans Conzelmann,³ has underscored afresh the need to re-state the strong case for the essential trustworthiness of Luke's narrative.

Some people concluded from my first lecture, in which I argued that Paul's autobiographical outline in Galatians i. 13-ii. 14 brings us to the eve of the Jerusalem Council of Acts xv. 6 ff., that I implied that Galatians was itself written on the eve of the Council. That may have been logically involved in my exposition, but I preferred to suspend judgement and state no such conclusion then, if only because any such conclusion must depend on further considerations—not least the question whether the recipients of the letter were North or South Galatians (the question discussed in the second lecture of this series).⁴ If they were South Galatians, then the letter could conceivably have been written any time after the end of the missionary expedition related in Acts xiii. 4-xiv. 26; if, on the other hand, they were North Galatians, it must have been written after the journey summarized in Acts xvi. 6, when Paul "went through the Phrygian and Galatic region" (i.e. between the Jerusalem Council and the evangelization of Macedonia) and probably after the journey summarized in Acts xviii. 23, when he traversed "the Galatic region and Phrygia" (i.e. between the end of his eighteen months in Corinth and the beginning of his lengthy stay in Ephesus)—that is to say, not earlier than Paul's Ephesian ministry, and probably during that ministry.⁵

One remark in the letter which could have a bearing on this problem is Paul's incidental reminder to his readers that "it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first" (Gal. iv. 13). The phrase "at first" (*τὸ πρότερον*)

¹ E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, E.T. (Blackwell, Oxford, 1971).

² M. Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, E.T. (London, 1956).

³ H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, E.T. (London, 1960); cf. *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, Tübingen, 1963).

⁴ BULLETIN, lii (1969-70), 243 ff.

⁵ This is the majority opinion on the date of Galatians. For a careful presentation of the case for an Ephesian provenance cf. E. de W. Burton, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC, Edinburgh, 1921), pp. xlvii ff.

probably, though not necessarily, implies that by the time he wrote he had paid them at least two visits. Not necessarily, I say, because the words may simply mean "it was bodily illness that originally led to my bringing you the Gospel". That is how the N.E.B. text has it, although a footnote offers in place of "originally" the alternative renderings "formerly" or "on the first of my two visits". If Paul's words imply two visits (and this is the more natural way to construe them), when were they paid? Proponents of the North Galatian view can point to the two occasions mentioned by Luke when Paul passed through Galatia (Acts xvi. 6; xviii. 23).¹ On the South Galatian view Paul's first visit was that of Acts xiii. 14 ff., and the implied second one could be his visit to Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and the "Phrygian and Galatic region" (Phrygia Galatica?) recorded in Acts xvi. 1-6,² but it could also be taken to refer to Paul and Barnabas's retracing of their steps from Derbe through Lystra and Iconium to Pisidian Antioch at the end of the former visit (Acts xiv. 21-23).³ In that case it might be possible to date Galatians before the Jerusalem Council of Acts xv. 6 ff.—i.e. soon after the last event mentioned in the autobiographical outline of Galatians i. 13-ii. 14. One advantage in this dating is that it would explain why Paul in Galatians does not cut the ground entirely from under the Judaizers' feet by appealing to the Council's ruling that circumcision and all that went with it should not be imposed on Gentile converts.⁴

¹ Cf. J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London, 1865), pp. 24 f., 41, 174 f.

² This was W. M. Ramsay's earlier view; cf. his *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (London, 1895), pp. 182 ff., and *A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London, 1899), pp. 405 ff. He thought then that it was sent from Antioch (cf. Acts xviii. 22 f.). On this dating Gal. v. 11 can be illuminated by Paul's circumcision of Timothy, which took place during the visit of Acts xvi. 1-6.

³ This was Ramsay's later view; cf. *The Teaching of Paul in Terms of the Present Day* (London, 1913), p. 391; *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*¹⁴ (London, 1920), pp. xxx, xxxi.

⁴ Recently, in an Australian paper, I came across the argument that, if Galatians was written before the Jerusalem Council of Acts xv. 6 ff., that Council was a farce, since the question which it debated would have been settled already by an "inspired epistle". This argument betrays a naïve exaggeration of the

It is difficult to decide what weight can be given to the phrase "so quickly"¹ in Galatians i. 6: "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in Christ and turning to a different gospel." The point of reference is the Galatians' conversion, and the implication is that no very long time had elapsed since it took place. Naturally those who date Galatians rather early among the epistles of Paul feel that they are doing due justice to the phrase "so quickly"—if the addressees were the South Galatians evangelized by Paul and Barnabas (Acts xiii. 14 ff.) and the letter was written on the eve of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts xv), then a bare year had elapsed. But if they were North Galatians a date (preferably early) in Paul's Ephesian residence is indicated, and in any case those who maintain a later date point out quite rightly that "so quickly" is a relative expression. "I cannot think it strange", wrote Bishop Lightfoot, "that the Apostle, speaking of truths destined to outlive the life of kingdoms and of nations, should complain that his converts had *so soon* deserted from the faith, even though a whole decade of years might have passed since they were first brought to the knowledge of Christ"—although he adds that "so long a period . . . is not required on any probable hypothesis as to the date of the epistle".² Plainly we cannot use "so quickly" as one of our foundation-stones.

II

But we must turn now to consider the place of Galatians among the letters of Paul.

Since Galatians goes traditionally along with 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans as one of Paul's four "capital" epistles, it is natural that it should have been grouped rather closely with them in date. F. C. Baur, for example, thought that the appearance of these four, in the sequence Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, at the beginning of Marcion's *Apostolikon*, was inexplicable unless a chronological order was being followed,

importance which the Jerusalem Christians would have attached to any letter of Paul's, "inspired" or otherwise—even had they known of it.

¹ Gk. οὐτω ταχέως.

² Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 42.

and he himself accepted this as the chronological order of the four.¹

Bishop Lightfoot acknowledged that in his day this chronological order was "the generally received opinion",² but gave his reasons for departing from it so as to place Galatians after 2 Corinthians and immediately before Romans. This had the advantage of placing Galatians next in date to the two epistles with which he believed it to exhibit the greatest degree of affinity. Of its affinity to Romans, of course, there can be no doubt. In Lightfoot's words, it "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".³

This close relationship between Galatians and Romans has led many scholars, like Lightfoot, to prefer a date for Galatians not far removed from that of Romans, which can be fixed fairly precisely during the winter preceding Paul's last visit to Jerusalem (cf. Rom. xv. 25 ff.; Acts xx. 2 ff.). The insistence on justification by faith, not by legal works, with the citation of Habakkuk ii. 4 in the sense "He who through faith is righteous shall live" (Gal. iii. 11; Rom. i. 17) and the appeal to the precedent of Abraham, who "believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness" (Gen. xv. 6, quoted in Gal. iii. 6; Rom. iv. 3), figures prominently in the argument of both letters. So does the interpretation of the promise made to Abraham as fulfilled in the Gentile mission, although the *testimonia* adduced are different in the two letters—in Galatians iii. 8, "In you shall all the nations be blessed" (Gen. xii. 3, xviii. 18); in

¹ F. C. Baur, *Paul: his Life and Works*, E.T., i (London, 1876), 247 f. For the sequence of Pauline letters in Marcion's canon he depends on Epiphanius (*Haer.*, 42. 9). That Galatians came first in his list is implied by Tertullian (*Adu. Marc.*, v. 2 ff.) and by the Marcionite prologues to the epistles, which make sense only "in the order in which they would appear in a Marcionite copy of the Apostle" (A. Souter, *Text and Canon of the NT*² (London, 1954), p. 188). But the position of Galatians at the head of Marcion's *Apostolikon* is due to considerations not so much of chronology (in which Marcion had but little interest) as of dogmatic fitness: it was, as Tertullian agreed, *principalis aduersus iudaisum epistula* (*Adu. Marc.*, v. 2).

² Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 40.

³ Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 49.

Romans iv. 17, "I have made you the father of many nations" (Gen. xvii. 5). The statement in Galatians v. 17, that "the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would", is amplified in the picture of inner tension drawn in Romans. vii. 14-25, while the admonition "Walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh" (Gal. v. 16) might be regarded as a summary of Romans viii. 1-17. Both letters bring out the close relation between the Christian's freedom from slavery to sin or from legal bondage and his being led by the Spirit (Gal. v. 18; Rom. viii. 14), at whose prompting he acknowledges his new status as a son of God and joint-heir with Christ in the invocation "Abba, Father"¹ (Gal. iv. 6; Rom. viii. 15 f.). In both letters the law of God is summed up in the single commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"² (Gal. v. 14; Rom. xiii. 9).

All this comes to expression in Galatians in a situation of anxiety, indignation and conflict; in Romans it is expounded more dispassionately and in a more logical sequence. Yet we need not suppose that the understanding and presentation of the gospel which we find in Galatians first took shape in Paul's mind under the exigencies of the Judaizing controversy which called forth that letter. It is true that in certain areas of Paul's thinking a progression can be traced as we move from his earlier letters to his later ones.³ But on such a fundamental matter as the way of salvation it would be surprising to find a progression sufficiently marked to affect the centre of his thinking. If the evidence clearly demanded this, we should accept it, but the evidence makes no such demand. To this we shall return.⁴

¹ Jesus' own word for God (Mark xiv. 36) was carried over into the usage of Hellenistic Christians; their repetition of his language was proof, according to Paul, that God has sent "the Spirit of his Son" into their hearts (Gal. iv. 6). Cf. J. Jeremias, *Abba: Studien zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Geschichte* (Göttingen, 1966), pp. 15 ff.

² From Lev. xix. 18; cf. Mark xii. 31 and Luke x. 27 for its firm place in the gospel tradition.

³ E.g. on the nature of the resurrection body; cf. F. F. Bruce, "Paul on Immortality", *Scottish Journal of Theology*, xxiv (1971), 457 ff. ⁴ See pp. 261 ff.

But at present we must bear in mind the relatively brief interval of time between Paul's earliest letters and those of the Roman captivity—not much, if at all, more than twelve years. (If some or all of the letters traditionally assigned to his Roman captivity were written during an earlier captivity, then the interval is further reduced.) If we leave the letters of the Roman captivity out of our reckoning, and think only of the "capital letters" and the Thessalonian correspondence, they were written within nine years at the outside. Most of the letters would have been written when Paul was in his fifties. He had experienced one revolutionary conversion in (probably) his early thirties; from then on the main features of his belief were sufficiently stable to make it no surprising thing to find him repeating them at an interval of several years when an appropriate occasion arose.

Johannes Weiss is probably right in pointing to Paul's "hidden years", before he joined Barnabas at Antioch, as the most formative in the development of his Christian thought, whereas "in the letters we have to do with the fully matured man". He is too sweeping in his judgement when he goes on to say that "the 'development' which some think they can discern in the period of his letters—ten years, at the most—is not worth considering at all";¹ but his words provide a salutary corrective to excessive speculation about Paul's inner development. A mind like Paul's does not stop growing at the mid-century point, but it tends to advance along lines whose general direction has been determined during the preceding years. Paul may equally well have reproduced in Romans some of the distinctive positions of Galatians whether Galatians was written one year or ten years before.

The affinity between Galatians and 2 Corinthians, Lightfoot held, was of a different order; it consisted "not so much in words and arguments as in tone and feeling".² He quoted Benjamin Jowett to this effect: in both Galatians and 2 Corin-

¹ J. Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, E.T., i (New York, 1959), 206.

² Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 44. In a footnote he mentions that Theodore of Mopsuestia observed a resemblance between these two epistles, citing J. B. Pitra (ed.), *Spicilegium Solesmense* i (Paris, 1855), 50.

thians, said Jowett, "there is a greater display of his own feelings than in any other portion of his writings, a deeper contrast of inward exaltation and outward suffering, more of personal entreaty, a greater readiness to impart himself".¹ This is indeed true, although I think the resemblance thus described is due to the fact that Paul's emotions were deeply stirred on both occasions rather than to the chronological contiguity of the two letters.

Lightfoot himself, however, added further considerations: e.g. the parallel between Christ's being "made a curse for us" in Galatians iii. 13 and his being "made sin for us" in 2 Corinthians v. 21; the repetition of the sowing-and-reaping sequence as an ethical figure in Galatians vi. 7 and 2 Corinthians ix. 6; such common phrases as "a different gospel" (Gal. i. 6; 2 Cor. xi. 4), "a new creation" (Gal. vi. 15; 2 Cor. v. 17), to be "zealously concerned for" people (Gal. iv. 17; 2 Cor. xi. 2), to "persuade men" (Gal. i. 10; 2 Cor. v. 11). In the lists of vices in 2 Corinthians xii. 20 f., Galatians v. 19-21 and Romans i. 29 f. and xiii. 13 he was disposed to find the middle term in the Galatians passage.² More important, however, in his eyes was the progression which he traced from the Corinthian correspondence through Galatians to Romans in respect of Paul's personal history (the "marks of Jesus" in Gal. vi. 17 being perhaps the result of the experiences of 1 Cor. xv. 30-32; 2 Cor. i. 8-10),³ the development of the Judaic opposition and the increasingly full exposition of the truth of the gospel. The admonition with regard to the restoration of offenders in Galatians vi. 1 might have as its background the restoration of the Corinthian offender in 2 Corinthians ii. 5-11 (cf. vii. 11 f.); the warning that "God is not mocked" coupled with the admonition to persevere in well-doing (Gal. vi. 7-10) might reflect the Galatian churches' slowness in contributing to the Jerusalem fund regarding which they had received instructions

¹ B. Jowett, *The Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, Galatians, Romans*, i (London, 1855), 196.

² Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 45, n. 3.

³ They were much more probably the result of his being stoned at Lystra (Acts xiv. 19; cf. 2 Cor. xi. 25), as some at least of his readers had good reason to know.

from Paul before he wrote 1 Corinthians xvi. 1. Lightfoot's argument is cumulative, but when its several parts are allowed to make their combined impression, then, he says, if the Corinthian correspondence is interposed between Galatians and Romans, "the dislocation is felt at once".¹

To Lightfoot, 2 Corinthians formed one continuous letter, whereas the majority opinion today is that it is composite—in particular, that chapters i-ix and x-xiii did not originally belong to the same letter.² In adducing evidence from 2 Corinthians suggesting that it was written before Galatians, he adduces it from both parts of the letter as we have it, but especially from chapters x-xiii. And the resemblance in tone between chapters x-xiii and the whole of Galatians is sufficiently obvious to call for no elaboration.

III

A fresh investigation of the relation borne by Galatians to 2 Corinthians on the one hand and to Romans on the other was published in 1951 by C. H. Buck Jr. in an important article contributed to the *Journal of Biblical Literature*.³ Ignoring the last four chapters of 2 Corinthians because of uncertainty regarding their date, Dr. Buck concentrated on chapters i-ix. He presented a synoptic arrangement of 2 Corinthians iii. 17, iv. 10-v. 5 with Galatians iv. 1-7, v. 13-25 and Romans viii. 2-25 so as to show that the last passage "reproduces with remarkable fidelity the logical outlines of arguments which also occur in II Corinthians 1-9 and Galatians",⁴ drawing words and arguments from the two earlier letters, conflating ideas which originally were formally separate in such a way as to reveal that they shared the same underlying thought and application. For example, when Paul speaks in Romans viii. 23 of believers "who have the first fruits of the Spirit", groaning inwardly

¹ Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 50.

² Cf. T. W. Manson, *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* (Manchester, 1962), pp. 210 ff.

³ C. H. Buck, Jr., "The Date of Galatians", *JBL*, lxx (1951), 113 ff.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 116.

as they wait for "adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" he combines the idea of "adoption as sons" (*υιοθεσία*), which is treated at some length in Galatians, with that of "the redemption of our bodies", which is the subject of 2 Corinthians iv. 16-v. 10. (It may be observed, in passing, that the treatment in Romans reflects a further development: in Romans what believers have received here and now is "the spirit of adoption or sonship", enabling them to anticipate the full "adoption as sons" which will be manifested at the parousia, whereas in Galatians they have received their adoption as sons already, thanks to God's sending his Son to redeem them, and because they are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into their hearts.)

This, however, would simply confirm that Romans was later than both 2 Corinthians i-ix and Galatians; Dr. Buck believes it possible to go farther in the confirmation of Lightfoot's thesis and show that Galatians, while earlier than Romans, was later than 2 Corinthians i-ix. He points out that the antithesis spirit-flesh occurs in 2 Corinthians i-ix, Galatians and Romans whereas the antithesis faith-works, which is intimately associated with the former antithesis in Galatians, is absent from 2 Corinthians, even in a "discussion of the identical problem"—the question of Christian freedom. "If Paul had already written Galatians", he asks, "is it conceivable that he could, at some later time, have written II Corinthians 1-9, with its vehement anti-legal position, without once employing the antithesis, faith-works?"¹ The only way to give an affirmative answer to this question, he concludes, would be to assume that, having used the faith-works antithesis in Galatians, Paul "then decided to abandon this line of argument and therefore consciously avoided it in II Corinthians 1-9" and "that shortly after the writing of II Corinthians 1-9 Paul again changed his mind and in Romans revived the abandoned argument". The improbability of this twofold assumption forces him "to the conclusion that Galatians was written not only before Romans but also after II Corinthians 1-9",² and this conclusion, in the

¹ C. H. Buck, Jr., "The Date of Galatians", *JBL*, lxx (1951), p. 120.

² *Ibid.* pp. 120 f.

light of his arguments, has commended itself as inescapable to others.¹

But 2 Corinthians i-ix is not concerned with the "identical problem" tackled in Galatians, nor does it take up such a "vehement anti-legal position" as Galatians does. In 2 Corinthians i-ix Paul displays for the most part a relaxed, almost euphoric, frame of mind, in his relief at the good news brought to him by Titus from Corinth; there is none of the intense agitation which marks Galatians. The only passage in 2 Corinthians i-ix which could properly be called "anti-legal" is chapter iii, and there Paul is not, as in Galatians, warning his readers against seeking salvation in works of the law but emphasizing the glory of the new covenant, to the ministry of which he has been called, by contrasting it with the evanescent glory of the old covenant. And the antithesis which he employs in this connection is spirit-letter (verses 6, 7), not spirit-flesh; the substantive "flesh" (σάρξ) does not appear in this chapter, and when the adjective "fleshy" (σάρκινος) is used, it relates to the new covenant, not to the old: the terms of the new covenant are inscribed not (like those of the old) "on stone tablets" but "on fleshy tablets, i.e. on hearts" (ἐν πλαξίν καρδίαις σαρκίνοις). This, of course, is the literal usage of the word, not Paul's distinctive theological usage, but the theological usage occurs in 2 Corinthians i-ix only in the phrase "after the flesh" (κατὰ σάρκα, i. 17, v. 16 bis), and if "after the flesh" is in antithesis to "after the spirit" (κατὰ πνεῦμα), the antithesis is implied, not expressed. The antithesis spirit-letter of 2 Corinthians iii. 6 f. is taken up again in Romans (ii. 29, vii. 6), although it is absent from Galatians. One could imagine Dr. Buck's rhetorical question being reworded thus: "If Paul had already written 2 Corinthians i-ix, is it conceivable that he could, at some later time, have written Galatians, with its vehement anti-legal position, without once employing the antithesis, spirit-letter?" If Dr. Buck is right, it must be conceivable, because this is what he believes to have happened; but if that is conceivable, it is equally conceivable that Paul, having used the

¹ Cf. J. C. O'Neill, *The Theology of Acts in its Historical Setting* (London, 1961), pp. 96 f., where Buck's argument is described as "objectively convincing".

faith-works antithesis in Galatians, because it was so apposite to the Galatian crisis, did not use it in 2 Corinthians i-ix, because it was not apposite to the Corinthian situation, but used it again in Romans, together with the antitheses spirit-flesh (as in Galatians) and spirit-letter (as in 2 Corinthians), because in Romans he was concerned to give a more comprehensive and systematic exposition of the gospel. Conclusions about relative dating based on considerations like these are not so compelling as Dr. Buck suggests.

Much the same might be said about the arguments of C. E. Faw who, writing ten years later,¹ dotted the i's and crossed the t's of the case made by Bishop Lightfoot and Dr. Buck for dating Galatians between 2 Corinthians and Romans, and added some emphases of his own regarding the development of Paul's acceptance of death, his employment of death and resurrection in a symbolic sense, and his special use of "crucifixion" to denote symbolic death.²

IV

Dr. Buck combines his dating of Galatians between 2 Corinthians i-ix and Romans with the view, alluded to above, that the doctrine of justification by faith, "while not necessarily incompatible with Paul's earlier doctrine, was actually formulated and expressed by him for the first time when he found it necessary to answer the arguments of the Judaizers in Galatia".³ This view, which is not essential to Dr. Buck's dating of Galatians, was in some degree anticipated by William Wrede, according to whom justification by faith is Paul's "*polemical doctrine*" and "is only made intelligible by the struggle of his life, his controversy with Judaism and Jewish Christianity, and is only intended for this".⁴ Dr. Buck's statement of this view is indeed much more moderate than Wrede's. For Wrede, "the whole

¹ C. E. Faw, "The Anomaly of Galatians", *Biblical Research*, iv (1960), 25 ff.

² Cf. C. E. Faw, "Death and Resurrection in Paul's Letters", *Journal of Bible and Religion*, xxvii (1959), 291 ff.

³ C. H. Buck, *JBL*, lxx (1951), pp. 121 f.

⁴ W. Wrede, *Paul*, E. T. (London, 1907), p. 123.

Pauline religion can be expounded without a word being said about this doctrine"¹—an odd assertion, when we reflect that in Paul's own exposition of his gospel, the letter to the Romans, written in a non-polemical situation, he gives justification by faith a cardinal place.²

It is true that several of Paul's positions took the form they did in response to lines of argument and teaching which he found it necessary to oppose.³ But the essence of justification by faith was more probably implicit in the logic of his conversion. If the former Pharisee no longer hoped for acceptance with God on the ground of his devotion to the Torah, on what ground did his assurance of such acceptance thenceforth rest? It may have been late in his career that Paul wrote of his ambition to "gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith" (Phil. iii. 8 f.); but there was never a time, from his conversion onward, when he could not have used the same words. When, in Galatians ii. 20, he says that "the life which I now live in the flesh⁴ I live by faith⁵ in the Son of God", there is no hint

¹ W. Wrede, *Paul*, E. T. (London, 1907), p. 123. Cf. W. Heitmüller, *Luthers Stellung in der Religionsgeschichte des Christentums* (Marburg, 1917), pp. 19 f., and the discussion in K. Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ii (Tübingen, 1928), 18 f.

² It is the presupposition also of Paul's language in 1 Corinthians i. 30 ("Christ Jesus, whom God made . . . our righteousness") and 2 Corinthians v. 21 ("that in him we might become the righteousness of God"). One might argue that in Galatians ii. 14 ff. Paul assumes that Peter agrees with him "that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ" (cf. Acts xv. 7-11), but for the difficulty of deciding where Paul's rebuke to Peter ends and his general reflections on the principle involved begin. Cf. C. von Weizsäcker, *The Apostolic Age*, E.T., i (London, 1907), 74 f.

³ His exposition of the cosmic significance of the work of Christ in reaction against the Colossian heresy is a good example; cf. BULLETIN, xlviii (1965-6), 268 ff.

⁴ Gk. ἐν σαρκί, an instance of the non-theological use of "flesh" (=mortal body) even in Galatians.

⁵ The saving or justifying principle of faith, insisted on in Galatians and Romans, is present in the Corinthian letters even more frequently than *πίστις* in the sense of a special spiritual gift (as in 1 Cor. xii. 9; Rom. xii. 6); cf. 1 Cor. ii. 5, xv. 14, 17; 2 Cor. i. 24 (*πίστις*), 1 Cor. i. 21, iii. 5, xiv. 22, xv. 2, 11 (*πιστεύω*).

that he is using a new form of words which had just taken shape under the exigency of confuting the Judaizers in Galatia. And the argument of Galatians iii. 10-14, where Christ, by dying the death which incurred the divine curse, transferred to himself the curse which his people had incurred by breaking the law,¹ must have commended itself to Paul sooner rather than later in his Christian career as the solution to the intolerably scandalous problem which he had previously found in the Christian claim—that the Messiah, upon whom, practically by definition, the blessing of God rested uniquely, should nevertheless have suffered the death upon which, according to the law, the curse of God rested explicitly.

The centrality of Paul's doctrine of justification to his whole conception of the gospel, not only in polemical situations, is given proper emphasis in two German works recently published in English translation. Günther Bornkamm, in his monograph on *Paul*, shows that "Paul's doctrine of justification is to be regarded not as theological theorizing on the primitive gospel, but as its proper development and exposition".² Paul's soteriology is the interpretation of his Christology: "to set out the gospel concerning Christ as a gospel of justification, and vice versa, is a decisive concern of his whole theology."³ And Ernst Käsemann, in his *Perspectives on Paul*, affirms that "the Pauline doctrine of justification is entirely and solely Christology, a Christology, indeed, won from Jesus' cross and hence an offensive Christology".⁴ It is a polemical or "fighting doctrine"⁵ indeed, but not on that account a subordinate element in Paul's gospel, for the attitudes and presuppositions against which it fights are not simply those of first-century Judaism but attitudes and presuppositions which equally require to be opposed in the twentieth century and cannot be effectively opposed except by this "fighting doctrine", which alone is "the breakthrough to the new creation".⁶ Professor Käsemann is no

¹ An instance of the rabbinical exegetical device of *gezerah shawah* ("equal category"), relating Deut. xxi. 23 and xxvii. 26 in respect of their common term "cursed".

² G. Bornkamm, *Paul*, E.T. (London, 1971), p. 116.

³ *Ibid.* p. 117.

⁴ E. Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, E.T. (London, 1971), p. 73.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 70.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 73.

mean fighter himself, and speaks from personal experience as well as from exegetical insight.

V

It would be proper to make some reference here to C. H. Dodd's correlation of what he regarded as the probable sequence of Paul's letters with the evidence of development in Paul's thought—not least because his thesis was first propounded in lectures given in this Library.¹ He believed that the "affliction in Asia" mentioned in 2 Corinthians i. 8-10 marked a psychological watershed, if not "a sort of second conversion", in Paul's experience, after which "the traces of fanaticism and intolerance [found in some of his earlier letters] disappear, almost if not quite completely, along with all that insistence on his own dignity".² In Professor Dodd's view, such letters as Galatians and 2 Corinthians x-xiii, in which these features are discernible, were written before this psychological watershed, whereas 2 Corinthians i-ix, from which they have practically disappeared, should (at least for the most part)³ self-evidently be dated after it. There is much to be said for Professor Dodd's exposition of "the mind of Paul", but I cannot go all the way with him, for, while I too recognize in 2 Corinthians x-xiii a separate letter from chapters i-ix, I am disposed to date it later, not earlier, than chapters i-ix.⁴ I am unable therefore to appeal to Professor Dodd's thesis in support of a date for Galatians earlier than that of 2 Corinthians i-ix since, if 2 Corinthians x-xiii could have been written after 2 Corinthians i-ix, so (theoretically) could Galatians.

¹ C. H. Dodd, "The Mind of Paul", BULLETIN, xvii (1933), 91 ff., xviii (1934), 69 ff., reprinted in *New Testament Studies* (Manchester, 1953), pp. 67 ff., 83 ff. ² BULLETIN, xvii (1933), 104; *New Testament Studies*, p. 81.

³ 2 Cor. vi. 14-vii. 1, frequently considered to be an interpolation, might be an exception.

⁴ Cf. F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (New Century Bible, London, 1971), pp. 166 ff. Again, if Philip. iii. 2 should be dated after 2 Cor., as Professor Dodd held, its fierce invective would be another exception to his rule. Cf. T. W. Manson: "if Philippians is to be dated after the spiritual crisis, Chapter iii can only be regarded as either a relapse or a misplaced survival from an earlier stage in Paul's career" (*Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, p. 164).

Another of my predecessors has also dealt with the date of Galatians in a Rylands Library lecture. T. W. Manson, in the course of his series of lectures on "St. Paul in Ephesus", dated Galatians to Paul's Ephesian period (although to him the recipients were the South Galatians).¹ Pointing out that Paul devotes two-fifths of the letter to defending his apostolic status against a violent attack, and a further two-fifths to a counter-attack against the position of the circumcision party, he observed that "the only time when Paul appears to have had to face an attack of this kind and of this gravity is in the Ephesian period; and the situation revealed in the Philippian and Corinthian letters is, I think, substantially that presupposed by Galatians".² I am not so sure, however, that Paul's apostolic status was seriously called in question during one phase only of his apostolic career; those who challenged it were liable to do so whenever an opportunity arose. And the judaizing propaganda of the Corinthian correspondence seems to me to belong to a later stage than that of Galatians. In the Galatian crisis pressure was put upon Paul's Gentile converts to accept circumcision in particular (with other features of Judaism like the sacred calendar); in the Corinthian crisis circumcision does not appear to have figured (it is mentioned incidentally and uncontroversially in 1 Cor. vii. 18 f.). The reason, I believe, is that after the publication of the apostolic decree of Acts xv. 20, 29, it would have been difficult for judaizing preachers invoking the authority of the leaders of the Jerusalem church to impose circumcision on Gentile Christians.³ What they did try to impose on the Corinthian church was the literal force of the food-regulations annexed to the decree, regarding which Paul took a more liberal and enlightened line.⁴ (The syncretism at Colossae, in which circumcision played a part, was a local

¹ T. W. Manson, "The Problem of the Epistle to the Galatians", BULLETIN, xxiv (1940), 59 ff., reprinted in *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, pp. 168 ff.

² T. W. Manson, BULLETIN, xxiv (1940), 60; *Studies*, p. 169.

³ But see *Studies*, p. 186, n. 1, where Professor Manson points out "that circumcision is not even mentioned in the Apostolic letter". Perhaps its omission was more eloquent than any specific statement ruling that Gentile converts were exempt from it.

⁴ Cf. C. K. Barrett, "Things Offered to Idols", *NTS*, xi (1964-65), 138 ff.

Phrygian development, not something imposed by Judaeon emissaries,¹ and it is not clear whether the "mutilation party" against which the Philippians are put on their guard comprised Jews or judaizing Christians.)²

VI

The conclusion to which I come is this: a comparative study of Galatians alongside those Pauline letters which can be more certainly dated is not decisive for the dating of this letter. In particular, nothing in such a comparative study prohibits our giving Galatians a place quite early among the Pauline letters, if an early place appears probable on other grounds, as I believe it does. In the third lecture of this series the disputation caused in the church of Syrian Antioch by those Judaeon visitors who "began to teach the brotherhood that those who were not circumcised in accordance with Mosaic practice could not be saved" (Acts xv. 1) was related to Paul's account in Galatians ii. 12 of the emissary or emissaries "from James" who came to Antioch and persuaded Peter to discontinue his table fellowship with Gentiles.³ It was further suggested that persons of this outlook also visited the churches of Galatia (the assumption being that these churches were in South Galatia) and tried to persuade Paul's Gentile converts there that it was necessary for them to accept circumcision and other features of the Jewish law. If these people visited the Galatian daughter-churches of Syrian Antioch about the same time as their fellows visited Antioch itself, or shortly afterwards, then the letter to the Galatians must have been written as soon as Paul got news of what was afoot. In that case Galatians may well have been written on the eve of the Jerusalem meeting described in Acts xv. 6 ff.—which would, I think, yield the most satisfactory correlation of the data of Acts and Galatians. It must be conceded that, if

¹ Cf. BULLETIN, xlvi (1965-66), 268 ff.

² That they were Jews has been held, *inter alios*, by J. G. Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (London, 1921), p. 104, and F. W. Beare, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians* (London, 1959), p. 104. For the view that they were Judaizers, cf. T. W. Manson, *Studies*, p. 163.

³ Cf. BULLETIN, liii (1970-1), 270 f.

this is so, Galatians is the earliest among the extant epistles of Paul.¹ I know of no evidence to make this conclusion impossible, or even improbable. Even on this early dating, Paul has been a Christian for at least fifteen years, and the main outlines of his understanding of the gospel would have been as well defined by then as ever they were likely to be. Now Galatians, whatever its date, is a most important document of primitive Christianity, but if it is as early as I am suggesting, its importance is enhanced. Some aspects of its importance in this regard would be a suitable topic for a future lecture in this series.

¹ Among those who have maintained this dating are J. Calvin, *Commentary on Galatians* (Geneva, 1548); E.T. by T. H. L. Parker, (Edinburgh, 1965), p. 24; V. Weber, *Die Abfassung des Galaterbriefs vor dem Apostelkonzil* (Ravensburg, 1900); D. Round, *The Date of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (Cambridge, 1906); K. Lake, *The Earlier Epistles of Paul* (London, 1911), pp. 297 ff. (he later abandoned this view for one which involved an identification of the Jerusalem visits of Acts xi. 30 and xv. 2); C. W. Emmet, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (Reader's Commentary, London, 1912), pp. xiv ff., and *The Beginnings of Christianity*, ed. F. J. F. Jackson and K. Lake, ii (London, 1922), pp. 269 ff.; W. M. Ramsay, *The Teaching of Paul*, pp. 372 ff., and *St. Paul the Traveller*²⁴, pp. xxii, xxxi; D. Plooi, *De chronologie van het leven van Paulus* (Leiden, 1918), pp. 111 ff.; A. W. F. Blunt, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Clarendon Bible, Oxford, 1922), pp. 182 ff., and *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Clarendon Bible, Oxford, 1925), pp. 22 ff.; F. C. Burkitt, *Christian Beginnings* (London, 1924), pp. 116 ff.; H. N. Bate, *A Guide to the Epistles of St. Paul* (London, 1926), pp. 45 ff.; G. S. Duncan, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Moffatt Commentary, London, 1934), pp. xxii ff.; F. Amiot, *S. Paul : Épttre aux Galates* (Paris, 1946), p. 32; W. L. Knox, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 40 ff.; R. Heard, *Introduction to the NT* (London, 1950), p. 183; H. F. D. Sparks, *The Formation of the NT* (London, 1952), pp. 60 f.; C. S. C. Williams, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London, 1957), p. 30 (tentatively); F. R. Coad, in *A New Testament Commentary*, ed. G. C. D. Howley (London, 1969), p. 444. It is difficult to know what significance to attach to the frequent observation that most of the proponents of this dating are British. For judicious summings up cf. J. G. Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion*, pp. 80 ff.; G. B. Caird, *The Apostolic Age* (London, 1955), pp. 200 ff.; D. Guthrie, *NT Introduction : The Pauline Epistles* (London, 1961), pp. 79 ff.