

EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

This epistle, unlike the other church epistles of Paul, is addressed, not to a single congregation dwelling in a city, but to the churches of a district --"the Galatic Land." The Roman province of Galatia, lying in the central portion of Asia Minor, was larger than "the Galatic Land," for it included several other districts. The territory of the Galatians originally belonged to the Phrygians, but certain tribes of Gauls, as Frenchmen were then called, moved by their restless, conquest-loving spirit, and by the pressure of rival tribes at home, invaded to the southeastward and attempted to overrun Greece. Being repulsed at Delphi, they crossed the Bosphorus, and, after many conflicts, were finally content to confine themselves to this territory, which, as we see, eventually bore their name. This occurred about B. C. 279. In B. C. 189 they were conquered by the Romans, but were still permitted to retain their kings. In B. C. 25 their self-government was taken away and they became part of the Roman province which was also named for them. They were divided into three tribes, each occupying subdistricts, with the cities of Tavium, Pessinus and Ancyra (now Angora), as their respective capitals, which last was also capital of the whole Roman province of Galatia. Though speaking Greek, they also retained their language, so that Jerome leads us to believe that a Galatian and a Frenchman could have conversed together with ease as late as the fourth century A. D. Though a part of the Celtic race, which includes the French, Welsh, Irish and Scotch, they were Frenchmen, and their characteristics are described by Julius Cæsar, who says: "The infirmity of the Gauls is that they are fickle in their resolves and fond of change, and not to be trusted." And Thierry speaks of them thus: "Frank, impetuous, impressible, eminently intelligent, but at the same [245] time extremely changeable, inconstant, fond of show, perpetually quarreling, the fruit of excessive vanity." Paul had planted churches among them and had revisited and confirmed these churches; but after his departure certain Judaizers had entered among them, and had persuaded them that becoming Jews was a condition precedent to their becoming Christians, and hence they could not be saved without circumcision. Being met by the teaching which the Galatians had learned from Paul, these Judaizers had felt the necessity of destroying Paul's influence. They undertook to do this by denying that he was an apostle, and asserting that he was, if anything, only an unfaithful messenger of the other apostles. The main purpose, therefore, of this epistle is to establish the fact that Christianity was a religion independent of Judaism, and that Paul was an apostle independent of the twelve. The date of the epistle can not be determined with accuracy, but it was evidently written sometime during the third missionary tour; for Paul had been twice in Galatia when he wrote it, having confirmed the Galatians on his second visit. Compare [Acts 16:6; 18:23; Gal. 1:9; 5:21](#). It has been said that it was written from Ephesus, or Troas, or Macedonia, or Corinth. There are several internal evidences which cause us to prefer one or the other of the two places last named, and to place the date in A. D. 57, in the short interval between the writing of 2 Corinthians and Romans. The two Corinthian letters, with Romans and Galatians, if we may judge by their similarity, were all written at about the same period, and, in fact, the points of resemblance between these epistles are so many and so striking that to concede the authenticity of one, is to practically concede that of all. Hence all four epistles have been recognized as authentic even by Renan and Baur. For incidental similarities, such as the mentioning of Damascus and Titus, compare [2 Cor. 11:32 and Gal. 1:17; 2 Cor. 2:13; 8:16 and Gal. 2:1-3](#). For verbal similarities, compare [2 Cor. 10:1-11 and Gal. 4:18, 20; 2 Cor. 12:20, 21 and Gal. 4:19-21; 2 Cor. 9:6 and Gal.](#)

[6:7](#); [2 Cor. 11:2 and Gal 4:17](#); [2 Cor. 11:20 and Gal. 5:15](#). The relation between Galatians and Romans [246] is argumentative, for Paul discussed the relations of the law and the gospel in each. The relation between 2 Corinthians and Galatians is personal, for Paul is defending himself against similar charges in each. For other relations between Galatians and Romans see [Rom. 8:14-17 and Gal. 4:6, 7](#); [Rom. 10:5 and Gal. 3:12](#); [Rom. 4:13, 14, 16 and Gal. 3:14, 16, 29](#); [Rom. 11:31 and Gal. 3:22](#). The epistle may be loosely divided into three sections of two chapters each, as follows: Part 1--[chapters 1 and 2](#), Arguments sustaining Paul's gospel and apostolic office. Part 2-- [chapters 3 and 4](#), Justification is by faith in Christ and not by legalism as proved by Scripture. Part 3--[chapters 5 and 6](#), Exhortations to steadfastness and faithfulness to Christian duty. The epistle has been in all ages the stronghold of evangelical Christianity in defending itself against ecclesiasticism and ritualism of all kinds. It was the favorite book of Martin Luther, who wrote three commentaries upon it. But Luther strained the words of Paul and drew from them such extreme conclusions that John Wesley regarded him as guilty of blasphemy. But the perversions of this precious epistle in no way militate against it or its proper use.