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THE HISTORY AND PRE-HISTORY OF A TEXT: GAL:1.19

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Summary:

The present text of Gal 1:19 is overloaded. Paul could have said, "I saw no other apostle except James", or, "I saw no other of the apostles." It is suggested that *of the apostles* was an ancient explanatory gloss to cope with the contradiction between Gal 1:19 and Acts 9:27. The translation, "I saw no other of the apostles, but I did see James" is shown to be unlikely.

Neville Birdsall once said to me, "John, why don't you leave the study of pre-history and devote yourself to history?"¹ He meant that all attempts to reconstruct the history of apostolic times share with the study of pre-history a conjectural character; the historian has to work back from what is known and to make conjectures about matters concerning which we have little or no direct evidence. His point was that a manuscript can be dated and located in a particular country, and we can be pretty sure, if it is a manuscript of a portion of scripture, that it was used over many years by a congregation of worshippers. I learnt from Neville Birdsall—though he could not persuade me to give up "pre-history"—that no attempt to reconstruct the history of the apostolic church can ignore the actual specific evidence of the manuscripts of scripture. I learnt from him never to overlook the evidence of the minuscules, and I ventured to think that late minuscules are capable of preserving ancient readings. In his honour I present a discussion of a verse that has long vexed readers of Galatians and which has

¹ This paper was presented at a conference to mark the seventieth birthday of Professor J.N.Birdsall, held at the University of Birmingham, England, on 26 May 1998.

never, so far as I know, been examined in the light of the manuscript variations: Gal 1:19.

TABLE

Textus Receptus Aleph B

1. ἕτερον δὲ τῶν ἀποστόλων
2. οὐκ εἶδον
3. εἰ μὴ Ἰάκωβον
4. τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ κυρίου

D* F G it vg

2. εἶδον οὐδενα vidi neminem

p⁵¹? E

2. οὐκ εἶδον οὐδενα

104

1. ἕτερον δε του αποστολων

1960

1. ἕτερον δε τον αποστολων

436

2. οὐκ ιδον

1959

4. τον αδελφον κυριου

81mg

4. τον αδελφον κυριου Ιησου

The obvious textual decision to take is how to apply the good old rule, "Prefer the shorter reading, unless you prefer the longer." In line two, we are faced with three variants, the T.R. οὐκ εἶδον, the reading of D* F G it vg εἶδον οὐδενα, and the probable reading of p⁵¹, supported by E, οὐκ εἶδον οὐδενα. Since it is likely that scribes would eschew double negatives, we should conclude that the third of these readings is more likely than either of the others: οὐκ εἶδον οὐδενα. Fortunately we have a good parallel at the opening of the Shepherd of Hermas's Vision: μόνον τοῦτο ἐβουλευσάμην, ἕτερον δὲ οὐδὲ ἔν (1:1; cf. Acts 4:11).

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Now let us examine the syntax of the sentence. The sentence is unnaturally overloaded. After saying that he remained a fortnight with Cephas, Paul could have said either of two things.

First, he could have said that he saw no one else except James. The Greek for that would have been, ἕτερον δὲ οὐκ εἶδον οὐδένα εἰ μὴ Ἰάκωβος. The expressed exception is James. He could equally easily have said ἕτερον δὲ ἀπόστολον οὐκ εἶδον οὐδένα εἰ μὴ Ἰάκωβον, for the burden of the sentence is still the exception. Compare:

Hermas Vis 3:12:2:

οὐδὲν ἕτερον προσδέχεται εἰ μὴ τὴν ἐσχάτην
ἡμέραν τῆς ζωῆς αὐτοῦ.

Hermas Man 4:31

ὅτι ἑτέρα μετάνοια οὐκ ἔστιν εἰ μὴ ἐκείνη, ὅτε
εἰς ὕδωρ κατέβημεν καὶ ἐλάβομεν ἄφεσιν
ἀμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν τῶν προτέρων.

Judith 8:20

ἡμεῖς δὲ ἕτερον θεὸν οὐκ ἔγνωμεν πλὴν αὐτοῦ (cf.
Dan 3:95; Tob 3:15; 6:15).

1 Cor 8:4 T.R.

οἶδαμεν ... ὅτι οὐδεὶς θεὸς ἕτερος εἰ μὴ εἶς.

Acts 17:21

εἶς οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἠεκαίρου ἢ λέγειν τι ἢ
ἀκούειν τι καινότερον.

Or secondly, he could have emphasized that he saw no other apostle. The Greek for this would have been ἕτερον δὲ τῶν ἀποστόλων οὐκ εἶδον οὐδένα. The implied exception would be others who were not apostles; he may have seen other people, but none of them was an apostle. The burden of this second sort of statement would have been to emphasize that he did not see any other apostle, whomever else he might have seen. In the Shepherd of Hermas Similitude 5:5:4, the speaker says that he cannot understand the Shepherd's parable. He continues:

οὐδὲ ἕτερος τῶν ἀνθρώπων, κἀν λῖαν συνετὸς ἦ
τις, οὐ δύναται νοῆσαι αὐτά.

Nor is there any other among men, be he ever so clever, who can understand these things.

The burden of this sentence from the Similitudes is to affirm that no other man, even a very clever man, would be able to understand the parable. The genitive case ἀνθρώπων is to emphasize the category that is excluded: men, even the cleverest.

My argument is that no Greek writer would both qualify the word ἕτερος by a genitive and then qualify the word ἕτερος by an exception-phrase. They are two mutually exclusive ways of qualifying the word ἕτερος.

If we have to choose between the two natural sentences, we should choose the first. Paul would then have written:

ἕτερον δὲ οὐκ εἶδον οὐδένα, εἰ μὴ Ἰάκωβον τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ κυρίου.

The words τῶν ἀποστόλων are a gloss.

However, we are not permitted to entertain the possibility that a gloss has been incorporated into our text unless we can show that the gloss makes better sense as a gloss to the unglossed text than as part of the long received text. What sense would our two words make as a gloss?

I conjecture that a scribe had a problem. His problem was to reconcile the text of Galatians as I have reconstructed it (“I saw no one else at all except James the brother of the Lord”) with the text of Acts 9:27. In Acts, Barnabas is said to have taken Paul and presented him to the apostles (in the plural). The scribe had to reconcile Acts, which mentioned that Paul saw at least three people—Barnabas and at least two apostles—with Galatians, which said that Paul saw only two people—Cephas and James the brother of the Lord. His marginal note, ἀποστόλων, against ἕτερον, solved his problem. If James the brother of the Lord was an apostle with Paul, the scribe had two apostles whom Paul saw. And the insertion of the idea that these two were *apostles* allows Paul not to mention Barnabas, who was not an apostle.

A subsidiary argument in favour of my thesis is that the words τῶν ἀποστόλων have been the despair of commentators ever since. The words do seem to suggest that James the brother of

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the Lord was an apostle, yet in 1 Cor 9:5 Paul seems to distinguish the apostles from brothers of the Lord.² Attempts have accordingly been made to translate the *Textus Receptus* of our verse in ways that avoid the identification of James as one of the apostles: "I did not see any other of the apostles except [I did see] James the brother of the Lord." The following verses are cited in support of this interpretation: Matt 12:4; 24:36; Luke 4:26,27; Rom 14:14; 1 Cor 8:4; Rev 9:4; 21:27. Modern scholars do not much mind discrepancies between Galatians and Acts, but they do mind discrepancies between Paul and Paul. If Paul here should include James the brother of the Lord among the apostles, and not mean that James was the son of Alphaeus, he would seem to be contradicting his normal usage and to be raising someone besides himself to a rank equal to the Twelve.

The difficulty in this proposed translation is the little word ἕτερον. If Paul had written τοὺς δὲ ἀποστόλους οὐκ εἶδον εἰ μὴ Ἰάκωβον we could readily translate his sentence: "I did not see the apostles but [I did see] James." Rev 9:4 is a model of this sort: καὶ ἐρρέθη αὐταῖς ἵνα μὴ ἀδικήσουσιν τὸν χόρτον τῆς γῆς ... εἰ μὴ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους οἵτινες οὐκ ἔχουσιν τὴν σφραγίδα ... ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων. In this and all the other examples given (Matt 12:4; 24:36; Luke 4:26,27; Rom 14:14; 1 Cor 8:4; Rev 21:27) the εἰ μὴ clause simply negates the previous

² The reference in the list of those to whom the risen Lord appeared in 1 Cor 15:7 has been taken as implying the inclusion of James in the number of "all the apostles" on the analogy of 1 Cor 15:5: "he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve", where Cephas was presumably with the Twelve at the second appearance. As G.D.Kilpatrick noted, there is no evidence that the traditional identification of this James with James the brother of the Lord is right ("Jesus, His Family and His Disciples", *JSNT* 15 (July, 1982), 3-19 at 11). Is this James, like Cephas, one of the Twelve, and does the reference to "all the apostles" imply the Twelve a second time? Paul uses the term "apostle" for other than the Twelve, but it is doubtful that people like Andronicus and Junias in Rom 16:7 were given a vision of the risen Lord; the apostles would presumably be gathered together in one place on this occasion. Paul's insistence that he was an apostle seems likely to have been an insistence that he was of equal rank with the Twelve.

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verb, with its subject or its modifiers: they ate the shew bread which it is not lawful for them to eat except [it is lawful] for the priests alone. In Gal 1:19 the εἰ μή clause relates directly and exclusively to the word ἕτερον. The received text must imply that James the brother of the Lord was, like Cephas, an apostle.

I have cut off the line of retreat that would read Gal 1:19 so as to exclude James from the band of the apostles. Might that not serve to raise the attractiveness of accepting the conjectural emendation that would exclude two words, τῶν ἀποστόλων, as a gloss?

I have left unmentioned two surprising variants in line one of my table, the variants in the article with ἀποστόλων. I would have supposed that one or other of them was simply a careless slip, but taking the two of them together, should we not ask whether they are evidence that ἀποστόλων was indeed a gloss? Could the glossator have added just the one word ἀποστόλων? Subsequent scribes then noted that there was here the insertion τοῦ [λόγου] ἀποστόλων or that someone had inserted τὸν [λόγον] ἀποστόλων.

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