

The Church's Progress to the Council of Jerusalem according to the Book of Acts¹

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The book of Acts portrays stages of the development of the self-awareness of primitive Christianity. The account has important sociological as well as theological implications for the study of Christian origins. Acts indicates that geographical and cultural expansion exposed and focused attention upon underlying causes of disputes and debates which were a part of the self-definition process. From focus upon "side issues" such as ritual and ethnic practice the church came to the realization that the real struggle lay in varying views of the Christian way of salvation and its relation to Judaism. It was these issues which made necessary the Council of Jerusalem of Acts 15.

Key Words: eating/foods, circumcision, saved

The proper response to the Kingdom of God announced by Jesus (Mark 1:14-15; Matt 4:17) is to identify oneself with him, to believe the "good news" (Gospel). For post-ascension disciples this required at least two initial, essential questions, "Who is Jesus?" and "What must I do to be saved?" It was on the plain of history, within the experiences of the early Church, that answers became available. History and theology are inseparably wed. Consequently, an understanding of the nature and experiences of the Church, primarily in the Apostolic Age, is an essential step to understanding the nature and implications of the kingdom.²

1. I acknowledge that the structure of this title was influenced by that of E. Gordon Rupp, *Luther's Progress to the Diet of Worms* (Chicago: Wilcox and Follet, 1951).

2. "Kingdom of God" is, of course, the major element in Jesus' teaching recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. Acts 1:3 notes it was a major theme during his ministry of the forty days as well.

The nature and place of the Kingdom of God in the ministry of Jesus continues to be an ongoing topic of discussion and research. For examples see H. N. Ridderbos,

Attempts to reconstruct the history of the church during the Apostolic Age are fraught with difficulties.³ The use of the Book of Acts as a source for that history is significant among these problems.⁴ Nevertheless, it is a significant part of the literature which deserves investigation. This study is concerned, first of all, with one phase of early Christian history, that recorded in Acts 1:1-15:1. It will suggest

The Coming of the Kingdom (trans. H. de Jongste, ed. Raymond O. Zorn; Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1962); Costa Lundström, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus. A History of Interpretation from the Last Decades of the Nineteenth Century to the Present Day* (trans. Joan Bulman; Richmond: John Knox, 1963); Norman Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (NTL; London: SCM Press, 1963); George E. Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom* (New York: Harper and Row Publishing Co., 1964); Bruce D. Chilton, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) and *God in Strength. Jesus' Announcement of the Kingdom* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987); G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986); Wendell Willis, ed., *The Kingdom of God in 20th Century Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988); Otto Betz, "Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom," Peter Stuhlmacher, ed., *The Gospel and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 53-74.

3. Some of these include the identity and reliability of sources for the study and questions of methodology employed in handling these sources. Another question involves the relation between various New Testament documents. More specifically such matters as the date, purpose, and provenance of the sources must be considered. This includes facing questions raised by recent critical studies about the *Sitz im Leben* of Gospel sources, the epistles, as well as Acts.

A particularly interesting issue is the effects of the AD 70 fall of Jerusalem upon the church of the last quarter of the first century. I have dealt at length with the Church of Jerusalem during this period in my doctoral thesis "The History and Influence of the Church of Jerusalem, AD 30-100: An Investigation of the Growth and Internal Factions and the Extension of its Influence in the Larger Church" (University of Manchester, England, 1969; [Available through University Microfilms International. 300 N. Zebb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106; publication No. 8211034) 271-346.

4. Approaches to Luke-Acts are varied. There is both a long history of investigations as well as ongoing assessments. For an accounting of the past see Ward W. Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1975); C. K. Barrett, *Luke the Historian in Recent Study* (Peake Memorial Lecture; London: Epworth Press, 1961) and F. F. Bruce, "The Acts of the Apostles to-Day," *BJRL* 65 (1982) 36-56.

Martin Dibelius is usually credited with beginning the form critical study of Acts in his essays now collected in *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (trans. Mary Ling; ed. Heindrich Greeven; London: SCM Press, 1956).

Building upon the work of Dibelius and others, Hans Conzelmann promoted the redactional critical investigation to Luke-Acts in his *The Theology of St. Luke* (trans. Geoffrey Buswell; London: Faber and Faber, 1960) and *Acts of the Apostles* (trans. J. Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and D. A. Juel; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987). This was furthered by Ernst Haenchen in *The Acts of the Apostles, A Commentary* (trans. Bernard Nobel and Gerald Shinn with Hugh Anderson and R. McL. Wilson; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971). This approach is also displayed in the essays in Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn, eds., *Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays Presented in Honor of Paul Schubert* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966). These writers and those who follow them, in one way or another, tend to be suspicious of the historicity of much of Luke-Acts.

a reconstruction which, it is hoped, will clarify the stages of the struggle through which the primitive fellowship passed and which climaxed in the Council of Jerusalem of Acts 15. It will be particularly important to consider the relevant material against the background of Second Temple Judaism.⁵ At the same time, although not the primary focus of this paper, our analysis has implications for a couple of other particularly difficult critical problems—the date and recipients of the Epistle to the Galatians and the relationship between the post-conversion visits of Paul to Jerusalem recorded in Galatians 1 and 2 to those of Acts 9, 11-12, and 15. A consideration of the resolution of the struggle at the Jerusalem Council will be the subject of another investigation.

The accounts of the Book of Acts seem to imply that the single most important thing which distinguished the first followers of "the Way" from other Jewish groups was what they believed about Jesus of Nazareth. Acts 2-5 records the answer to our first question, "Who is Jesus?" by noting such terms as Lord (κύριος), Messiah, Author-Pioneer-Leader (ἀρχηγός),⁶ Savior, the Prophet [like Moses], the

Examples of contemporary approaches to Acts which affirm at least some degree of its historical reliability are exemplified by F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) and *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (NICNT; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988); David J. Williams, *Acts* (New International Bible Commentary; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990); Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1989); Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) and his *Between Jesus and Paul. Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) and *Luke Historian and Theologian* (enlarged ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989). Note also the series *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting* (ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clark); of particular interest for this study is vol. 1, *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) and *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting*, vol. 4.

Even more recent attitudes are reflected in G. Lüemann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts, A Commentary* (trans. J. Bowden; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989) and Charles H. Talbert, ed., *Luke Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar* (New York: Crossroad, 1984). Of particular interest for this study is Earl Richard ("The Divine Purpose: The Jews and the Gentile Mission [Acts 15]," 188-209), who provides helpful insights with essentially a structuralist approach.

5. I have dealt with the Jewish setting of Christianity in *Customs and Controversies: Intertestamental Jewish Background of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995).

6. This word is an almost impossible term to translate. It carries the joint connotations of (1) path-breaker (pioneer) who opens the way for others, (2) source of founder, and "leader-ruler." English translations seem to fall into one of these three categories, hence, (1) "Pioneer," "Guide," "Hero," (2) "Founder," "Author," "Initiator," or (3) "Leader," "Captain," "Prince," or "King." Cf. J. Julius Scott, Jr., "Archēgos in the Salvation History of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *JETS* 29 (1986) 47-54.

Righteous (or Just) One, the Servant of the Lord, and the Crucified One⁷ as well as the one who brought, explained, and implemented the Kingdom of God. Stephen referred to Jesus with his Lord's own favorite self-designation, "the Son of Man" (7:56). In Saul-Paul's early preaching in Damascus he identified Jesus as "the Son of God" and "the Messiah" (9:20, 22).

At the same time it appears that at least three issues were significant as the early followers of "the Way" worked out the implication of their essential faith in Jesus. First of all, it seems many did *not* immediately understand the relationship between the new faith and the nation Israel. Is the former a continuation of the latter? its successor? are they in some sense parallel? or are they completely unrelated? Uncertainty here also raised questions about the identity of rightful candidates for membership in the Christian community (the Church). This, in turn, caused controversy in identifying proper subjects for evangelistic-missionary efforts; put bluntly, "Must non-Hebrews (Gentiles) become Hebrews (by becoming proselytes) in order to become a part of the new faith?"

Secondly, although it was assumed from the beginning that Christianity involved an appropriate moral-ethical life-style ("obedience," cf. Acts 5:32), it was not certain just what this meant. Was this obedient life the means of obtaining acceptance by God (the way into the community) or a response to the acceptable standing previously made available by him? What is the bases for life and decision making within this Christian life-style; what makes an attitude, action, or thing right or wrong?

Finally, these issues became evident, at least partially, through the events described in Acts 6:1-15:1 and are alluded to elsewhere in NT literature. They are part of the sequence of events through which the *real issues* facing the new faith eventually were exposed and clarified.

I. ACTS 1-5, THE EARLIEST DAYS OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY

The resurrection of Jesus and particularly the events at the Feast of Pentecost gave dramatic proof (visual and audible signs) that the final age was a reality and that God, through his Holy Spirit, was present and active within the group of the followers of Jesus. All of the original disciples and the initial converts were racially Hebrews/Jews, present in Jerusalem. They accepted the basic tenets and practices of Judaism in general and of one or more of the Jewish groups

7. Acts 2:36; 5:31. Actually there are at least 13 distinct names or titles applied to Jesus in Acts 2-7.

of the time. At first they were virtually indistinguishable within the complex Jewish social, religious structure. Generally, they seem to have regarded the new faith as a continuation of God's work through the history of Israel in the past. They were simply Jews who were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah and that through him the "age of fulfillment" had arrived. In such a setting it would be assumed that Jewish Christians would follow the "Jewish way of life" (one of many definitions of it) and that all candidates for inclusion in the new faith would be from the same racial and cultural background.

II. ACTS 6-7, THE JEWISH CHRISTIAN HELLENISTS (STEPHEN)

Acts 6:1-6 indicates the first crack in this perceived homogeneous⁸ shell. It demonstrates the presence within the Church of both of the two *major* cultural divisions of Second Temple Judaism.⁹ From the time of Alexander the Great onward there had been both Hebraic (Semitic) and Hellenistic (Greek) branches of Judaism. The former was more faithful to traditional ways of life and attitude, including racial-cultural particularism and isolationism. The latter accepted at least some elements of Greek culture and tended to be broader, more inclusive in their outlook. These different cultural outlooks caused the *Hebraic Jewish Christians* to see the nature and implications of the new faith differently than did the *Hellenistic Jewish Christians*.¹⁰ If language caused the Hebraic and Hellenistic Jewish Christians to meet separately, the differences between the two groups would have developed more rapidly and been even more pronounced.

8. Note ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό in 1:15 and 2:44. The phrase denotes harmony and unity in some sense—spacial, temporal, or in spirit. As Bruce (*The Acts of the Apostles. The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* [3rd ed.; Grand Rapids, 1990] 108) notes, in the LXX it may mean "in the same place," "at the same time," or "with one accord;" in the Apostolic Fathers it seems to have a semi-technical sense and refers to a meeting of the whole church, distinct from just household gatherings.

9. Elsewhere I have dealt at length with the development of factions both within Palestinian Judaism and the Church of Jerusalem in my *Customs and Controversies* and in "The Church of Jerusalem, A.D. 30-100."

10. See Oscar Cullmann, "The Significance of the Qumran Texts for Research into the Beginnings of Christianity," *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (ed. Krister Stendahl; London: SCM, 1958) 18-32; "Dissensions Within the Early Church," *USQR* 22 (1967) 83-92; E. Earle Ellis, "'Those of the Circumcision' and the Early Christian Mission," *Studia Evangelica IV* (ed. F. L. Cross; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1968) 390-99 and idem, "The Circumcision Party and the Early Christian Mission," *Prophecy and Hermeneutics in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 116-28; J. Julius Scott, Jr., "Parties in the Church of Jerusalem as Seen in the Book of Acts," *JETS* 18 (1975) 217-27; and M. Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, 69-126. Such reconstructions as this are rejected by Craig C. Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews. Reappraising Divisions within the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress, 1992).

Stephen's speech provides insights into the particular emphases and concerns of the Hellenistic group and introduces the "theology" of the Jewish Christian Hellenists. It is, I believe, significant that Acts records the beginning of missionary expansion immediately following the Stephen history. It was the cultural outlook and theological emphasis of his group that helped free the Jerusalem Church to leave its isolationism, to move out as witnesses beyond Jerusalem "to the end of the earth" (cf. Acts 1:8).¹¹

III. ACTS 8, THE INCLUSION OF GROUPS WITH TRADITIONAL ASSOCIATIONS WITH JUDAISM

The more strict first century Hebraic Jews probably refused unnecessary association with all but fellow Jews who observed the written and traditional laws and customs as did they. Some went to great lengths to avoid contact even with other Jews who did not accept their own outlook and interpretations.¹² On the other hand, most, even Hebraic, Jews were more lenient.

The Samaritans were a difficult case. Jews and Samaritans had maintained mutually hostile relations for decades if not centuries. Nevertheless, they were not like Gentiles. Samaritans were racially "half Jewish," circumcised, and observed the Mosaic Torah (albeit in their own edition).¹³ Later Talmudic writings reflect something of the ambiguity Jews held toward them.

Luke recounts that Philip took the initiative in evangelizing the Samaritans. His Greek name and inclusion as one of "the Seven" (Acts 6:5) suggest that almost certainly he was a Hellenist, like Stephen a Hellenistic Jewish Christian, and therefore more open to contact with

11. See J. Julius Scott, Jr., "Stephen's Defense and the World Mission of the People of God," *JETS* 21 (1978) 131-41; cf. T. C. Smith, "The Significance of the Stephen Episode in Acts," *Studies in Acts* (Greenville: Smyth and Helwys, 1991) 33-48; note also Earl Richards, *Acts 6:1-8:4: The Author's Method of Composition* (SBLDS 41; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1978).

12. The monastic life-style of Qumran community is an illustration of one such reaction.

13. On the Samaritans in general see J. Scott, *Customs and Controversies*, 196-200; Alan Crown, ed., *The Samaritans* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1989); James D. Purvis, "The Samaritans and Judaism," *Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters* (ed. Robert A. Kraft and George W. E. Nickelsburg; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 81-98; John Bowman, *The Samaritan Problem. Studies in the Relationships of Samaritanism, Judaism, and Early Christianity* (trans. Alfred M. Johnson; Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1975); John MacDonald, *The Theology of the Samaritans* (London: SCM, 1964); Moses Gaster, *The Samaritans: Their History, Doctrines and Literature* (The Schweich Lectures, 1923; London: Oxford University Press, 1925); J. A. Montgomery, *The Samaritans. The Earliest Jewish Sect* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston, 1907).

non-Jews. The seriousness with which the Jerusalem believers viewed the conversion of Samaritans is reflected by the sending of two of the most influential members of "the Twelve" (Peter and John, presumably both "Hebraic") to "investigate" the matter. These apostles sensed the presence of a genuine work of God. This was confirmed by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Samaritan believers; although not mentioned in Acts, this was probably validated by visual and/or audible signs.

Ethiopians certainly did not have even the limited racial, "blood" association with Jews as did the Samaritans. Nevertheless, there was a connection. Both Jews and Ethiopians recognize "traditional associations" between the two groups as a result of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon, 1 Kgs 10:1-13. Both groups accepted the tradition that she later bore a son by Solomon (cf. 1 Kgs 10:13). Thus rulers of Ethiopia, until the Communist take-over in the 1970s, claimed to be, "the Son of David, Lion of the Tribe of Judah." The presence of the Ethiopian eunuch of Acts 8:26-39 in "Jerusalem to worship" (v. 27) and his possession of an Isaiah scroll suggests that he may have been a *proselyte*¹⁴ (a "convert" to Judaism, a "naturalized" Jew). In any case, the acceptance of the Samaritans and an Ethiopian into the new faith demonstrates expansion beyond, not only the geographic boundaries of Jerusalem and Judea, but also beyond the cultural and racial boundaries of both Hebraic and Hellenistic Judaism. It is highly significant that the accounts both of these expansions include implications of the presence of indications of approval given by the undeniable presence and activity of God.

IV. ACTS 9:32-34. PROCLAMATION TO JEWS IN THE COASTAL PLAIN AREA OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL

The coastal plain of the land of Israel is the site of great highways of the ancient world. These were both the trade routes and the roads of armies which marched to and from Egypt to the south and the Mesopotamian world to the north and east. Archaeology demonstrates the presence of Gentile, especially Greek influence along the coast even before the invasion of Alexander the Great unleashed a flood of Hellenism in the fourth century BC.¹⁵

14. Circumcision may have led to his being [erroneously?] known as a "eunuch." Emasculation may have been required for a male to be in the service of a queen. The term may mean nothing more than "an official."

15. Elias Bickerman, *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees: Foundations of Post-biblical Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962) 14-16; Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974) 32-35, 56; Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 1.73, 149.

The coastal plain always has been first to be affected by pagan influences. The Jewish residents of this area could not avoid constant contact with Gentiles and their influence. They were geographically removed from the center of Hebrew worship, the temple, and other institutions which many felt were necessary for a fully "observant" life. The more strict Jews felt they had "reasons to doubt" the kosher status (i.e., the ceremonial purity) and proper adherence to other Jewish distinctives (concepts and especially practices) by the residents of the coastal plain.¹⁶

The circumstances of the inclusion of some coastal plain Jews in the believing community, as reported in Acts 9:32-42, probably implies some hesitancy and/or misgivings by Jerusalem Christians. The fact that there were believers in this area is first introduced by recording the presence and implied approval of none other than Peter (v. 23). Later, the raising of Tabitha-Dorcas from the dead provides miraculous confirmation of God's presence and acceptance of these groups.

V. ACTS 10:1-11:18. CORNELIUS, AN EXCEPTIONALLY "GOOD" GENTILE

The conversion of the Roman centurion Cornelius marks a particularly significant event in the sequence we are following. I have dealt in depth with the details of this account elsewhere.¹⁷ We must here observe only a few especially important facts relating both to the event and the discussion of it afterwards in Jerusalem. Cornelius was both an uncircumcized Gentile and an officer in the Roman army of occupation. Nevertheless he is introduced as possessing qualities and engaging in deeds of harmony with Jewish piety (10:2, 22). The wording suggests he was a "God fearer,"¹⁸ a member of an unofficial

16. Geographical separation from Jerusalem, contact with foreigners who followed trade routes through their territory, and the presence of Hellenistic towns in its borders caused Galilee to be called "Galilee of the Gentiles," Matt 4:15 (see Sean Freyne, *Galilee From Alexander the Great to Hadrian, 323 B.C.E. to 135 C.E.* [Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1980] 101-45, 259-97). How much more would suspicion arise against the inhabitants of the coastal plain with more trade routes and more Hellenistic towns. E. Schürer (*The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ [175 B.C.—A.D. 135.]* [rev and ed. G. Vermes, F Millar, and M. Black; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979] 2.85-184) describes 33 Hellenistic cities, the majority, as would be expected, were in the Decapolis, but 13 were in the coastal plain.

17. "The Cornelius Incident in the Light of its Jewish Setting," *JETS* 34 (1991) 475-84.

18. In both Acts 10:2 and 22, Cornelius is described as (φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν = "who feared God" [RSV]). This phrase, along with (σεβόμενοι τὸν θεόν = "worshipper of God," [RSV]) seems to refer to an *unofficial* class of Gentiles who stopped short of

class of Gentiles, friendly to Judaism, but who stopped short of becoming full proselytes. Some Jews permitted the "God fearer" limited participation in Jewish worship. As such, in Jewish eyes, Cornelius was an exceptionally *good Gentile* who might be accepted by all save the most strict Jews.

Peter's contact with Cornelius came at divine initiative. Cornelius is said to have sought the "good news" through Peter "in a vision of an angel of God" (10:3). He then (1) obeyed God's directive and (2) was waiting expectantly (10:24) for the message.

For his part Peter was prepared for Cornelius's summons by a thrice repeated vision from God. The point of the vision was the Hebraic (with OT foundation) *kosher* laws and traditions. The primary focus in Peter's vision was upon clean/unclean animals for food.¹⁹ The accompanying heavenly voice specifically addresses the kosher issue in general and reminded Peter that God is the final determiner of what is or is not clean and acceptable. Peter was then informed by God that three men were looking for him; he was instructed to "accompany them without hesitation; for I have sent them" (10:20).

As Peter entered the house of Cornelius he mentioned *kosher* laws, this time as they apply to *individuals with whom one could visit or associate* (10:27). Note that Peter took the principle first applied to animals for food (vs. 15) and applied it to persons.²⁰ In Acts 10:28, Peter explained his willingness to break tradition because of God's

becoming full proselytes but were permitted limited participation (by some Jews) in Jewish worship. These individuals, "God fearers," worshiped Yahweh only, practiced imageless worship, attended the synagogue, observed the Sabbath and food-laws, and conformed to other basic elements of Jewish law and tradition and Jewish morality.

On "God fearers" see Kirsopp Lake, "Proselytes and God-Fearers," *Beginnings of Christianity* (1933; reprint Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966) 5.74-96; G. Kuhn, "σεβόμενοι or φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν," *TDNT* 6.743-44. For recent restudy of this group see Max Wilcox, "The 'God-Fearers' in Acts—A Reconsideration," *JSNT* (1981) 102-22; three articles in *BAR* 12.5 (Sept./Oct., 1986): "Robert S. MacLennan and Thomas Kraabel, "The God-Fearers—A Literary and Theological Invention," 47-53; Robert Tannenbaum, "Jews and God-Fearers in the Holy City of Aphrodite," 55-57; Louis Feldman, "The Omnipresence of God-Fearers," 59-63; and Scott, *Customs and Controversies*, 346-47.

19. Lev 11; Deut 14.

20. The verb in Acts 10:34, καταλαμβάνομαι, is in the present, middle, hence, "I am in the process, just now, of coming to realize for myself. . . ." Peter thus seems to suggest that he was *only then* beginning to apprehend personally the truth (that God shows no partiality) which he had previously known only in theory.

The fact of God not being partial (literally, "does not lift up the face," also translated, "not a respecter of persons") is often found in Scripture. In the Old Testament, Deut 10:17, it is a characteristic of God which enables him to provide perfect justice. In the NT it is mentioned in Acts 10:34; 15:9; Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; Jas 2:1, 9; 1 Pet 1:17 and in early Christian literature—*Pss. Sol.* 2:19; *1 Clem.* 1:3; *Barn.* 4:12; *Pol. Phil.* 6:1.

directive. Furthermore, Peter clearly asserted that acceptance of an individual by God was predicated upon the life and ministry of Jesus (in his message he used the same basic outline of the ministry of Jesus as found in all the Synoptic Gospels!) (10:36–43).

Luke records that the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles as confirmation of God's acceptance of them. The presence of audible signs is specifically mentioned (10:46), presumably because it provided a concrete, recognizable indication of the presence of the (otherwise invisible) Holy Spirit. Furthermore, this "speaking in tongues" was parallel to the phenomena of Pentecost, Acts 2:4; cf. 2:6–12. Peter and those accompanying him then accepted the right of Gentile believers to be included among the fellowship of believers in Jesus. This they demonstrated by baptizing uncircumcised Gentile believers in the name of Jesus Christ and remaining for some days (= associating with them).

Upon his return to Jerusalem Peter faced questions and had to give explanation for his activities in Caesarea (11:1–18). The presence of "the ones out of the circumcision" (οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς) was mentioned earlier, in the house of Cornelius in Caesarea (10:45), and now, again, in the following discussion in Jerusalem (11:2). Since all Peter's travel party and all present in Jerusalem were circumcised Jews, this phrase must designate a special group, "the Circumcision Party" (so RSV of 11:2). This was certainly the most strict group among members of the Hebraic Jewish Christian community.²¹

The points at issue were those of great concern to a strict Hebraic group. They involved various aspects of the *kosher* laws-traditions-association with uncircumcised persons, by implication, the necessity of the *rite/act of circumcision* within the fellowship of believers, and persons *with whom one could eat*.²² Peter's answer, reflecting the lesson of the thrice-repeated vision of Joppa, insisted that it was at

In addition to being the basis for determining proper candidates for becoming Christians (Acts 10:34; 15:9), it has implications for the nature of relationships between Christian masters and slaves (Eph 6:9), the administration of divine punishment in judgment (Col 3:25), and the attitude and treatment by Christians of the poor within their community (Jas 2:9).

21. Called "the circumcised believers" in both the NIV and NRSV. See bibliography at note 9.

22. Note Acts 11:3, "Why did you *go to uncircumcised* and eat with them?" The strength of ancient taboos against eating with persons of another group is illustrated in Gen 43:32 where three different groups at one meal were served separately. (1) Joseph, although second in command to Pharaoh, could not eat with (2) the Egyptians because he was not of their race, and (3) his brothers, who were not yet recognized as Joseph's kin, ate by themselves.

God's initiative that he contacted Cornelius and God had demonstrated his approval of it.

The full implications of this discussion in Jerusalem can be appreciated only in view of its Second Temple Jewish setting. Especially significant were the attitudes, prominent among traditional Hebraic Jews toward themselves as "the people of God" and their deep seated distrust, hatred, and revulsion against Gentiles as persons and their religious and moral practices.²³ By their acknowledgment, "Then God has given to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life" (11:18), it appears that some Christians recognized that it was the will of God to accept into the number of "the people of God" at least some Gentiles, but possibly only exceptionally good ones, or "God fearers." Even so, one might sense in the wording of 11:18 that this recognition was made grudgingly at best.²⁴

VI. ACTS 11:19-26, THE INCLUSION OF MORE GENTILES IN ANTIOCH (ON THE ORANTES)

Acts 11:20 says that Jewish Christians in Antioch preached to "the Hellenists (or Greeks)," certainly meaning "uncircumcised Gentiles."²⁵ Significantly, this breach of precedent came in a Hellenistic area. The Church in Jerusalem *again* sent a member of its leadership group, this time Barnabas, to "look into" the matter.

23. Jewish revulsion of Gentile religious and moral practices was not without reason. Conduct that abhorrent to Jews is well documented in classical sources (e.g., Euripides, "The Bacchae") and reflected in such NT passages as Rom 1:22-31 and 1 Pet 4:3. Another contributing factor was that throughout their history Israel had suffered bitterly at the hands of Gentiles. This even included attempts to stamp out their religion (Antiochus Epiphanes) and the race (Haman, in the Book of Esther). On Second Temple Jewish attitudes toward Gentiles in general see Scott, *Customs and Controversies*, 335-52.

24. Chronological note: I suggest that Paul's first post-conversion visit to Jerusalem, Gal 1:18-24; Acts 9:26-30, occurred at some point within this time-frame. Acts locates it before the Cornelius incident, Gal 1:18 dates it, "after three years," presumably after his conversion, that is ca. AD 35/36(?).

25. Some texts read "Ἕλληνας and others Ἕλληνιστῶς. The textual evidence is fairly evenly divided between. However, as F. E Bruce (*The Acts of the Apostles* [3rd ed; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990] 272) notes, "Since the companions of these Cypriots and Cyrenaean had already been preaching to Jews (who in that area would certainly be Hellenist), it would be pointless to say that the Cypriots and Cyrenaean preached also to the Hellenists. What is meant is that they preached to Gentiles."

Hellenism was an urban centered society which placed a high priority on culture. It is a reasonable supposition that those to whom the missionaries preached were not just any uncircumcised Gentiles but *urban, cultured* ones.

Barnabas liked what he saw, enlisted the help of Saul of Tarsus, and stayed in Antioch for a lengthy period. We are left to wonder what, if any, report was given to the Jerusalem congregation by Barnabas and what was its reaction.

VII. ACTS 11:27-30; 12:25, THE FAMINE VISIT FROM ANTIOCH TO JERUSALEM

Acts 11 and 12 relate a visit to Jerusalem by Barnabas and Saul-Paul to take aid to the believers of that city who were threatened by famine conditions. In addition to hardships from famine, according to the chronology of Acts, the Jerusalem believers were also subject to persecution (by King Herod Agrippa I, to please the Jews, 12:1-3). Acts implies that the famine and the persecution took place at approximately the same time and mentions Paul and Barnabas' "famine visit" to Jerusalem on both sides of the persecution narrative.

There is no mention of any special meeting between Barnabas and Saul with leaders of the Jerusalem fellowship on this occasion. Yet, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that at least the leadership of the Jerusalem congregation would have taken the opportunity to talk with these representatives from Antioch about the inclusion of Gentiles and the association of Jewish believers with Gentiles, matters over which there was long-standing concern.²⁶ The meeting reported in Gal 2:1-10²⁷ "fits" nicely into this setting.

26. Three facts are worth noting. (1) Barnabas' report to the group that had first sent him to Antioch was certainly due. (2) It is possible that the "un-Jewish" behavior of Jewish believers in Caesarea and Antioch may have been at least partly responsible for the outbreak of persecution against believers in Jerusalem (cf. F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*. The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes [NICNT; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988] 234). (3) Conditions in Jerusalem would have made it unwise if not impossible for any large meeting of believers at this time.

27. Discussions of the relation between the post-conversion visits of Paul to Jerusalem noted in Acts and those of Galatians 1 and 2 are too numerous to record. I have summarized what I believe to be the most significant issues in "The Church of Jerusalem, A.D. 30-100," 30-35; cf. 165-73. See also the excellent summary of issues and material on this issue by Richard N. Longnecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas: Word, 1990) lxxii-xxxviii. E. F. Bruce addressed Acts-Galatians issues in a number of his writings; e.g., *Acts (Greek Text; 3d ed.)* 47-52; *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 148-59; "Galatian Problems 1. Autobiographical. Data," *BJRL* 51 (1969) 292-309; "Galatian Problems 2. North and South Galatians," *BJRL* 52 (1970) 243-66; "Galatian Problems 3. The 'Other' Gospel," *BJRL* 53 (1970) 253-71; "Galatian Problems 4. The Date of the Epistle," *BJRL* 54 (1972) 250-67; "Galatian Problems 5. Galatians and Christian Origins," *BJRL* 55 (1973) 264-84; and *The Epistle to the Galatians. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Eerdmans, 1982) 2-32, and esp. 43-56.

VIII. ACTS 13-14, THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY AND THE REPORT BY THE MISSIONARY PARTY

The next major step in geographical, cultural, racial expansion, according to Acts, came with the first missionary journey of Barnabas and Saul-Paul. It is significant that they were sent out by a racially mixed church (Acts 13:1). They travelled as far as south-central Asia Minor, a predominantly Gentile area. Although they first preached to Jews, the largest number of converts were Gentiles. This effort marked the first initiative by Christians to reach large numbers of Gentiles and resulted in the beginning of a radically different racial-cultural make-up in the Christian community.

My reconstruction of the relation of the visits in the two documents is as follows: Gal 2:1-10 reports a private meeting between Barnabas and Saul-Paul and leaders of the Jerusalem Church. The issues included: (1) The nature of the message being preached among the Gentiles; by implication circumcision and the prerogatives of the Jewish national-cultural heritage seem to have been important items in the discussion and (2) Paul's right to be a spokesman for God (= his apostleship).

The leaders ("Pillars": James the Lord's brother, Peter, and John) are said to have (1) extended "the right hand of fellowship" (2:9), thus acknowledging the accuracy of Paul's message (including making no requirement for the circumcision of Gentile believers) and his status as an official spokesman for God (= an apostle) and (2) agreed upon a segregation of the mission field: Peter would preach to "the circumcised" and Paul and Barnabas to "the uncircumcised" (= Gentiles). The Jerusalem officials requested only that Antioch (and other churches?) "keep on remembering the poor" (v. 10—note the present tense of the verb, *μνημονεύωμεν*, suggests a continuation of action already begun—possibly a reference to the material aid brought in this, the famine visit).

The decision was not made public. Titus, an uncircumcised Greek, was seen as a test case. Certain individuals ("clandestinely introduced false brethren," *παρεισάκτος ψευδαδέλφους*, v. 4) took the actions necessary ("slipped in," *παρεισῆλθον*) to determine (literally, "to spy out," *κατασκοπήσαι*) whether or not Titus was circumcised. They demanded that Titus be circumcised as a recognition of the necessity of the circumcision of all Gentile believers as a prerequisite for their inclusion within the new faith. Saul-Paul, defending the principle that circumcision of Gentile believers is not a necessary prerequisite for inclusion in the new faith, resisted.

Note that the Greek of Gal 2:3-5, which describes the Titus incident, is notoriously unclear. Some commentators believe Paul was forced to permit Titus to be circumcised (e.g., "Who can doubt that it was the knife which really did circumcise Titus that has cut the syntax of Gal 2:3-5 to pieces." F. C. Burkitt, *Christian Beginnings* [London: University of London Press, 1924] 118). I believe that as a matter of principle and for the purity of the law-free Gospel Paul resisted all efforts of forced circumcision on Titus. Galatians 1-2 does not appear to me to have been written by an individual in the mood for compromise.

The circumcision of Timothy, Acts 16:1-3, is an interesting contrast. In this case circumcision was a matter of choice but it would contribute positively to the ministry. Titus, on the other hand, had been made a "test case"; refusal to permit his circumcision was necessary for the defense of the Gospel (cf. Gal 2:5).

The enterprise was begun by the direction of "the Holy Spirit" (13:2).²⁸ Again, a new step was taken only at divine initiative. During the mission trip there was ample evidence of God's approval of the policy of preaching to the Gentiles and of accepting them on a basis other than the traditional ones for inclusion in the national-religious structure of Israel/Judaism. Upon their return to Antioch on the Orantes, Paul and Barnabas reported their activities in such a way as to make clear the nature of their message and the identity of their converts (14:27).

X. ACTS 15:1-3. OPPOSITION FROM THE JERUSALEM COMMUNITY

Acts 15:1 records that objections to the inclusion of Gentiles apart from circumcision continued to come from some within the Jerusalem Church. The scene was Antioch; the protagonists, individuals "from Judea," They insisted that Gentiles be "circumcision according to the custom of Moses" (15:1). This continued the demand that Gentiles must first become Jewish proselytes in order to become Christians. Paul and Barnabas took strong issue with these representations by the Judeans.

The geographical expansion related by the narrative of Acts (from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, "and to the end of the earth," (1:8) is often noted. Less obvious, but no less important, is the cultural, racial, and social expansion. From the idyllic harmony and unity of the first days of the fellowship in Jerusalem, the author of Acts leads step by step as the Church moves beyond a constituency of strictly Hebraic Jews in Jerusalem (6:1). First came the recognition of cultural divisions among Jewish Christians, the Hebraic Jewish Christians and the Hellenistic Jewish Christians. Then we are told of the inclusion of some from groups who had traditional associations with the Hebrews, the Samaritans and Ethiopian, the latter possibly a proselyte. On the coastal plain of the land of Israel believers came from among Jews living away from Jerusalem and who, presumably, were less strict in their religious observance. At Caesarea the community of believers embraced an uncircumcised Gentile, although he, a "God fearer," a "good Gentile," was probably viewed as an exceptional case and accepted only because of evident divine initiative and approval (10:1-11:18). In Antioch urban Hellenistic Gentiles,²⁹ probably from a cultured pagan background, were evangelized and accepted among the "Christians." During Paul's first missionary journey the

28. Although the Church of Antioch "sent them off" (Acts 13:3), Acts also says the party was "sent out by the Holy Spirit" (13:4).

29. See note 25.

gospel was proclaimed to diaspora Jews as well as Gentiles in mass; it was the latter who were most responsive.³⁰ Such unrestricted solicitation among uncircumcised Gentiles was the final step toward a repudiation of a "Jewish privilege,"³¹ and of the assumption that the new faith was merely another Jewish sect or "denomination." It made clear that the Messiah's kingdom included "all peoples, nations, and languages" (Dan 7:14).

XI. THE NEW FAITH AT AN IMPASSE

Psychologists and other observers of human behavior note that in disputes of all types "side issues" or symptoms of the real issue frequently emerge first.³² When so, the genuine cause is identified only after the passage of time and with struggle.

In this dispute in Acts side issues surfaced first. These included such questions as (1) with whom may the Jewish Christians associate; (2) with whom may they eat (cf. Gen. 43:32); (3) what is the status of food laws and other *kosher* regulations within the new faith; (4) what is the necessity and place of circumcision and "the customs" (of one or more branches of first century Judaism) within Christianity, and (5) what is the status of Jewish privilege. All of these were but parts of the over-riding issue, the nature and place of the Jewish law (both the Old Testament Torah and its traditional interpretations) within the Jewish Christian community.

Now, at Antioch the main issue became clear: What is the nature of the new faith? On what basis is salvation imparted?

Those from Judea argued that the new faith is inseparably bound to the old and that it is entered in exactly the same way one entered old Israel, by birth or through proselytism (circumcision, "according to the custom of Moses," 15:1, 5). They apparently meant that one *cannot* be a Christian without first becoming a Jew because the

30. Note Acts 12-14.

31. "Jewish privilege" is a difficult concept to clarify. It involves the fact that the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were the chosen, favored people of God with special "advantages" (cf. Rom 3:1-2; 9:4-5). It goes further to include attitudes of exclusivism which could manifest itself with violent reactions at even the suggestion that God might show favor to a Gentile instead of a Hebrew. Note that both Jesus (Luke 4:22-29) and Paul (Acts 22:21-22) incurred the ire of the Jews by suggesting that God had concern for Gentiles. See Scott, *Customs and Controversies*, 121-26.

32. E.g., Clifford J. Sager (*Marriage Contracts and Couple Therapy* [New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1976] 11) lists the 12 complaints most commonly stated by 750 couples who sought counseling for marital difficulties. He then adds, "These complaints are not the central problem but symptoms of it." (I am indebted to my colleague, Professor Stanton L. Jones of the Department of Psychology of Wheaton College, for calling Sager's work to my attention.)

Kingdom of God is inseparably bound to Israel as a race, culture, and religion. They may have insisted, with many Second Temple Jewish groups (although with numerous variations and emphases), that the one who had been graciously included in the number eligible for membership in the Kingdom of God (by birth or proselytism) must earn it or maintain that place by observing nomistic practices³³ (the Old Testament Torah within the context of one of the several sets of first century interpretation and additions to it).³⁴

Paul and his supporters argued that although the nation Israel and the Old Testament are not insignificant in God's purpose, salvation is offered and imparted freely, on the basis of God's gift of grace, made available through the person, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus; proper candidates for Christian salvation are not limited to

33. Within the setting of Christianity this claim has broader implications. Is God's favor bequeathed on the basis of *law* (legalism), a synonym for any form of human status or effort to earn divine acceptance. This might take several different forms, such as (1) observing ceremonies and rituals (e.g., Jewish Law), (2) joining (belonging to) the right group, (3) doing some other form of good works which merit or deserve God's favor and salvation.

34. The assumption that all intertestamental Judaism held a concept of salvation by law has been severely challenged by E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977); (cf. *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* [1983]). He argues that during the Second Commonwealth period (as opposed to later Rabbinic thought) the prevailing concept saw "the covenant by God's grace and Torah obedience as man's proper response within the covenant" (*Palestinian Judaism*, 420).

Nevertheless the New Testament is an important source for understanding Second Temple Judaism. It portrays that at least some Jews seem to have held just such a view as Sanders rejects. Note Mark 10:17 (" . . . a man ran up and . . . asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"), Luke 15:29 (the older brother of the prodigal son, who most likely represents the Pharisaic way of looking at things, expects acceptance because, "These many years I served you, and I never disobeyed your command"), Luke 18:9-14. (the prayer of the Pharisee vs. that of the Publican), John 6:28 (the reference to "the works of God"); Paul constantly fights against a concept of earning salvation by keeping the law (e.g., Rom 9:30-32, Israel "pursued it [righteousness] not by faith but, as it were, by works"). There seems to have been at least a legalistic/nomistic "ethos" in the first century Jewish religion. The presence of a "wage-price" view of salvation would seem almost inevitable in a religion, like Second Commonwealth Judaism, primarily concerned with orthopraxy. The difference between this reading and that of Sanders may well be one of the difference between the religious understanding of many of the common people and some "theologians."

In summary, I suggest that Torah was indeed seen as a response to Covenant (graced), yet law-keeping was unquestionably the essence of Hebrew religion. Some Hebrews understood the proper relation between grace and Torah. For still others this dual focus probably resulted in a misguided zeal for external observances alone. For others, it was Torah keeping that was regarded as the means of acquiring merit and salvation before God on something like a wage-price relationship.

I have also dealt with this matter in more detail in *Customs and Controversies*, 273-77.

a particular ethnic, national, nor cultural group. The only requirement is acceptance of this gracious gift of God by faith (15:8-11). They viewed grace to mean that all that needs to be done for a person to become acceptable before God has already been accomplished by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (15:11).

With the issue now clarified the Christian faith could go no further until it was resolved. Nothing less than the content of the Christian message, the Christian undertaking of the Kingdom of God, the nature of the Christian religion was at stake. Acts 15:2 says the matter was to be decided in conference(s) between "Paul, Barnabas, and some of the others" and the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. The stage was now set for a momentous event in the history of Christianity. In Luke's presentation the Church had completed her progress to the Council of Jerusalem.

XII. THE PROGRESS TO THE COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM AND THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

The date and destination of the Epistle to the Galatians are subjects of long, ongoing debates complicated, by numerous accompanying problems. The early date, ca. 48, places the composition of the epistle between the first and second missionary journeys of Paul and prior to the Acts 15 Council of Jerusalem. This necessitates the identification of the addressees as inhabitants the southern part of the political province of Galatia whom Paul contacted on his first missionary journey. The late date, ca. 56/57, places the writing of Galatians during Paul's third missionary journey, about the same time as the composition as the Corinthian correspondence and Romans. In this case the "Galatians" addressed were an ethnic group, persons originally from ancient Gaul who, after the Roman Gallic wars, were located in the northern part of the province (the area Paul visited no earlier than his second or third missionary journeys)? Questions of method are also important. In addition to exegetical considerations, which type of evidence should predominate, literary style and theological expression or emphasis, thus grouping the epistle with I and II Corinthians and Romans³⁵ or historical considerations which might favor the earlier date? Finally, there is the problem of the relationship (if any) of the two post-conversion visits to Jerusalem by Paul described in Galatians (chaps 1 and 2) with the three recorded in Acts 9, 11-12, and 15.

35. See Charles H. Buck, "The Date of Galatians," *JBL* 70 (1951) 113-22; Bruce, "Galatians and other Pauline Epistles: C. H. Buck's Argument," *Epistle to the Galatians*, 48-49.

The issue is not inconsequential; it has widespread ramifications. These include the nature of the reconstruction the history of the early Church which, in turn, provides the setting and framework for the detailed interpretation (exegesis) and the understanding of the overall theology of the New Testament. And, of course, also involved is the question of the relative merits of the epistles of Paul and Acts as sources for historical information in this endeavor.

If the epistle is dated late during Paul's third missionary journey, after the Acts 15 Council of Jerusalem, then it would appear that the settlement of that meeting (if it occurred at all³⁶) was not permanent and a division and conflict remained between Peter and Paul after it (as exemplified by Gal 2 and 1 Cor 1). This was, of course, the position of F. C. Baur³⁷ who argued that the Jewish branch of the Church, led by Peter, espoused as legalistic view of Christianity while Paul and the Gentile wing held that salvation was by grace. Baur believed that these two diametrically opposed views of the nature of Christianity remained throughout the Apostolic Age and beyond. On the other hand, if the epistle was written before the Council, that meeting is seen as the settlement for the issues and controversies reflected in Galatians and that in spite of local problems, such as those in Corinth, the Church was united on the cardinal question of the nature of Christian salvation, that it comes by grace through faith.

The details of the evidence for the positions related to the date and destination of Galatians and discussion of them cannot be reproduced here.³⁸ Rather, I suggest, if the steps in the Church's progress to the Council of Jerusalem outlined above are accurate, then we

36. Many twentieth century scholars assume the account is creation of the author; e.g., Dibelius, "Apostolic Council," *Studies in Acts*, 93-101 and Haenchen, *Acts*, 464-65.

37. See F. C. Baur, "Die Christuspartei in der korinthische Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des petrinischen und paulinischen Christentums in der ältesten Kirche, der Apostel Petrus in Rom," *TZT* 4 (1831) 61-206; *Church History* (trans. Allan Manzies; London: Williams and Norgate, 1878-1879) 2 vols.; *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, His Life and his Work* (trans. Eduard Zeller; 2d ed. London: Williams and Norgate, 1876) 2 vols.; cf. Horton Harris, *The Tübingen School: A Historical and Theological Investigation of the School of F. C. Baur* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

Many others have, with modifications, adopted the dialectal reconstruction of Baur's "Tübingen School." Among the more recent are S. G. F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church. A Study of the Effects of the Jewish Overthrow of A.D. 70 on Christianity* (2d ed.; London: SPCK, 1957) and, more recently, the writings of Gerd Luedemann, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity* (trans. M. Eugene Boring; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); "The Successors of Pre-70 Jerusalem Christianity: A Critical Evaluation of the Pella-Traditions," *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* (ed. E. P. Sanders; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 161-255; Cf., *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology* (trans. F. Stanley Jones; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

38. This I have sought to do in my "The Church of Jerusalem, A.D. 30-100," 30-37.

have a framework within which to evaluate the state of the development of the controversy represented in Galatians³⁹ and, then, of the most likely time of its writing. That stage is precisely the point at which the discussion moves from the "side issues" to fundamental question of the nature of Christian salvation, or of justification by faith, as Paul words it in Gal 2:15-21. Paul sees such earlier issues—the validity of his own apostleship, the demand for circumcision, and the question of eating companions—as preliminary and converging upon the "real" issue of justification by law versus justification by grace.

This is the same issue, the nature of Christian salvation, which, according to Acts 15:1, made the Jerusalem Council necessary. Both Galatians (2:11) and Acts (14:26; 15:1) record this point was reached in Antioch. Both record it was reached only after previous meetings in Jerusalem had dealt with "side issues" but had failed to effect a lasting solution to questions and concerns.

Thus, I suggest, that within the "map" of the progress of the debate, Paul's initial visit to Jerusalem is described both in Acts 9 and Galatians 1. The "famine visit" of Acts 11:27-12:25 is the same as that described in Galatians 2, although Paul's version contains descriptions of meetings, issues, conflicts, incidents, and a "settlement" (based on the segregation of the mission field) not mentioned in Acts. This took place after the conversion of Cornelius, when some progress had already been made toward clarifying the identity of proper candidates for inclusion in the Church, the New Israel.

39. Gal 2:11-21: When Peter first arrived in Antioch, a racially-mixed fellowship, he ate with Gentiles (= disregard *kosher* traditions relating both to associations and partaking of meals). Partaking of meals here certainly refers to accepting Gentiles on the same level and may include joining them in the Lord's Supper. Peter's action, combined with his position in the Jerusalem community, was a significant expression of acceptance of the gospel of non-circumcision to the Gentiles and their full acceptance into the fellowship. He withdrew from fellowship with Gentile Christians when "certain came from James."

Peter seems to have viewed his action as nothing more than a concession to Jewish sensitivities and/or the difficult position of the Jerusalem community. (It is significant that Paul explicitly mentions the presence in Antioch of members of the same group, "the Circumcision Party" [οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς], that had raised questions about Peter's association and acceptance of Cornelius and his household, Acts 11:2.) Paul saw Peter's actions as a denial of the legitimacy of uncircumcised believers to be recognized as Christians in the same sense as circumcised Jewish believers, he understood the very nature of the new faith was involved!

Paul's rebuke of Peter deals, not with such "side issues" as proper associations, with whom one eats, circumcision, or Jewish privileges, but with what he sees as the major issue which had always been at stake. Gentiles need not *become Jews* (= proselytes) in order to become Christians; the issue is the nature of justification—not by law but "by faith in Christ."

In this suggested scenario the "certain people who came from James" of Gal 2:12 were the same as the "certain individuals . . . from Judea" of Acts 15:1. The demand that Gentiles be "circumcised according to the custom of Moses" in order to "be saved" of Acts actually took the form, as recorded in Galatians, of demanding that Jewish Christian withdraw from table fellowship with Gentile believers. Behind this demand, Paul recognized, were not simply racial-cultural preferences or ceremonial issues, but of more fundamental concern, the doctrine of Christian salvation (justification by faith).

Galatians, then, like Acts, shows that between Paul's first two journeys, in Antioch, the issue was clarified. Galatians,⁴⁰ I suggest, was written at this point, between Paul's conflict with Peter in Antioch but before the issue was finally settled in the Acts 15 council in Jerusalem. The stage of the debate portrayed in Galatians "fits" that chronological point.

The Epistle to the Galatians, in its own way also describes the way Church progressed to the Council of Jerusalem. It shows that the Christian understanding of the Kingdom of God, the nature of the Christian religion was at stake, but it does so in Paul's way and with his language. Galatians also shows that the stage was now set for a momentous event in the history of Christianity, that the Church had completed her progress to the Council of Jerusalem.

40. It appears that about this same time some "Judaizers" invaded Paul's mission field in Galatia and made disturbing statements and demands. If these were not from precisely the same group as "the Circumcision Party" (οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς), Acts 10:45; 11:2; Gal 2:12, they certainly breathed the same spirit, held the same concepts, and made similar demands.

The major elements of the "Judaizers'" position in Galatia seems to have been (1) Paul was not an original follower of Jesus and not a true representative (= apostle); (2) all Paul knew of Christianity he learned from the leaders of the Jerusalem Community; (3) Paul misrepresented the message he learned in Jerusalem; (4) the true Jerusalem Gospel requires Gentiles, as well as Jews, to be circumcised and to obey the Jews' law, *as a condition for salvation*.

In his response Paul (the Epistle to the Galatians) defends himself and his gospel, and clarifies the nature of the Christian faith.