

## Paul's Letter to the Galatians

There is no question as to the genuineness of this Pauline Letter, but unlike most other writings of the Apostle it was addressed to "Churches" rather than to a single community.

Formerly it was not easy to decide the precise meaning of the term "Galatia." Opinions differed on the subject. The "North Galatian theory," contended for by some German scholars, maintained that the Letter was addressed to the Churches of Ancyra, Tavium, Pessinus and possibly to those in other cities. The "South Galatian theory," which now holds the field in English-speaking countries, is to the effect that the congregations intended were those of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Derbe and Lystra; and this is strongly supported by the unique resemblance between this Letter and Paul's sermon in Pisidian Antioch (Ac 13:14-41). In any case the population was very mixed, consisting of Phrygians, Greeks, Romans, Gauls and Jews.

The date of the Letter cannot be exactly fixed. The periods assigned by recent scholarship vary from 46 A.D. to 58 A.D., but the medium estimate of 53 A.D., adopted by Harnack and Ramsay, satisfies all the requirements of the case.

The Apostle certainly visited Galatia during his second missionary tour, perhaps about 51 A. D., and, although suffering from illness, was received with enthusiasm. After a short stay he departed cherishing a joyful confidence as to his converts there. But when, less than three years afterwards, he came again, he found that the leaven of Judaism had produced a definite apostasy, insomuch that both the freedom of individual believers and his own Apostolic authority were in danger.

Even his personal presence (Ac 18:23) did not end the difficulty. Hence, possibly during his journey between Macedonia and Achaia, he sent this Letter. Its rugged and incoherent style shows that it was dictated under great stress of feeling, and the doctrine of justification by faith is stated more emphatically than in any other of his writings. But his earnest insistence upon the "fruit borne by the Spirit" proves that his ideal of practical holiness was rather strengthened than impaired by his plea for Faith as the mainspring of Christian life.