

**PAUL, JERUSALEM AND THE  
JUDAISERS:  
THE GALATIAN CRISIS IN ITS BROADER  
HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

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## STATEMENT OF SOURCES

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ABSTRACT

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The thrust of this thesis is encapsulated in the title – Paul, Jerusalem and the Judaisers: The Galatian Crisis in Its Broader Historical Context – which reflects the author’s insistence that reconstructing all the events surrounding the crisis that impelled Paul to compose his letter to the Galatians is essential to understanding this letter. The position taken in this study is that the Galatian crisis was initiated by a group of Judaising opponents acting under the direct authority of the Jerusalem church. The origins of this controversy can be traced back to the early dispute between the Hellenists and the Hebrews described in the Acts of the Apostles, which led to the expulsion of the Hellenists from Jerusalem and the establishment of the community in Antioch. Paul’s opponents apparently cited Jerusalem as the source of and the warrant for their Law-observant gospel. In Galatians, Paul alludes to events involving Judaising opponents that transpired in Jerusalem and Antioch prior to the outbreak of the crisis at Galatia. Thus, the immediate background of the crisis is found in the Jerusalem Council (Gal 2:1-10; Acts 15:1-35) and the Incident at Antioch (Gal 2:11-14). Turning to the conflict in Galatia itself this thesis attempts to explore the links between these earlier events and the Galatian crisis. The primary avenue for this examination will be via a consideration of Paul’s argument in Galatians. By the careful use of the mirror-

reading technique, this thesis will endeavour to reconstruct the message and the origins of Paul's opponents. The thesis concludes with a brief examination of Paul's later conflicts with Judaizing opponents at Corinth and Philippi, as well as the autobiographical material in Romans, all of which will provide an insight into the eventual outcome of the crisis in Galatia.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
<i>ABR</i>	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archeologist</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
<i>BibInt</i>	Biblical Interpretation
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentary
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theological Bulletin</i>
CBNTS	Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBSS	Continuum Biblical Studies Series
CNT	Companions to the New Testament
<i>CTJ</i>	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
CTL	Christian Theological Library
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUT	Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>

<i>JRH</i>	<i>Journal of Religious History</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSS	JSNT Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentaries
MNTS	McMaster New Testament Studies
NCB	New Century Bible
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NIGTC	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	<i>NovT</i> Supplements
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTG	New Testament Guides
NTR	New Testament Readings
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
PNTC	Pelican New Testament Commentaries
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SE</i>	<i>Studia Evangelica</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series



SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and Its World
SP	Sacra Pagina
SPNT	Studies on Personalities of the New Testament
<i>SR</i>	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
<i>TD</i>	<i>Theology Digest</i>
TNTC	The New Testament in Context
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>TZT</i>	<i>Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie</i>
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
WBC	Word Book Commentaries
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZBK.NT	Zürcher Bibelkommentare. Neuen Testament
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

## INTRODUCTION

Paul's letter to the Galatians is a short and passionate document, which is perhaps the most polemical of all the Pauline correspondence. Although commentators differ about the exact details of the situation that occasioned Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia, all agree that Paul wrote to counter what he considered to be a significant crisis for his Galatian converts.<sup>1</sup> In this letter we find Paul vehemently defending his gospel and his right as an apostle to preach this gospel among the Gentiles (1:16; 2:8) against accusations to the contrary advanced by opponents who were advocating "a different gospel" (1:6-10). The content of the letter seems to imply that this other gospel entailed faithful adherence to the Mosaic Law (3:10), including circumcision (5:2-4; 6:12-13), as well as the observance of the Sabbath and the Jewish feast days (4:8-11).

As to the basis of the missionaries' warrant they appear to have resorted to two avenues of authority. First, they apparently appealed to Scripture, particularly the story of the Abrahamic covenant (3:6-29; 4:21-31), at which the institution of circumcision was imposed on God's chosen people (Gen 17:1-27). Accordingly, these missionaries have traditionally been considered "Judaizers"; that is, proponents of a traditional Jewish proselyte model of Christian mission, which required Gentile Christians to attach themselves to ethnic Israel.<sup>2</sup> Second, the fact that Paul finds it necessary to detail his relationship with the apostolic authorities at Jerusalem (1:11-2:14) may imply that these

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<sup>1</sup> See the surveys of the competing theories offered by J. J. Gunther, *St. Paul's Opponents and Their Background: A Study of Apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian Teachings* (NovTSup 35; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 1-5; E. E. Ellis, "Paul and His Opponents", in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults*, ed. J. Neusner (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 264-298; F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (SNTSMS 56; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 59-72; and J. L. Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 117-126.

<sup>2</sup> This identification has a long history dating back to the second-century, when Marcion first inferred that Paul's opponents were fanatical Jewish Christians from Jerusalem (Tertullian, *Av. Marc.* 5:2-4). This view was further supported by both John Calvin and Martin Luther during the Reformation. Since then most Protestant exegetes have held to some form of this theory. See the discussion in W. Russell, "Who Were Paul's Opponents in Galatia?", *BSac* 147 (1990), 329-350; F. J. Matera, *Galatians* (SP 9; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 7-11; and R. N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas: Word Books, 1990), xliii, lii-iv.

missionaries also claimed a direct commission from the Jerusalem church, while casting doubts on Paul's own claims to apostolic authority. Thus, a significant aspect of their message must have been the record of the events surrounding Paul's early association with the Jerusalem Apostles, Peter, James and John, including the Council at Jerusalem (2:1-10) and possibly also the so-called "Incident at Antioch" (2:11-14). Why else would Paul need to provide his version of these events?<sup>3</sup>

Many commentators argue that there would seem to be in Galatians 1-2 a clear reflection of additional allegations by the Judaisers that Paul, like they, had similarly received the "gospel" by way of Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> There may also be here, as F. F. Bruce points out, a further implied charge that Paul had failed to preach that gospel correctly, abridging and adulterating the import of the message that he had received at Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> However, few scholars are willing to directly link the Judaisers to the Jerusalem Apostles. Some commentators have suggested that Paul's Apostleship was never an issue at Galatia.<sup>6</sup> Others have argued that the Judaisers did not even view themselves as opponents of Paul.<sup>7</sup> A few scholars have even questioned the methods used to identify the missionaries as "Judaisers" with connections to Jerusalem and their message as a Law-observant "gospel".<sup>8</sup> Indeed, such is the diversity of views that even by the early-seventies, a survey

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<sup>3</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1990), 108, makes the point that how individual scholars interpret the biographical statements in Galatians 1-2 is determinative of the differing theories concerning the identity of Paul's opponents at Galatia.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Martyn, *Galatians*, 117. Similar views are expressed by Longenecker, *Galatians*, 36, 42, 44-45, 64-66; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 26; H. D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 64-66; and J. D. G. Dunn, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC; London: A. & C. Black, 1993), 72-78.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce, *Galatians*, 101-102.

<sup>6</sup> B. R. Gaventa, "Galatians 1 and 2: Autobiography as Paradigm", *NovT* 28 (1986), 309-326; and B. Lategan, "Is Paul Defending his Apostleship in Galatians? The Function of Galatians 1:11-12 and 2:19-20 in the Development of Paul's Argument", *NTS* 34 (1988), 411-430.

<sup>7</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 431-466; G. Howard, *Paul: Crisis in Galatia - A Study in Early Christian Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (SNTSMS 35; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1-19; and R. Jewett, "The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation", *NTS* 17 (1970), 198-212 (205).

<sup>8</sup> The issue of method was first raised by J. B. Tyson, "Paul's Opponents in Galatia", *NovT* 10 (1968), 241-254, which became the stimulus for further discussions pursued by G. Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography: Towards a New Understanding* (SBLDS 73; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985); J. M. G. Barclay, "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case", *JSNT* 31 (1987), 73-93; *idem*, *Obedying the Truth: A Study in Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 1-35; C. H. Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit: A Study in the Argument and Theology of Galatians* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), 31, 39-40; J. L. Martyn, "A Law-Observant Mission to Gentiles: The Background of Galatians", *SJT* 38 (1985), 307-324 (310-313); *idem*, "Events in Galatia: Modified

by J. J. Gunther revealed that there had been at least eight major theories proposed for the identity of Paul's opponents at Galatia, and further hypotheses have been added in the years since.<sup>9</sup>

The present study is intended as one more contribution to the ongoing debate concerning Paul's opponents at Galatia. As will be demonstrated here in the Introduction, this study aims to engage the more prominent current theories and offer a fresh approach in examining the crisis as it emerges from Paul's letter. Where this analysis differs from recent trends in the study of the Pauline opposition at Galatia is in its attempt to examine the crisis from the perspective of the broader context of Paul's relationship with Jerusalem. The title of this study then is significant. It is not intended to be an examination of the Galatian crisis in isolation, but an exploration of the wider historical background to the issues raised by Paul in his response to the Galatian crisis. However, before we can address the issues, it is important that we survey the current scholarly literature, discuss our methodology, and describe the structure of the subsequent chapters.

## **1. Survey of the Scholarly Literature**

For the most part, the literature on the issue of Paul's opponents in Galatia falls into two camps. The first group of commentators approaches the subject from the perspective of all the Pauline controversies, attempting to see Paul's difficulties at Galatia as one skirmish in what is a much wider war between opposing forms of Christianity. Another school of thought tends to smooth over the differences inherent in the primitive Christian movement, preserving the vision of a basic theological unanimity between these two wings of early Christianity, and attributing the advent of the various Pauline opponents, including those at Galatia, to local issues and agitators. While the first group tends to read the situation

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Covenantal Nomism versus God's Invasion of the Cosmos in the Singular Gospel. Response to Dunn and Gaventa", *Pauline Theology, Vol. 1: Thessalonians, Philipians, Galatians, Philemon*, ed. J. M. Bassler (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 160-179 (160-163); and J. L. Sumney, "Servants of Satan", "False Brothers" and Other Opponents of Paul (JSNTSS 188; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 77-85, 134-159.

<sup>9</sup> Gunther, *St. Paul's Opponents*, 1-5. A thorough examination of all the issues and the methodological approaches used to interpret Galatians has been recently offered by M. Silva, *Interpreting Galatians: Explorations in Exegetical Method*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001). See also M. D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 110-192; and *idem* (ed.), *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), which brings together many of the more significant articles on Galatians published in recent decades.

through the lens of the Corinthian correspondence, the second group tends to accept the vision of Acts. Where the first sees in the early Church a clear and simple division between “Jewish Christianity” and “Gentile Christianity”, the other school of thought postulates a diversity of various movements shaped by a variety of religious, cultural and social influences.

### ***1.1. Jewish Christian Judaisers from Jerusalem***

The theory that Paul’s opponents at Galatia were Judaizing Jewish Christians from Jerusalem is most closely associated with the nineteenth century Pauline scholar F. C. Baur and subsequent members of the Tübingen School. In a series of important publications, Baur advanced the theory that behind the obvious polemical material found in the Pauline letters lay a fundamental enmity between two missions or, more precisely, two competing Christian movements.<sup>10</sup> For Baur, church history throughout the first century was driven by the ongoing conflict between a Law-observant Jewish Christianity that appealed to Peter and the Jerusalem church as its source of authority and a Law-free Gentile Christianity championed by Paul and his heirs. Baur found the earliest evidence for this conflict in Paul’s autobiographical information in Galatians 1-2 and Romans 16, his warnings against opponents in Philippians 1 and 3, as well as the description of the factional divisions described in the Corinthian correspondence.

In 1 Corinthians (1:12-13; 3:5-6), Paul refers to a report that the whole church of Corinth had become divided into factions, one of which declared its allegiance to Cephas and Christ as opposed to the partisans of Paul and Apollos (1:12-13; 3:5-6). Baur saw the enumeration of factional groups in 1 Corinthians as parallel to, and therefore indicative of, the continuation of the factional disputes evident at the Jerusalem Council and the

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<sup>10</sup> F. C. Baur, “Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des paulinischen und petrinischen Christentums in der ältesten Kirche, der Apostel Petrus in Rom”, *TZT* 4 (1831), 61-206. Baur’s views were subsequently developed more fully in a series of publications, most significantly: *Das Christentum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte* (Tübingen: Fues, 1860); E.T. *The Church History of the First Three Centuries*, tr. A. Menzies (London: Williams & Norgate, 1878) and his two-volume masterpiece *Paulus, der Apostel Jesus Christi. Sein Leben und Wirken, seine Briefe und seine Lehre* (Stuttgart: Becher und Müller, 1845), recently re-released in English in a single volume format: *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teaching: Two Volumes in One*, tr. A. Menzies (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003). H. Harris, *The Tübingen School: A Historical and Theological Investigation of the School of F. C. Baur* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990) provides a complete overview of the impact of Baur on the study of the Pauline controversies.

Antiochene dispute as described in Galatians 2:1-14.<sup>11</sup> The Christ party and the Cephas party formed one faction that stood in opposition to the Pauline Party represented by a similar inflation in the allegiances to Paul and his co-worker Apollos.<sup>12</sup>

On this understanding, Baur argued that the Christ Party represented the interests of Jewish Christian missionaries claiming a relationship to Christ and apostolic authority via Peter, who enjoyed primacy among the first Jewish Apostles of Jesus.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, Baur argued that two related issues stood at the heart of this long-lived dispute. The first concerned the question of Law-observance. The “dogs” and “cutters” at Philippi (3:2-11) and the “false Apostles” at Corinth (2 Cor 11:2-29) placed great emphasis on “circumcision and everything else that is inherent to Judaism”. Therefore, Paul was forced to defend his mission on the basis of his own Jewish pedigree (Phil 3:7-9; 2 Cor 11:21-23; cf. Gal 1:13-16).<sup>14</sup> The second issue at stake in this dispute focused on Paul’s apostolic credentials. The opponents at both Galatia (Gal 1:10-2:14) and Corinth (1 Cor 9:1-27; 15:3-15; 2 Cor 10:1-12:21) questioned Paul’s authority on the basis that Paul “had never been prepared for the apostolic office in Jesus’ own school”.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, Paul was forced to defend his status as an apostle on the basis of his revelatory experience on the road to Damascus.

Turning to Galatians, Baur argued that the evidence of Paul’s letter suggested “strange teachers” invading Paul’s churches professing a commission from the Pillar Apostles to undermine Paul’s authority and subvert his “liberal” and Law-free Gospel.<sup>16</sup> Baur’s analysis of the situation persuaded him that the troublemakers at Galatia appear to be Jewish Christians of “the genuine old stamp”.<sup>17</sup> In this they were probably like the adherents of the Pharisaic element in Jerusalem during the Council (Acts 15:5; cf. 11:2-3), and also like that of the Cephas and Christ Parties in Corinth (1 Cor 1:12; 3:22). For such Jewish Christians Paul’s Gentile mission threatened the “very ground of their existence”

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<sup>11</sup> Baur explores the identity of the “False Brothers” at Jerusalem and Antioch more fully in *Paul*, 105-145. In this work he draws a clear link between the anti-Pauline faction at Jerusalem and Antioch with the one at Corinth.

<sup>12</sup> Baur, “Die Christuspartei”, 76-78.

<sup>13</sup> Baur, “Die Christuspartei”, 84.

<sup>14</sup> Baur, “Die Christuspartei”, 107.

<sup>15</sup> Baur, “Die Christuspartei”, 107-108, 114.

<sup>16</sup> Baur, *Paul*, 49-60.

<sup>17</sup> Baur, *Paul*, 60.

and their identity as Jews. Hence, these Jewish Christian missionaries came to Galatia with a “Judaising” program, seeking to force Paul’s Gentile converts to become Jewish proselytes by submitting to circumcision and adhering to the Mosaic Law.

Contrary to the popular understanding of Baur’s study, Baur did not directly link Paul’s opponents with the Jerusalem Apostles. He did not claim that the Judaisers interfered in Paul’s churches at the express command of the apostolic authorities. He did not see them as agents of Jerusalem. However, he maintained that they must be associated with the Judaising “False Brothers” at Jerusalem and the “James Party” at Antioch. Like these latter groups, the Judaisers at Galatia must have acted with the tacit approval of James, Peter and John. Baur argued that only this explanation would account for Paul’s appeal to the record of his Jerusalem meeting with the Pillars and his Antiochene dispute with Peter in Galatians.<sup>18</sup>

In view of this conclusion, Baur saw the dispute between Paul and the Judaising faction of the Jerusalem church as the basis for understanding the nature of the primary factional conflicts that drove developments within early Christianity. Paul’s central focus on the opposition between the Jewish Law and the Christian gospel was seen as a reflection of the opposition Paul faced throughout his career. Given the nature of Paul’s defence and the repeated references to James and Peter, we must assume that this opposition was clearly linked with the original circle of Jesus’ disciples at Jerusalem.

In time, Baur came to see the echoes of Paul’s conflict with Jerusalem not only in the writings of Paul, but within the rest of the New Testament canon and the patristic writings of second century, where it appeared to be resolved by the emergence in the patristic period of the hierarchical Catholic Church.<sup>19</sup> Baur contended that observing the literary references to this conflict in the Pauline correspondence one could distinguish the authentic letters (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians) from the pseudo-Pauline letters (Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus).<sup>20</sup> A thorough comparison of Acts and the Pauline letters drew a similar

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<sup>18</sup> Baur, *Paul*, 121.

<sup>19</sup> Baur, “Die Christuspartei”, 205-206.

<sup>20</sup> Baur, *Paul*, 255-256.

negative conclusion regarding the historicity of the Acts' account of Paul's career.<sup>21</sup> We shall return to the question of the reliability of Acts presently.

Baur's study was neither new nor, as we shall see, did it remain uncontested. On the one hand, ever since the Reformation most Protestant exegetes and historians had considered that the roots of Roman Catholicism were to be found in the legalistic, hierarchical, Petrine Christianity, which stood in opposition to the Pauline (and later Protestant) model that championed justification by faith alone and eschewed any form of sacerdotal intercession.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, however, Baur's thesis was not without its detractors. Criticism of his reconstruction of the Pauline controversies focused on three related issues. First, many of Baur's critics felt that his study relied far too heavily on the grand view of Hegelian dialectics, which tends to interpret all historical events in terms of a struggle between opposing ideologies.<sup>23</sup> Second, Baur's analysis of the rest of the New Testament and second century texts, such as Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and Epiphanius' *Panarion*, as a continuation of the conflict between Pauline and Jewish Christianity also proved unconvincing.<sup>24</sup> Finally, most scholars completely rejected the Tübingen School's evaluation of the later date and character of Acts and the majority of the Pauline letters.

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<sup>21</sup> Baur, *Paul*, 252. Following Baur's lead, others in the Tübingen School would apply Baur's criteria to the rest of the New Testament writings by interpreting and categorising them according to their ideological "tendency" (*Tendenz*). Hebrews and 1 Peter were assigned to the Pauline camp, while James, Matthew and Revelation were considered the products of a Petrine Jewish Christianity. Two further categories were developed; the first, a middle position, most clearly seen in the "mediating and conciliatory" tendencies of Luke/Acts and the Gospel of Mark; the second, "Catholic" texts, like 2 Peter, Jude and John, which reflected the emerging universal Church of the second century. For discussion, see W. G. Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*, tr. V. K. Alber (London: SCM Press, 1973), 130-134 and S. J. Hafemann, "Paul and His Interpreters", in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G. F. Hawthorne and R. P. Martin (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 666-679 (667).

<sup>22</sup> Russell, "Opponents", 330.

<sup>23</sup> Kümmel, *The New Testament*, 132. Similarly, S. Neill and N. T. Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 23-24.

<sup>24</sup> As early as the 1850s, A. Ritschl, *Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche*, 2nd edn (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1857), challenged the notion that all the Jewish Christian texts, both canonical and non-canonical, could be subsumed under the single banner of a "Judaizing Christianity". He was particularly critical of Baur's use of the Jewish-Christian material in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and Epiphanius' *Panarion* to flesh out the picture of Paul's "Judaizing-Christian" opponents at Jerusalem and in Galatia (104-107). According to Ritschl's reading of the texts, one must distinguish the "Jewish" Apostles of Jesus from the "Judaizing Christian" opponents of Paul, both of whom must be further delineated from the various second-century "Jewish Christian" groups whose disparate views are found in such works as the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* and the *Epistle of Barnabas*. Moreover, he saw in the apologists of the second century no real evidence of influence from Paul and, thereby, suggested that Catholic Christianity probably emerged from a form of Gentile Christianity that had no historic connection to Paul.



In the English-speaking world, J. B. Lightfoot was the first to offer an alternative theory to Baur's study.<sup>25</sup> In his commentary on Galatians, Lightfoot began by arguing for the early dating and historical reliability of Acts. Later, in his multi-volume work on the Apostolic Fathers, Lightfoot sought further to undermine Baur's dialectical presentation of two, competing first century Christianities moving towards a Catholic synthesis in the second century, by reappraising both Baur's dating and assessment of the patristic evidence, especially from Ignatius and Polycarp, which underpinned Baur's study.<sup>26</sup> Lightfoot sought to question Baur's chronology, in this case by situating Acts earlier in the ecclesiastical timeline and by arguing that Ignatius and Polycarp were not representative of late second century "Catholic" literature.

Using this revised chronology, Lightfoot maintained that Paul did not stand in opposition to the "chief Apostles of the circumcision" – James, Peter and John – with whom Paul enjoyed amicable relations. Lightfoot proposed that the most pervasive opponents of Paul were not rival Christians associated with the Pillar Apostles (Gal 2:9). Rather, they were a radical, rogue element within the Jerusalem community, as Acts (11:1-18; 15:1-2, 5) testifies.<sup>27</sup> Lightfoot argued that Paul and the Pillar Apostles had reached a genuine accord concerning the Gentile mission at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35; Gal 2:1-10). In his view, the subsequent Antiochene dispute (Gal 2:11-14) was initiated by radicals within the Jerusalem church who did not enjoy the support of the apostolic leadership. This faction he categorised as a form of "Pharisaic Ebionitism", seeing their ilk in every reference to the traditional Judaisers whom Paul opposed in Galatians, 2 Corinthians and Philippians.<sup>28</sup>

Lightfoot argued that a critical reading of Galatians supports this view of Paul's opponents, but it does not provide evidence of any long-lived controversy between Paul

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<sup>25</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *St Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (London: Macmillan, 1884).

<sup>26</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers. Part 2. S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1885, 1890), 2:345-346. Similar comments made about the significance of Lightfoot's work on the Apostolic Fathers are found in Hafemann, "Paul and His Interpreters", 668-669; Kümmel, *The New Testament*, 544; G. Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity*, tr. M. E. Boring (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 9-12; and J. D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1991), 3-4.

<sup>27</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 345.

<sup>28</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 311.

and the Pillar Apostles. On the contrary, Galatians 2:1-10 speaks of a distant (past) situation when James, Peter and John agreed in principle with Paul against the Judaizing propaganda of the mavericks, which explains why Paul cites the outcome of the Jerusalem Council as the guarantee of his fundamental and longstanding fellowship with the Jerusalem authorities. Nevertheless, Lightfoot agreed with Baur that the “Galatian apostasy” had a “double aspect” in denying Paul’s authority and repudiating Paul’s doctrine of grace.<sup>29</sup> He argued that the letter clearly demonstrates that Paul’s opponents were Jewish Christians who advocated the necessity of circumcision (Gal 5:2-4; 6:12-13), as well as the observance of the Jewish calendar feast days (4:8-11) and the assumption of the entire ceremonial law (3:10; cf. 5:16, 24), which was “the logical consequence of the adoption of the initiatory rite”.<sup>30</sup>

While Lightfoot agreed in principle with Baur that the “systematic hatred of Paul” was the key to interpreting the literature of the apostolic period, he sought to distance Paul’s opponents from the Jerusalem Apostles. He traced the Judaizing opponents of Paul across Galatians, 2 Corinthians and Philippians, suggesting that the letter to Galatia was written in the aftermath of this conflict that bedevilled Paul’s later missions in Achaia and Macedonia. Hence, we might agree with J. D. G. Dunn, who quotes with approval the opinion of C. K. Barrett that, while Lightfoot destroyed the chronology of the Tübingen school, he established a “modified Baurian position” that saw conflict and division, and especially the Pauline controversies, as pivotal to developments within the early Church.<sup>31</sup>

Many commentators continue to agree with Baur that there would seem to be in Galatians some connection between the Judaisers and Jerusalem, but in agreement with Lightfoot they are unwilling to draw even the most tenuous of links between the Galatian troublemakers and the apostolic authorities. John Bligh, for example, agrees with the traditional view that Paul’s opponents were “almost certainly Jewish Christians from Jerusalem”, but he argues along with Lightfoot that they were representative of the

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<sup>29</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 63.

<sup>30</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 27.

<sup>31</sup> Dunn, *Partings*, 3-4. Similarly, Silva, *Interpreting Galatians*, 123, observes that Lightfoot’s interaction with Baur displays “remarkable sensitivity to the tensions between Paul and the Jerusalem Apostles” while at the same time setting forth a coherent alternative to Baur’s solution.

“Pharisaic extremists” who, after the Jerusalem Council decided in Paul’s favour, sought to undermine the accord by pursuing Paul throughout his missionary fields.<sup>32</sup> F. F. Bruce adapts Lightfoot’s solution by arguing that the troublemakers were probably the same people who initiated the disputes in Antioch (Gal 2:11-14; Acts 15:1) – which, contrary to the order of Galatians 2:1-14, occurred prior to the Jerusalem Council – but they did not enjoy the full backing of the apostolic leadership at Jerusalem as Luke demonstrates in Acts 15.<sup>33</sup>

By contrast, F. Watson prefers to associate the troublemakers with the “men from James” at Antioch (Gal 2:12). Watson presents a scenario whereby the James party, buoyed by their success in defeating Paul at Antioch, move on to the Pauline congregations in Galatia determined to apply the same tactics among the Gentile converts there.<sup>34</sup> A comparable picture is offered by R. Longenecker, but he is less willing to link the opponents directly to James, preferring merely to suggest that the agitators “claimed to be representing James’ pastoral concerns regarding Jewish-Gentile relations in the Christian communities outside of Palestine”.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, B. Witherington has joined the consensus view by denying outright any link between James and the Galatian troublemakers while conceding that “they seem to have [unspecified] connections with the Jerusalem church”.<sup>36</sup>

A significant contribution was made to this debate by R. Jewett who found it possible to maintain the traditional connection between Paul’s opponents in Galatia and Jerusalem by suggesting that “Jewish Christians in Judea were stimulated by Zealot pressure into a nomistic campaign among their fellow Christians in the late forties and early fifties”.<sup>37</sup> It was this situation that lay behind the dispute at Antioch (Gal 2:11-14), where Peter and the Antiochene community were threatening to bring persecution on the entire

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<sup>32</sup> Bligh, *Galatians*, 26-31.

<sup>33</sup> Bruce, *Galatians*, 19-32.

<sup>34</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 60. More recently J. Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 193-194; *idem*, *Paul: His Story* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 129-138, argues that Paul’s opponents came from Antioch with the view to apprising the members of their missionary communities of the new Law-observant regime established after the Antiochene incident. All future references to Murphy-O’Connor’s work will refer to the first of these two books.

<sup>35</sup> Longenecker, *Galatians*, xcvi.

<sup>36</sup> B. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 25.

<sup>37</sup> Jewett, “Agitators”, 205.

Christian movement by flouting Jewish sensibilities regarding the separation of Jews from Gentiles.<sup>38</sup> The dispute spread quickly to Galatia, where the Judaisers' strategy was not to oppose Paul but to offer a complement, or more correctly a completion, to Paul's gospel, which entailed circumcision and the observance of the cultic calendar.<sup>39</sup>

Amongst the recent commentators on Galatians, J. L. Martyn has been the one who has consistently argued for viewing the situation at Galatia as a conflict between Paul and elements within the Jerusalem church. However, in terms of the relationship between Paul and the Galatian troublemakers, Martyn adopts Jewett's view and also argues that the opposing Law-observant mission to the Gentiles grew out of "genuine conviction", not animosity towards Paul whom these "teachers" (as Martyn prefers to label them) viewed benevolently as sharing in the same work for Christ.<sup>40</sup>

Earlier, G. Howard had similarly suggested that, on the basis of Galatians 5:11, the opponents actually thought Paul was preaching circumcision and considered him a colleague.<sup>41</sup> They probably viewed themselves as completing Paul's mission, a view that only Paul felt was a dangerous development and a perversion of the true gospel. Howard argued that "While Paul was hostile to the Judaisers, there is no indication that they were hostile to him".<sup>42</sup> Where Howard and Martyn disagree is on the issue of the relationship of the missionaries to these events described in Galatians 2:1-14.

A key component to Martyn's view is that Paul's negative assessment of the "teachers" is coloured by his previous clashes at Jerusalem and Antioch, and he apparently hoped that his strong defence at both the Council and in the face of the men from James at Antioch would have settled the situation. Paul had placed his trust in the accord reached between him and the Pillar Apostles. By contrast, Howard suggested that the missionaries understood that Paul was preaching circumcision and treated him as an ally on the

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<sup>38</sup> Jewett, "Agitators", 204. See also W. Schmithals, *Paul and James*, tr. D. M. Barton (SBT 46; London: SCM Press, 1965), 66-68; Tyson, "Paul's Opponents", 248; Bruce, *Galatians*, 131; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 73-74; and Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 133-135.

<sup>39</sup> Jewett, "Agitators", 205. Jewett's views are accepted uncritically by Longenecker, *Galatians*, xcii-xciv.

<sup>40</sup> Martyn, "Law-Observant Mission", 315; and *idem*, *Galatians*, 431-466.

<sup>41</sup> Howard, *Crisis in Galatia*, 1-19.

<sup>42</sup> Howard, *Crisis in Galatia*, 11. See also Sumney, "Servants of Satan", 134-152.

assumption that he, like them, was “dependent on the Jerusalem Apostles for his gospel”.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, Howard could find no explicit evidence that the Judaisers were privy to the details of either these earlier debates or the agreement made at Jerusalem.<sup>44</sup> Martyn, on the other hand, argues that the teachers were representing themselves as the only true ambassadors of the apostolic authorities in Jerusalem, charging Paul with deviating from the Law-observant gospel he was commissioned to preach.<sup>45</sup> In effect, Martyn’s reconstruction of the Galatian crisis revisits Baur’s study, alleging that the Galatian crisis must be seen against the broader context of two missions distinguished by differing attitudes to both the Law and the Law-observant Apostolic community at Jerusalem.

In a manner very similar to Martyn, P. F. Esler, in his commentary on Galatians (1998), notes a number of specific connections that Paul draws between the Galatian crisis and his previous problems with Jerusalem.<sup>46</sup> First, Esler observes ancient rhetoric required a *narratio* in a deliberative speech (as Esler perceives the genre of Galatians), which bore a close relationship to the matter at hand.<sup>47</sup> In Paul’s biographical *narratio* in Galatians 1:11-2:14 the Jerusalem Apostles are the sole focus, suggesting that the issue of circumcision and Law-observance, which had proved a divisive element in his previous dealings with Jerusalem, was also central to the problems at Galatia.<sup>48</sup> Accordingly, Paul’s literary strategy in this case would seem to indicate that Paul intended to promote a link between the troublemakers at Galatia and both the false brothers at Jerusalem along with the James party at Antioch.

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<sup>43</sup> Howard, *Crisis in Galatia*, 9.

<sup>44</sup> Howard, *Crisis in Galatia* 10.

<sup>45</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 466.

<sup>46</sup> P. F. Esler, *Galatians* (NTR; London & New York: Routledge, 1998), 74, 137-140. See also Martyn, *Galatians*, 458-466; and F. Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (HTKNT 9; Freiburg: Herder, 1988), 325. Similarly, R. B. Cook, “Paul and the Victims of His Persecution: The Opponents at Galatia”, *BTB* 32 (2002), 182-191, has made an argument for seeing Paul’s opponents as Christian Jews with whom Paul had previously clashed. Cf. A. A. Das, *Paul and the Jews* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 17-48.

<sup>47</sup> Esler, *Galatians*, 59-75. More recently, B. Fiore, “Paul, Exemplification, and Imitation”, in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*, ed. J. P. Sampley (Harrisburg: Trinity, 2003), 228-237.

<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Gaventa, “Galatians 1 and 2”, 313; J. H. Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (SNTSMS 26; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 128-158; and M. V. Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters and Thought* (SNTSMS 119; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 191-199.

Second, we should not overlook Paul's statement in 4:24-25 concerning Jerusalem and its children as presently serving as a slave to the covenant from Mount Sinai. This claim echoes Paul's earlier attack on the false brothers at Jerusalem (2:4), whose attempt to "make us slaves" by imposing circumcision on the Gentiles is later extended to the James party, and then to Peter, Barnabas and the rest at Antioch (2:13).<sup>49</sup> The Jerusalem church and its apostolic leadership, James, Peter and John, figure in the letter on three occasions prior to the later condemnation of Jerusalem in 4:24-25, as the focus of Paul's attempts to fight off efforts to enslave both him and his converts, by imposing circumcision on the Gentiles. Thus, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that Paul presents Jerusalem's Law-observant program as both a form of slavery and as the immediate cause of the present attempts to enslave the Galatians.

Third, Paul's stated motives for revisiting the details of the Jerusalem Council and the Incident at Antioch also indicate that Paul wants to draw parallels between these conflicts and the present situation at Galatia. It seems likely that Paul must have been forced to present his own version of these events to counter another version that was being circulated by his opponents. And, in any event, Paul's own stated purpose in doing so was to demonstrate how he had consistently fought for the "truth of gospel" (2:5, 14) against the incursions of the circumcision party wherever they occurred, formerly in Jerusalem and Antioch, and more recently in Galatia (1:6-7).<sup>50</sup> Both of these considerations support the view that there exists a causal relationship between the earlier events in Jerusalem and the later crisis at Galatia.

At this point, our survey of the history of the interpretation of Galatians appears to indicate that there exists a fair body of opinion amongst scholars that Paul's Galatian opponents were Jewish Christians from Judea who advocated circumcision and Law-observance. Moreover, there is no consensus about the relationship of these missionaries with the apostolic leadership at Jerusalem or their relationship with Paul. However, as we shall see in the next section there is also a significant minority opinion that Paul's

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<sup>49</sup> Esler, *Galatians*, 138; and more fully in his earlier work, *The First Christians in Their Social Worlds: Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), 57-62. See also Martyn, *Galatians*, 462-466.

<sup>50</sup> Esler, *Galatians*, 138.

opponents were neither Jewish Christians nor agents of the apostolic community in Jerusalem.

### ***1.2. Local Non-Christian Opponents***

We have seen that the traditional identification of Paul's opponents at Galatia as Judaisers is usually coupled with the view that these troublemakers were from outside the community. In keeping with this view, most commentators make a distinction between the "Galatians" who were the addressees of the letter and the "opponents" who were the subject of the letter. It is also normally argued that these opponents were fellow Christians from either Jerusalem or some other community aligned with the Law-observant faction at Jerusalem and, therefore, they are usually identified as "Jewish Christians" who directly opposed Paul's Law-free mission. A few commentators, however, have challenged the key aspects of this identification, arguing that Paul's opponents were local to Galatia and not members of the Christian community.

The most notable early proponent of this line of argument is J. Munck who denied outright that there ever existed any "conflict between Jewish Christianity and Paul".<sup>51</sup> In Munck's view, Paul saw Christianity as the fulfilment of Judaism and the Church as the true Israel. For Paul, as for Peter, James and John who lent their full support to him, the Gentile mission was an expression and an extension of Jewish eschatology, signalling the final ingathering of both Gentiles and eventually Jews as well prior to the *Parousia*. Accordingly in Galatians, Munck could not find any indication of Judaising agents of the Jerusalem church. Munck focused on Galatians 6:13, claiming this passage did not provide evidence of Jewish opponents, let alone Jewish Christian "apostates". Rather, Munck felt that the statement that "those who receive circumcision [but] do not themselves keep the Law" (Gal 6:13) suggested local Gentile converts who "supposed from their reading of the Old Testament that God required of his people that they should be circumcised and observe everything that he had commanded in His Law".<sup>52</sup> Paul writes Galatians to explain the radicalism of freedom wrought by Christ's epoch-making death

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<sup>51</sup> J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, tr. F. Clarke (London: SCM Press, 1977), 279.

<sup>52</sup> Munck, *Paul*, 132; see also L. Gaston, *Paul and Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 29-30, 81-82, who offers a similar view.

and resurrection signalling the onset of the *eschaton* when Gentiles would join Jews in the benefits of the Abrahamic covenant.

Oddly, while he laid great stress on 6:13, Munck paid little attention to Paul's claim concerning his opponents' attempts to avoid persecution in 6:12. This would seem to be a crucial aspect of Paul's portrait of his opponents, and the spectre of persecution is one that occurs, not only at Galatia, but also earlier in Antioch (2:12), suggesting a closer relationship between events in both places than Munck would allow. By contrast, A. E. Harvey sought to compensate for Munck's oversight by arguing that the opponents were Gentiles who were newly converted to Judaism and sought to offer circumcision to Paul's converts as a means of avoiding persecution.<sup>53</sup> The uniqueness of Harvey's view is that he contends that these proselytes were pressuring fellow Gentiles who were converts to Christianity to avoid persecution from the synagogue by adopting Jewish practices, not Jewish theology. Harvey reasoned that this is so because of the Jewish emphasis on strict adherence to Jewish practices, rather than to Jewish orthodoxy.<sup>54</sup> Paul's tactic was to show the theological consequences of embracing Jewish practices (Gal 6:12-13). But this theory is not without its problems.

The distinction between theology and faith-practice is a false dichotomy. It seems clear enough that Paul thought that the gospel his opponents preached was one that entailed a demand for circumcision (5:2-4; 6:12-13); or, put more accurately, it entailed the necessity of circumcision as the only means of entry into covenant relationship with God. Accordingly, his opponents taught that the Mosaic Law was divinely ordained as the only means to maintaining moral order and restraining the impulses of the flesh (5:16, 24). It may be possible that these opponents were Gentiles, but throughout the letter Paul seems to assume otherwise. In 2:15, Paul directly addresses his opponents as fellow Jews – “We who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners”. This shared ethnic and religious identity is also implicit in his preceding chapters where Paul speaks of his “former life in Judaism” (2:13-14) and Peter's apostleship among “the circumcised” (2:8). Accordingly, it seems

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<sup>53</sup> A. E. Harvey, “The Opposition to Paul”, *SE* 4 (1968), 319-332. Similarly, J. D. Crossan and J. L. Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus' Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom – A New Vision of Paul's Words and Deeds* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 39-40, assume uncritically that all the opponents found in Paul's letters were, like Paul's converts, Gentile “God-worshippers”.

<sup>54</sup> Harvey, “Opposition”, 324.



difficult to sustain the line of arguments presented by either Munck or Harvey that Paul considered his opponents at Galatia were anything other than fellow Jews. However, this does not preclude the possibility of Paul's opponents being local Jews.

The view that Paul's opponents at Galatia were local Jews is another variation of the general view that Paul's opponents were not interlopers or outsiders. This particular adaptation is associated with W. Lütgert, J. H. Ropes, W. Schmithals, and F. R. Crownfield, all of whom sought to identify Paul's opponents as Jews who were syncretistic in their religious practices, resulting in an early form of Jewish Gnosticism.<sup>55</sup> Lütgert and Ropes had proposed that in Galatians Paul was fighting two separate battles against, on the one hand, a group of Judaizers who claimed connections with the apostolic authorities at Jerusalem (1:1-5:12); and, on the other, local quasi-Gnostic (Diaspora) Jewish spiritualists whose libertine tendencies led them to oppose both Paul and the Jerusalem Judaizers (5:13-6:10).<sup>56</sup>

Schmithals rejected the view of Lütgert and Ropes that Paul faced a two-fold opposition at Galatia, but he agreed that Paul's opponents were either Jewish or Jewish-Christian Gnostics. He had argued that on the basis of Paul's strong denigration of the Jewish initiatory rite in Galatians 5:3 and 6:13 the opponents preached a gospel of circumcision rather than full Law-observance, agreeing with Paul against Jerusalem that the "purity of the gospel and the non-mediated character of the apostolate are inseparable".<sup>57</sup> On this view, Schmithals reasoned that for Paul's opponents the ritual of

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<sup>55</sup> W. Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist. Eine Untersuchung zur Vorgeschichte des Galaterbriefes* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1919); J. H. Ropes, *The Singular Problem of the Epistle to the Galatians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929); F. R. Crownfield, "The Singular Problem of the Dual Galatians", *JBL* 63 (1945), 491-500; W. Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians*, tr. J. E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971); and, *idem*, *Paul and the Gnostics*, tr. J. E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972). See also R. Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, tr. R. A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 132-141, who similarly argues for the Gnostic origins of Paul's opponents.

<sup>56</sup> Lütgert's theory was developed further by Ropes, *Singular*, 23-25, who rejected the common view that the Judaizers originated in Jerusalem. Ropes argued that, while Paul preached the futility of the Jewish Law, he retained close connections with both the Jewish roots of the Christian message and the Jerusalem church. As with Lütgert, Ropes proposed two different and differing sets of opponents; but, unlike Lütgert, he proposed that these groups were composed of Gentiles native to Galatia, each focusing on competing aspects of Paul's own teachings. The first were Gentile converts who focused on the Jewish elements of Paul's teachings and advocated a Judaizing position and challenged Paul's antinomian stance based on Paul's previous commission from Jerusalem. The second were a group of radical, libertine spiritualists or "pneumatics" who opposed the Law-observant stance of the Judaizers and criticised Paul for his links to Jerusalem.

<sup>57</sup> Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, 19.

circumcision was seen as a mystical rite of initiation into the higher or more perfect knowledge. This set them fundamentally at odds with Jerusalem and, accordingly, they charged Paul with being subject to the apostolic authorities, a charge that Paul seeks to overturn in the initial chapters of Galatians.

Similarly, F. R. Crownfield had attempted to resolve the problems inherent in Lütgert's "Two Front" hypothesis by suggesting that Paul's opponents were atavistic in their faith practice, probably former members of a Jewish mystery cult.<sup>58</sup> He identified Paul's Galatian opponents as a group that combined Christianity with a mystical understanding of following Torah and Jewish legal practices.<sup>59</sup> The "Judaizers" and "spirituals" were actually the same group. The leaders of this group are theorised to have been early converts to Christianity, and although not followers of the earthly Jesus, were nonetheless loosely connected with Jerusalem.<sup>60</sup>

Crownfield conjectured that they were adherents of Jewish mystery cults seeking spiritual illumination through legalism. As he built on Lütgert's study to develop his view, Schmithals also built on Crownfield's work and specified it to Gnostic groups. Both writers tended to correlate the Colossian opponents with those of Galatia who combined some Jewish rites with laxity in morals.<sup>61</sup> A similar view is held by H. Schlier in his commentary on Galatians.<sup>62</sup> He embraces an identity for the opponents that explains their nomism coupled with their antinomian tendencies as an early stage of Gnosticism demonstrating a sort of Jewish apocalypticism similar to that found at Qumran. This is not far from the view of Brinsmead, who saw Paul's opponents as possessing an Essene theology and ethics that espoused a "nomistic enthusiasm".<sup>63</sup>

More recently, M. Nanos has reinvigorated the debate by suggesting that Paul's Galatian opponents, whom he calls the "influencers", were "members of the larger Jewish communities of Galatia entrusted with the responsibility of conducting Gentiles wishing

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<sup>58</sup> The definitive refutation was provided by Crownfield, "Singular", 491-492, 498-500.

<sup>59</sup> Crownfield, "Singular", 492-493.

<sup>60</sup> Crownfield, "Singular", 493.

<sup>61</sup> Crownfield, "Singular", 494; and Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, 44-46.

<sup>62</sup> H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (KEK 7; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 22-24.

<sup>63</sup> B. H. Brinsmead, *Galatians: Dialogical Response to Opponents* (SBLDS 65; Chico: Scholars Press, 1982), 164-178.

more than guest status within the communities through the ritual process of proselyte conversion”.<sup>64</sup> The cornerstone of Nanos’ argument is that the Galatian churches were still in relationship with the synagogues in Galatia, for the letter “predates...any division which could be characterized as Christianity versus Judaism”.<sup>65</sup>

Nanos also attacks the notion that the “influencers” were opponents of Paul or missionaries from Jerusalem. Indeed, they are not even fellow believers in Christ. Nanos insists that the disagreement is an internal Jewish debate in which the focus is on the figure of Christ, not over circumcision, dietary proscriptions and righteousness as traditionally assumed. Therefore, the issue of Galatians is not about the Torah *per se*. Paul does not denounce Jewish identity or behaviour for Jews or even for Gentiles seeking proselyte status who are not connected with faith in Christ. However, because the addressees do believe in Christ, Paul insists that they are righteous as Gentiles and cannot become Jewish proselytes. Carrying over a position from his earlier book on Romans, Nanos understands Paul’s gospel as one that proclaims that the addressees, as Gentiles, have been made a part of a new community consisting of Israel and the nations worshipping together.

Another modern commentator who, like Munck, Harvey, Schmithals and Nanos, takes the local social situation seriously is S. Elliott. Contrary to the aforementioned scholars, however, Elliott examines the crisis at Galatia from the perspective of the former pagan cultic context of the Gentiles who converted to the Galatian churches. While she argues that circumcision remains the central issue in Galatians, she suggests that Paul’s concern over the issue “does not originate from an antipathy towards the Law, but from an antipathy toward the cult of the Mother of the Gods and an abhorrence of self castration”.<sup>66</sup> This reinterpretation of the issues raised by Galatians produces a significant reappraisal of the crisis. Accordingly, she presents a radical reconstruction of the situation of the letter that suggests that Paul seeks to dissuade his audience from getting circumcised, not because of the danger of their Judaizing, but because he “saw circumcision as an especially

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<sup>64</sup> Nanos, *Irony*, 6.

<sup>65</sup> Nanos, *Irony*, 7.

<sup>66</sup> S. Elliott, *Cutting Too Close for Comfort: Paul’s Letter to the Galatians in Its Anatolian Context* (JSNTSS 248; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2004), 13.

problematic ritual in a context in which ritual castration [popular in the Mother Goddess cult of the *Galli*] was practiced”.<sup>67</sup>

On this reading, Paul uses the dichotomy between the two covenants and the two consorts, Sarah and Hagar, as allegories, which present a choice for the Galatians. They can either stay with Paul’s gospel or opt for circumcision, which would take them back into the world dominated by the Mother Goddess. As castration bound the *Galli* to the Mother, so circumcision will enslave. Remaining uncircumcised will enable them to continue as sons and heirs.<sup>68</sup> For Paul the crisis is not one whereby his converts are in danger of adopting Jewish practices, but of their possible backsliding towards their former pagan practices.

Despite the originality of these alternative theories postulating the opponents as Gentiles or Gentile proselytes to Judaism, Jews or syncretistic Jewish Christians *native to Galatia*, their proponents have failed to win broad backing from other commentators on Galatians. This has been the case because of several difficulties inherent in these theories. First, hypotheses suggesting a Gnostic component to the Pauline opposition at Galatia have not survived. Subsequent scholarship would prove that it is not entirely clear as to what extent first century Judaism and first century Christianity had been infected by Gnostic ideas. The parallel examples often cited to support this theory are derived from texts much later than the Pauline letters and, therefore, it seems that Gnosticism was far from being a clearly defined phenomenon in Paul’s time.<sup>69</sup>

Second, those scholars who would argue a Galatian locale for the origins of Paul’s opponents must deal with the fact that Paul regularly and consistently, throughout the letter, makes distinctions between the Galatians and those who have “bewitched” (3:1) and “unsettled” (1:7; 5:12; cf. 6:12-13) the communities. Moreover, as J. D. G. Dunn points out, “Paul always refers to the troublemakers in the third person, while addressing his

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<sup>67</sup> Elliott, *Cutting Too Close*, 233.

<sup>68</sup> Elliott, *Cutting Too Close*, 286.

<sup>69</sup> See further E. Käsemann, “Die Legitimität des Apostels: Eine Untersuchung zu II Korinther 10-13”, ZNW 41 (1942), 33-71. Similar views are expressed by D. Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 41-60. A thorough rebuttal of the Gnostic hypothesis is offered by R. M. Wilson, “Gnostics - in Galatia?”, SE 4 (1968), 358-367.

converts in the second person”.<sup>70</sup> Such distinctions strongly suggest that Paul’s opponents were interlopers and outsiders and, thereby, these distinctions raise serious questions about any view that postulates a purely internal dispute at Galatia.<sup>71</sup>

To pursue the issue further, not only does Paul imply that these missionaries were not native to Galatia, but his remarks implicitly suggest that they were only newly arrived in Galatia. He comments on the rapidity with which the Galatians have deserted him and his gospel (1:6), and he accuses the interlopers of “hindering” (5:7) the Galatian converts’ obedience to the truth of the gospel. The sense of these statements is that the missionaries’ disturbing influence was a later development. There are no indications, either explicit or implicit, that Paul encountered these opponents while he was in Galatia.

We can infer from Paul’s statements about his opponents at Galatia that he thought that they were Christian missionaries from outside the community. There are two significant statements that confirm this analysis. First, Paul characterises his opponents message as a “gospel” (1:6-9), and more particularly a view of the gospel that entailed a Judaising message (5:2-4, 16, 24; 6:12-13). Second, in a manner that Paul compares to the situation at Antioch, the Judaising missionaries at Galatia attempted to force the Gentile converts to adhere faithfully to the whole Law (3:10), including the observance of the Sabbath and the Jewish feast days (4:8-11).<sup>72</sup> Paul condemns this message as a perversion of the gospel of Christ (1:7). Martyn observes rightly that the term “gospel” is so significant to Paul that he would not have used it here unless his opponents were also using it and, therefore, these opponents could not be anything other than Christian missionaries.<sup>73</sup>

This conclusion can be confirmed by Paul’s claim that the Galatian troublemakers were preaching a gospel message that was clearly at odds with the one he preached (1:6-9), and he suggests that their motive in doing so was to avoid being persecuted for Christ

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<sup>70</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, “The Theology of Galatians: The Issue of Covenantal Nomism”, in *Pauline Theology, Vol. 1*, 125-146 (128).

<sup>71</sup> Bligh, *Galatians*, 31; Betz, *Galatians*, 7; Longenecker, *Galatians*, xcvi; Matera, *Galatians*, 7-11; Martyn, *Galatians*, 120; and Sumney, “*Servants of Satan*”, 137.

<sup>72</sup> Longenecker, *Galatians*, 181-183.

<sup>73</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 109. Nanos, *Irony*, 141-142, 284-316, attempts to answer this point by noting that the term was widely used in Paul’s time by Jewish groups outside Christianity. While this may be true, Nanos does not take seriously the fact that the term remains one of particular significance to Paul, especially within the context of Galatians, which focuses almost exclusively on the whole issue of Paul’s gospel and his right as an apostle to proclaim that gospel.

(6:12). This is a highly polemical assertion that probably provides little concrete data about the agitators' motivations, but it does reveal a great deal about their religious affiliations.<sup>74</sup> These accusations can only make sense if we assume that Paul's opponents were fellow Christian missionaries.

Nanos argues that this statement indicates that the "influencers" were Jews who wanted to force Paul's Gentile converts to become Jewish proselytes so as to avoid being persecuted by association with the Christian community.<sup>75</sup> This scenario, however, does not sit comfortably with the available evidence in Galatians.<sup>76</sup> Nanos suggests that there was a threat of reprisals from civic authorities if not all those identified as "Jewish" were maintaining the clear signs of Jewish identity. But it is highly unlikely that the Pauline communities in Galatia, composed entirely of Gentile converts, would have been perceived as Jewish by the wider community. Moreover, if Nanos' view is correct, it would seem strange that Paul chose to isolate the cross (as opposed to circumcision or Sabbath observance) as the issue creating a public danger. Indeed, one would be hard-pressed to provide any evidence that Jews were ever implicated in any persecution of Christians. The only logical interpretation of Galatians 6:12 is that Paul must have understood that his opponents shared his and his readers' common belief in Christ, or else the insult – that they wished to avoid persecution on account of Christ – would make no sense whatsoever.<sup>77</sup> The problem, therefore, is more likely to be one within the Christian community, fostered by troublemaking interlopers, rather than a dispute between local Jews and their Christian associates.

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<sup>74</sup> Sumney, "Servants of Satan", 136; H. Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2 vols (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 2:119; and D. Lührmann, *Galatians: A Continental Commentary*, tr. O. C. Dean (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 123. Jewett, "Agitators", 205-207, who is followed by Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxxxviii-xcvi, depends heavily on this passage to place the Galatian crisis within the context of heightened Jewish nationalism during the decades leading up to the Jewish War.

<sup>75</sup> Nanos, *Irony*, 264-267.

<sup>76</sup> For a recent and specific response to Nanos on this point see Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 17-29.

<sup>77</sup> With few exceptions, most commentators accept this reading of the passage. See Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 222-223; Bruce, *Galatians*, 268-269; Bligh, *Galatians*, 30-35; Jewett, "Agitators", 205; Longenecker, *Galatians*, xciv-xcv, 290-291; Matera, *Galatians*, 230-231; Martyn, *Galatians*, 560-563; and Das, *Paul*, 18-19.

### 1.3. *The Galatian Crisis in Its Broader Context*

We noted initially that Baur had arrived at his conclusions regarding the identity of the Judaisers at Galatia via a comparison of Galatians with the rest of the authentic Pauline letters and the Acts of the Apostles. Using this material, Baur traced the trajectories of the two competing missions throughout the first century. His starting point was the Acts' account (6:1-6) of the Hellenists' dispute with their Hebrew co-religionists in Jerusalem, which ended in the martyrdom of the Hellenist leader Stephen and the establishment of Gentile Christianity at Antioch (Acts 11:18-26).<sup>78</sup> It was this dispute that later led to the Jerusalem Council, the Incident at Antioch and the Galatian crisis. The Pastoral Epistles and the second century Jewish Christian literature bore further testimony to the longevity of this dispute.

Subsequent scholarship would not go as far as Baur in attributing direct links between the various opponents at Galatia, Jerusalem, Corinth and Philippi; however, many scholars agreed with his appraisal that the Galatian crisis must be seen in a much broader context than simply within the confines of the letter itself. Lightfoot had drawn parallels between the Judaising opponents in Galatians and those in 2 Corinthians and Philippians, but he disagreed with Baur by proposing that the problems discussed in 1 Corinthians, Romans and the Pastorals bespoke a second group of opponents who were influenced strongly by an incipient Gnosticism, which Paul encountered in Greece and Rome.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, while he opposed Baur's negative assessment and late dating of Acts, he retained Baur's evaluation of the Hellenists, whose disagreement with the Hebrews was to "sound the death-knell" for Jewish Christianity.<sup>80</sup> Lightfoot attributed to them, and not to Paul *per se*, the final breach between Judaism and Christianity. Once the Hellenists were

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<sup>78</sup> On the contribution of the Hellenists to the conflict see Baur, *Paul*, 39-59.

<sup>79</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 311.

<sup>80</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 296-298. Similar views of the Hellenists are expressed by H. Räisänen, "Paul's Conversion and the Development of His View of the Law", *NTS* 37 (1987), 404-419; M. Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity*, tr. J. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1983), 4-11; and E. Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, tr. B. Noble and G. Shin (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 259-261. As we shall see in chapter one, a contrary view is offered by C. C. Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews: Reappraising Division within the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); whose position has been followed by R. Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church", in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting, Volume 4: The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, ed. R. Bauckham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 429. An earlier but similar analysis to that of Hill's and Bauckham's had been expressed by Munck, *Paul*, 218-228.

scattered in the wake of Stephen's martyrdom, their Gentile mission flourished while "the star of Jewish Christendom" waned, and the Hellenists' influence on Paul was to be immeasurable.<sup>81</sup>

Similarly, Schmithals attributed early libertine tendencies to the Hellenists at Jerusalem and agrees with the assessment that they posed a threat to the Law-observant Hebrews.<sup>82</sup> However, he felt that in Galatians Paul was addressing, not the heirs of the Hebrews, but Gnostic opponents whose presence can be detected in both the Corinthian letters. At Corinth, these opponents came professing superior knowledge supported by their adeptness at miraculous and visionary signs, which led them to minimise the humanity of Jesus (cf. 2 Cor 6:14-7:1) and criticise Paul for his inferior knowledge (2 Cor 11:16) and self-professed weaknesses (2 Cor 10:10). A similar situation developed at Galatia, which set Paul's opponents fundamentally at odds with both him and Jerusalem and, accordingly, they charged Paul with being subject to the apostolic authorities; a charge that Paul seeks to overturn in the initial chapters of Galatians.

Schmithals offered a telling critique of Baur's study by drawing attention to the fact that Baur's identification of Paul's Galatian opponents as Judaisers was a "presupposition" that could not be sustained without recourse to material outside the letter itself.<sup>83</sup> However, Schmithals' analysis falls prey to a similar weakness, given that his strategy is to develop a coherent picture of Gnostics outside Galatia and demonstrate how this best explains the details in Galatians. To do this, moreover, involves some dubious exegesis on his part. For example, in the traditional view Galatians 3-4 is seen as the heart of the argumentation against the Judaisers. Rather than contesting the particulars of the Judaizer interpretation of this section, however, Schmithals virtually ignores it and alleges that Paul did not really understand his Gnostic opponents or he would not have argued in this manner.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 303.

<sup>82</sup> W. Schmithals, *Die Apostelgeschichte des Lukas* (ZBK.NT 3.2; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1982), 65.

<sup>83</sup> Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, 13.

<sup>84</sup> Others who adhere to this Gnostic identification find that they too must assert that their knowledge of the Galatian opponents exceeds Paul's because in Galatians 3-4 he argued about the Law, as Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, 18, says, "in such a way as he might have done if his opponents had been Pharisaic Judaists, which they obviously were not". See also, W. Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament: An Approach to Its Problems*, tr. G. Buswell



Perhaps the most important contribution in recent years to the ongoing debate surrounding both the identity of Paul's various opponents and the methods used to identify them is that of J. L. Sumney. Sumney has criticised the method of reading references to opponents in one letter through the lens of another, suggesting that this approach pushes the available evidence in Paul beyond credible limits.<sup>85</sup> He argues that we need to begin any analysis of Paul's opponents with individual readings of each of the relevant letters. Sumney seeks to challenge the common presupposition that there was a single, anti-Pauline movement that purposefully sought to undermine Paul's authority and supplant his teachings, be they Baur's Judaisers or Schmithals' Gnostics. He also questions those identifications dependent on set theological categories, such as Christology or soteriology, heresy or orthodoxy.

Sumney argues that the historical controversies in which Paul was embroiled were not so one-dimensional as suggested by a simple model of bipartite division, and probably involved a complex of various social, cultural, as well as theological issues. Moreover, labelling the opposition as heretics may skew the matter, so that they are not considered apart from the author's polemical context. In addition, many interpreters have an investment in emphasising the distance of these opponents from Paul's views and practices, privileging Paul's perspective because it is their own, and thus risking the exaggeration of differences. We saw how scholars, such as Jewett, Howard and Martyn, have warned that we should not assume that Paul's polemical statements in Galatians indicate any real animosity on the part of those whom Paul attacks. On occasion Paul may be reacting far more strongly to an issue than his opponents would have deemed necessary. For the sake of emphasis, and in the peculiar interests of his specific audience, Paul may be exaggerating or even parodying the motives, position, or the pedigree of his opponents.

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(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 53. It is possible that a critic's knowledge can exceed an author's knowledge of the subject matter, but this is not to be confused with the critic thinking that his knowledge of the author's meaning is superior. See the discussion in Longenecker, *Galatians*, xci, xciv; and E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 19-23.

<sup>85</sup> J. L. Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents: The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians* (JSNTSS 40; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 77-86, 89-92, 98-100; *idem*, "Servants of Satan", 20-32.

However, despite these valuable cautions, Sumney's analysis of the individual letters leads him to conclude with a scenario very similar to that of Lightfoot, with two separate groups of Pauline opponents. According to Sumney, the Corinthian, Galatian, and Philippian letters reflect two different trajectories of actual anti-Pauline opposition reflecting debates about the relationship of Christianity to the Law.<sup>86</sup> At Corinth, Paul's opposition most likely came from Jewish Christians who used their Jewish heritage to justify their own apostolic authority but who did not require Gentile converts to obey any portion of the Law. In Galatians, however, the circumstances are reversed. While there is no challenge to Paul's apostolic authority, now Gentile compliance with the requirement to be circumcised is being demanded. Paul's reaction was so harsh that it galvanised his opposition into a true anti-Pauline movement that emerges later with the "dogs" and "cutters" at Philippi, who appear to have been a group of teachers travelling from church to church requiring Gentile converts to be circumcised.

Still, according to Sumney's view, these two anti-Pauline movements do not share a common antecedent in anything remotely similar to what scholars have posited as Jewish Christianity, a unified movement opposed to Pauline teaching.<sup>87</sup> Even when issues relating to Christianity and the Law re-emerge in 1 Timothy and Titus, these are experiences of local concern and not part of a wider movement of anti-Pauline sentiment. Despite the importance of Sumney's analysis, his view of Paul's opponents generally, and his reconstruction of the Galatian opponents in particular, have not won over all scholars. Baur's bipartite view of early Christianity survives to the present, albeit in modified form.

Two of the strongest cases are made by G. Lüdemann and M. Goulder, who are probably the two most consistent modern champions of Baur's study.<sup>88</sup> In a series of publications, these scholars have sought to retain and to extend Baur's thesis. In his most

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<sup>86</sup> Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents*, 301-309.

<sup>87</sup> Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents*, 310-311.

<sup>88</sup> Lüdemann, *Opposition*. The most prominent example of Goulder's defence of Baur is his *St. Paul versus St. Peter: A Tale of Two Missions* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), a small, popular study that Goulder later revisits and develops in part with a more detailed analysis in his *Paul and the Competing Mission in Corinth* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001). A similar approach is taken by the equally small and popularist book by E. C. Park, *Either Jew or Gentile: Paul's Unfolding Theology of Inclusivity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003). Cf. L. Thurén, *Derhetorizing Paul: A Dynamic Perspective on Pauline Theology and the Law* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2002), 51-178, who similarly examines problems associated with Paul's view of the Law in Galatians against the broader background of Romans and the Corinthian letters.

recent monograph on Corinth, Goulder attempts to counter many of the traditional arguments levelled against Baur's theory.<sup>89</sup> Lüdemann offered a similar defence of Baur in an earlier examination of Jewish Christianity.<sup>90</sup> Where Lüdemann differs from Goulder is in scope rather than the details of the hypotheses. Like Baur before him, Lüdemann traces the development of Paul's conflict with Jewish Christianity from the pre-Pauline Jerusalem church and the advent of the libertine Hellenists through to the second century fathers and the patristic references to later Jewish Christian groups. Goulder limits his focus to the Pauline texts.

Amongst the critics of Baur, Schmithals had argued that Baur's view of the Galatian agitators as Judaisers from Jerusalem was a "presupposition of the exegesis of the Galatian epistle" and "not its conclusion".<sup>91</sup> Similarly, others before Schmithals had accused Baur of developing his conflict model of early Church polity as a result of viewing the history of primitive Christianity through the lens of Hegel. Both Lüdemann and Goulder, however, effectively demonstrate that Baur's exegetical process was based rather on a thorough historical analysis of the sources, owing little to presuppositions or Hegelian dialectics.<sup>92</sup>

Along with Baur, Goulder argues that a critical assessment of 1 and 2 Corinthians reveals that a single Petrine front of opposition underlies the various visits to Corinth by missionaries competing with Paul. Moreover, he contends that the local supporters and the theology of the Petrine camp explain all the dynamics and polemical material found in both 1 and 2 Corinthians.<sup>93</sup> Although the argument is incidental to his study in this work, Goulder draws connecting lines between Paul's opponents in Corinth and his earlier troubles in Galatia. Accordingly, he seeks to defuse the objection of Lightfoot, Lütgert,

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<sup>89</sup> Goulder, *Paul and the Competing Mission*, 1-15.

<sup>90</sup> Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 1-32.

<sup>91</sup> Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, 13.

<sup>92</sup> Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 1-4; and Goulder, *Paul and the Competing Mission*, 10-13.

<sup>93</sup> Goulder, *Paul and the Competing Mission*, 16-46. This suggests that in examining these texts, and especially the hypothetical letter fragments contained in 2 Corinthians, we are dealing with the same complex of materials – a view that is also supported by Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 80-81; and Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, 113-114; who is followed by Georgi, *Opponents*, 14-18. See also C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (BNTC; London: A. & C. Black, 1973), 30-32, 278, who likewise draws parallels between Galatians and the Corinthian letters. Similarly, but more cautious in drawing a direct parallel between the two is J. Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians* (SP 8; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 6-7.

Sumney and other scholars that the opposition at Corinth looks fundamentally different to the opposition that Paul encountered in Galatia. Lütgert was impressed by the dual nature of Paul's defence in Galatians, which seemed to suggest that Paul was facing contradictory charges of being both an antinomian libertine and a Jewish legalist; the second of which finds no parallel in the Corinthian letters. Goulder, however, notes that Paul's response to his opponents in 1 Corinthians 9:1-27 echoes the confrontations evident at the Jerusalem Council as described in Galatians 2:1-10. G. Lüdemann follows a similar line of argument.<sup>94</sup> He draws parallels to the Corinthian problems and specifically identifies the Galatian opponents as "the so-called false brethren who were not able to execute their demand at the Jerusalem Conference that Titus be circumcised and who obviously had not participated in the agreement that was worked out there".<sup>95</sup>

#### **1.4. Summary**

At this point we might summarise our findings. It seems clear that the majority of scholars accept that the spectre of Jerusalem haunts the pages of Galatians unlike any other in the Pauline corpus. Echoes of similar battles that both predate and proceed from the Galatian crisis may be detectable in both Acts and elsewhere in Paul's letters. However, scholars remain divided on the relevance of this additional material. Traditionally, commentators called the Galatian opponents "Judaisers", but recent developments in Pauline studies have led to a number of competing reconstructions of the Galatian crisis and, accordingly, several alternative labels. The Galatian opponents have been variously characterised as the "Judaisers" from Jerusalem or Jewish Christian "Agitators" from Judea, Gentile Christians, Jewish Christian "Teachers" or Jewish "Influencers" native to Galatia.

The points of difference turn on how scholars interpret the outcome of the Jerusalem Council and the dispute at Antioch. Those who favour a positive outcome, accepting at face value Paul's claim that an accord was reached at Jerusalem, view the opponents as having no real or only an indirect connection with Jerusalem. Consequently, these scholars see the missionaries as being motivated either by external pressures and fears of persecution or genuine conviction to complete or complement Paul's Law-free mission

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<sup>94</sup> Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 68-72.

<sup>95</sup> Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 101. Similar reconstructions are suggested by Betz, *Galatians*, 7; and Matera, *Galatians*, 24-26.

with a fuller expression of the Law-observant gospel. Those who see a series of interrelated conflicts described in Acts and Galatians, see connections between the earlier Hebrews-Hellenists disputes, as well as between the Galatian opponents of Paul and those who opposed Paul at either/or Jerusalem and Antioch. However, few are willing to directly credit the commission of these Judaisers to the Pillar Apostles – preferring to see them as a rogue element within the Jerusalem church that was motivated by a stricter Pharisaic or Zealotic attitude to Jewish separatism. While the first set of theories require that we view those whom Paul attacks in Galatians as “teachers”, “missionaries” or “influencers” who were not fundamentally hostile to Paul, the second necessitates the characterisation of these people as “Judaisers”, “agitators” or “troublemakers” who openly opposed Paul, his mission and his gospel.

Obviously, the definitive reconstruction of the factional conflicts that shaped developments in primitive Christianity *per se*, or those that led to the Galatian crisis specifically, have yet to be written; and there is little hope of this study filling that void. However, I think it important to suggest some avenues of approach to the questions surrounding the Galatian crisis, and Paul’s relationship with Jerusalem during that dispute, that are not currently being explored, and which may help to show the way forward amidst the radically different reconstructions of the situation presently on offer. Moreover, this study is founded on the view that, despite the wide variety of interpretations, the central questions still remain those that were first explored by Baur in the nineteenth century; and it is these questions that will be the focus of this study.<sup>96</sup> Are we correct in characterising Paul’s opponents at Galatia as “Judaisers” – that is, Christian Jewish missionaries who wanted to force Gentiles to be circumcised and observe all aspects of the Mosaic Law? Were they local dissidents, or did they originate from outside the Galatian communities? Was the crisis in Galatia a continuation of earlier conflicts? To what extent did the conflicts at Jerusalem and Antioch play a role in the Galatian crisis? If the Judaisers came from Jerusalem, were they acting under the direct authority of James, Peter and the apostolic authorities, or were they merely a renegade minority of ultra-legalists? If the first part of

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<sup>96</sup> Baur, *Paul*, 121, 251-253.

that question should prove true, can we find evidence of these Judaizing opponents in other letters of Paul, specifically 1 and 2 Corinthians, Philippians or Romans?

## **2. Methodology**

The plethora of theories advanced over the decades bears ample testimony to the many difficulties encountered when one embarks on the task of trying to retrace both the identity of Paul's opponents at Galatia and the contours of Paul's relationship with Jerusalem during the Galatian crisis. Moreover, the current lack of consensus is most likely a direct and natural result of the methodology employed in attempting to determine the nature of Paul's opposition at Galatia. On many occasions grand hypotheses have been erected only on the basis of isolated fragments and catch phrases from across the spectrum of all Paul's letters, which are then augmented with recourse to distant parallels.

### **2.1. *Difficulties in Interpretation***

It has long been recognised that the problem that confronts us in examining this conflict is that the letter to the churches in Galatia is just that, a letter.<sup>97</sup> It is a personal correspondence that was not intended to convey a comprehensive historical account of the dispute that compelled Paul to put pen to paper. Moreover, Galatians divulges only Paul's side of the conversation. Consequently, the data that can be drawn from Galatians is fragmentary and coloured by Paul's own perspective on the events. It is a highly polemical text, with Paul responding to a crisis that he perceives as a serious threat to the gospel he proclaims. Indeed, the debate itself is twice removed from the text of Galatians, since Paul is not even directly addressing his opponents, but only those members of his community who have been influenced by those adversaries, of whom Paul has only heard reports.

We must assume, therefore, that Paul's picture of the situation and the troublemakers who caused it will be seriously distorted by both the nature of the information Paul has to hand and his own biased reflections on that data.<sup>98</sup> In order to reconstruct the original situation on the basis of the letter alone, the interpreter must critically deduce and surmise the problems Paul faced from the responses he provides.

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<sup>97</sup> Thuren, *Derhetorizing Paul*, 26. Cf. V. M. Smiles, *The Gospel and the Law in Galatia: Paul's Response to Jewish-Christian Separatism and the Threat of Galatian Apostasy* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>98</sup> Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 27-28. This point is also made strongly by J. Eckert, *Die urchristliche Verkündigung im Streit zwischen Paulus und seinen Gegnern nach dem Galaterbrief* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1971), 22-26, 234-236.

Aptly, F. Matera describes the process as “moving from answer to question, solution to problem”, which in effect means that “interpreters must read the text as if looking in a mirror”.<sup>99</sup> Even then, our picture of both the situation and the protagonists involved are artificial constructions built on Paul’s perception of the situation as it was reported to him.

C. Cosgrove reminds us that we are dealing, not with the “historical Galatians”, but the “epistolary Galatians”.<sup>100</sup> Our portrait of the troublemakers at Galatia and the apostolic authorities at Jerusalem as represented in Galatians is a characterisation, even a caricature, of the real historical people to whom Paul is referring. Sometimes we can simply reverse (mirror-read) Paul’s heated polemics and apologetic statements to determine some aspect of the attack on Paul and the origins of that attack; at other times we may only be in possession of Paul’s view of the issues.

The dangers in such an approach are obvious. G. Lyons has offered a particularly strong critique of mirror-reading, arguing that the “methodological presuppositions on which it rests are arbitrary, inconsistently applied, and unworkable”.<sup>101</sup> Fundamental to Lyons’ argument is the view that Paul’s letter to the Galatians, in terms of Greco-Roman rhetoric and epistolography, is deliberative rather than forensic in nature.<sup>102</sup> As such, it is impossible to read into the letter any obvious apologetic statements. Lyons goes so far as to say that Paul’s supposedly defensive assertions “are often, if not always, examples of pleonastic tautology used in the interest of clarity”.<sup>103</sup> The most Lyons is willing to grant is that the letter was occasioned by “trouble-makers” in Galatia who were seriously compromising Paul and his gospel, but Paul’s response is such that we cannot be any more specific about the situation.<sup>104</sup>

Most scholars accept that, in Galatians, Paul is drawing on methods of argumentation common to Greco-Roman rhetoric. H. D. Betz has reasoned that the epistle

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<sup>99</sup> Matera, *Galatians*, 7. Compare comments in Barclay, “Mirror-Reading”, 1-3; Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxxxix; and Martyn, “Law-Observant Mission”, 310-313.

<sup>100</sup> Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit*, 87. See also Matera, *Galatians*, 6; and Smiles, *The Gospel*, 6.

<sup>101</sup> Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography*, 95.

<sup>102</sup> Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography*, 112-119.

<sup>103</sup> Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography*, 110.

<sup>104</sup> Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography*, 17-76.

is primarily a typical “apologetic letter”; but this has not met with widespread acceptance.<sup>105</sup> Lyons may be correct in suggesting that the letter was primarily “deliberative”, but this does not mean that it is devoid of any “apologetic statements”.<sup>106</sup> As P. F. Esler points out, this identification is founded on the erroneous assumption that “deliberative speeches did not contain passages in defence of the speaker”; an assumption belied by the fact that the “makers of deliberative (political) speeches frequently had to present their own character favourably as a way of persuading their audience of the merits of their case”.<sup>107</sup> Drawing on Aristotle’s *Rhetorica*, Esler notes that such a *narratio*, even in a deliberative speech, had two purposes: first, to recall past events as lessons for the future; and second, to either attack the character of an opponent or eulogise an ally.

Lyons agrees with the first, arguing that the *narratio* has to do with Paul’s concern to establish “his divinely determined ethos, not defending his personal or official credentials”.<sup>108</sup> In other words, the opponents are not to be seen as having made any claims and accusations against Paul; Paul is merely stressing his authority, and offering himself as an example of one who formerly stood against similar onslaughts from Judaising opponents. However, Lyons seems oblivious to the second possibility – that

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<sup>105</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 14; and *idem*, “The Literary Composition and Function of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians”, *NTS* 21 (1975), 353-379. Betz’s identification is followed by Brinsmead, *Galatians*, 42-55; G. Lüdemann, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles*, tr. F. S. Jones (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 46-48; and J. D. Hester, “The Use and Influence of Rhetoric in Galatians 2:1-14”, *TZ* 42 (1986), 386-408.

<sup>106</sup> Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography*, 25-27, 119. Similarly, G. A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Studies in Religion; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 23-25; and R. G. Hall, “The Rhetorical Outline for Galatians: A Reconsideration”, *JBL* 106 (1987), 277-287. Nanos, *Irony*, 32-61 argues for identifying the letter as a form of “ironic rebuke”.

<sup>107</sup> Esler, *Galatians*, 65. Similarly, D. E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (LEC; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 203, 207, who characterises Paul’s letter as an “eclectic combination of various rhetorical techniques”, which is best understood as a “deliberative letter with some apologetic features”. Longenecker, *Galatians*, cxix, surveys this variety, suggesting that Galatians is a “combination of Hellenistic epistolary structures, Greco-Roman rhetorical forms, Jewish exegetical procedures, and Christian soteriological confessions – together, of course, with Paul’s own revelational experiences and pastoral concerns”. Similarly, Smiles, *The Gospel*, 13, who agrees with Aune. See also J. M. G. Barclay, *Obedying the Truth: A Study of Paul’s Ethics in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 23-25; and P. Perkins, *Abraham’s Divided Children: Galatians and the Politics of Faith* (TNTC; Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001), 20-24, both of whom arrive at comparable conclusions.

<sup>108</sup> Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography*, 133. Similarly, Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit*, 133; and Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 71-73; both of whom agree with Lyons on this point. More recently, S. A. Cummins, *Paul and the Crucified Christ in Antioch: Maccabean Martyrdom and Galatians 1 and 2* (SNTSMS 114; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) has offered a thorough defence of Lyons view that Paul is presenting his experiences as “paradigmatic” rather than elating any relevant historical data.



Paul recalls his early dealings with Jerusalem in order to attack the character of his opponents.

Lyons recognises that Paul was probably well informed of “his opponents and their charges”; they were “pressing circumcision” upon the Galatians.<sup>109</sup> Yet Paul, in Lyons’ view, remains oblivious as to their motivations; “he can conceive of only malevolent or unworthy ones (4:17; 6:12-13)”.<sup>110</sup> It is most likely true that Paul’s caustic appraisal of his opponents’ personal motives is part of his rhetorical strategy. But Lyons ignores the wider context and, consequently, he cannot see that Paul also knows their real theological and ideological motives as well.

Throughout the *narratio*, Paul responds directly to his opponents’ views on the Law from the perspective of their shared Christian traditions (1:7, 13-14; 2:15). And just as his disagreements with their theology leads to *ad hominem* attacks on their character, so we might also assume that Paul’s opponents would have been equally critical of Paul, attacking both the content of his gospel and his right as an apostle to preach it. If these were not at issue, why would Paul make them so? It seems highly unlikely that Paul would have raised the issue of his own authority if it were not already central to the debate.

Nevertheless, J. Barclay agrees in part with Lyons that there are a number of “pitfalls” that have trapped and compromised many previous attempts to identify Paul’s opponents.<sup>111</sup> Barclay identifies four. First, the danger of *undue selectivity* has led many commentators to build detailed scenarios on only those aspects of Galatians that are most conducive to their pre-existing theories. Second, the danger of *over interpretation* has tempted some scholars to imagine that every statement of Paul rebuts an equally vigorous counterstatement from his opponents.<sup>112</sup> Third, practitioners of mirror reading all too often do not make distinctions in Paul’s rhetorical strategies; in particular, some scholars do not

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<sup>109</sup> Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography*, 99.

<sup>110</sup> Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography*, 139.

<sup>111</sup> Barclay, “Mirror-Reading”, 79-83. Esler, *Galatians*, 64-68, also makes some telling remarks regarding Lyons’ critique of mirror reading.

<sup>112</sup> Barclay, “Mirror-Reading”, 79, n. 38, notes that Lyons is “particularly, and rightly critical of those who assume that every Pauline denial is a response to an explicit criticism from his opponents”. See also Betz, *Galatians*, 6.

clearly distinguish exposition from polemic and apology. Mirror reading can only yield effective results when we are dealing with the latter two expressions, where Paul is obviously responding to attacks from his opponents.<sup>113</sup> Ignoring this fact has led to the danger of *mishandling polemics*, which has trapped many into making more out of Paul's attacks than is warranted with polemical language. Finally, the danger of *latching onto particular words and phrases* has meant that many use only fragmentary bits of data as the fragile hooks on which to hang a whole study.

Having sounded these cautionary notes, we should not be tempted to imagine that the task of reconstructing the events surrounding the Galatian crisis is completely beyond our reach. Barclay, for example, argues that despite the dangers involved in mirror-reading Galatians it is possible to arrive at a fairly detailed picture of the situation Paul was confronting if we steer clear of the pitfalls, and examine each of Paul's polemical statements with a critical eye.<sup>114</sup> One must pay particular attention to those subjects and metaphors that are frequently accentuated throughout the letter, and are clearly crucial to Paul's defence. Those apologetic denials that are emphasised by repetition and the polemic assertions repeated in different places utilising a range of phrasings are all possibly indicative of the actual historical situation that confronted Paul.<sup>115</sup> Similarly, further indications of Paul's knowledge of his opponents' position and the position of the Jerusalem church can probably be drawn from Paul's use of scripture. In fact, much can be deduced about the issues at stake if we take note of the scriptural passages and texts employed by Paul that appear to work against his own views – these are likely to represent the arguments that Paul is attempting to refute.

In addition to Barclay's observations, we might add R. Longenecker's comment that mirror-reading Galatians to identify Paul's opponents can only be effective when augmented with "other materials" drawn from the New Testament and contemporary, non-canonical literature to "check our hypotheses and to supplement whatever profile [of Paul's

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<sup>113</sup> Similar comments are made by Barclay, "Mirror-Reading", 84-85. See also Martyn, "Law-Observant Mission", 317-323; Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 13; Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxxxix; Smiles, *The Gospel*, 4-14; and Esler, *Galatians*, 61-68.

<sup>114</sup> Barclay, "Mirror-Reading", 84-86. Similarly, Matera, *Galatians*, 6-7, offers a comparable set of cautions, as does Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents*, 77-86.

<sup>115</sup> Barclay, "Mirror-Reading", 86-87; Matera, *Galatians*, 7; Smiles, *The Gospel*, 6-7; Sumney, "Servants of Satan", 23-27; and Dunn, *Galatians*, 25-26.

opponents] may be drawn from Galatians itself'.<sup>116</sup> Sumney's warnings regarding this technique are not without weight; however, Sumney's approach precludes, *a priori*, the possibility of reconstructing the relationship between the various conflicts involving Paul and other factions within the Christian movement as evidenced across the spectrum of the Pauline corpus. As J. Sieber points out in his review of Sumney's *Identifying Paul's Opponents*, investigating each of Paul's letters in isolation leads to a "limited view of history" since it assumes that "people, events and ideas exist in a vacuum".<sup>117</sup> Earlier, N. Taylor made the point that Paul's self-identification as "Apostle to Gentiles" grew out of his successive membership of, and dealings with, various Christian communities.<sup>118</sup>

In attempting to recreate the events surrounding the Galatian crisis, Paul's first-hand account must remain paramount. Fundamental to all historical investigation is the principle of granting the greatest credence to the primary witness; in this case, Paul.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, our interest in this study is the wider issue of Paul's relationship with Jerusalem before, during and after the Galatian crisis. It is not the purpose of this study to examine the entire sweep of the factional conflicts that drove developments in the early Church throughout the first century. We are not dealing with such phenomena as might be titled "Gentile Christianity" and "Jewish Christianity"; much broader terms, the second of which is, in any event, a theoretical construct that has been used in so many different senses by various authors so as to be rendered virtually meaningless.<sup>120</sup>

Lightfoot was probably correct in challenging Baur's ready categorisation of all the New Testament material, as well as much of the later extra-canonical Christian texts, into two simple categories: one, Gentile Christian; the other, Jewish Christian. Any attempt to try to understand a first century phenomenon, such as the Galatian crisis, on the basis of

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<sup>116</sup> Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxxxix.

<sup>117</sup> J. Sieber, "Review of *Identifying Paul's Opponents* (Sumney)", *Int* 45 (1991), 424-426 (424).

<sup>118</sup> N. Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem: A Study in Relationships and Authority in Earliest Christianity* (JSNTSS 66; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 79-94.

<sup>119</sup> Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit*, 16; Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents*, 87-88; and Smiles, *The Gospel*, 4.

<sup>120</sup> The subject of "Jewish Christianity" as a meaningful title has been explored by various scholars, see especially R. A. Kraft, "In Search of 'Jewish Christianity' and its 'Theology': Problems of Definition and Methodology", *RSR* 60 (1972), 81-92; A. F. J. Klijn, "The Study of Jewish Christianity", *NTS* 20 (1974), 419-431; S. K. Riegel, "Jewish Christianity: Definitions and Terminologies", *NTS* 24 (1978), 410-415; R. Murray, "Jews, Hebrews and Christians: Some Needed Distinctions", *NovT* 24 (1982), 194-208; and J. E. Taylor, "The Phenomenon of Early Jewish Christianity: Reality or Scholarly Invention?", *VC* 44 (1990), 313-344.

material from the second or third centuries completely begs the question of continuity, and undermines the theoretical basis of any discussion. Still, this should not tempt us to dismiss the possibility of drawing connections between the various opponents of Paul and grouping them together under a single title.

It may be true to say that the terms “Gentile Christianity” and “Jewish Christianity” are inadequate for our purposes here. The distinction between the two labels depends primarily on an ethnic delineation that does not do justice to the complexities inherent in such a division. R. E. Brown has argued persuasively that we must view all the varieties of early Christianity as composed of both Jews and Gentiles, but separated on the basis of differing attitudes to the Law.<sup>121</sup> Brown’s typology assumes that each of the Jewish Christian groups would have spawned Gentile converts who adopted their views of the Law. We shall argue in the course of this study that the various controversies that one must associate with the Galatian crisis were all focused on the Law. While, Paul’s opponents insisted on full observance of the Law, including circumcision, Paul and his associates did not demand Gentile converts be circumcised or adhere to the precepts of the Law.

B. J. Malina has suggested that the title “Christian Judaism” may be a far more apt description of the movement composed of Jews and their Gentile converts who, in addition to their belief in Jesus Messiah, adhered to the quintessential faith-practices of Judaism – circumcision, Sabbath observance, Temple worship, and the dietary and purity codes.<sup>122</sup> By contrast, we might style the opposing faction as “Gentile Christianity”. The significant difference between the two groups is signalled by the noun which, in each case accurately captures the predominant feature of their peculiar self-identities and their differing faith-practices. Accordingly, while these two movements shared a common faith in Jesus as Messiah and Lord, we will argue that they proclaimed two competing gospels.

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<sup>121</sup> R. E. Brown and J. P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983), 1-9.

<sup>122</sup> B. J. Malina, “Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism: Towards a Hypothetical Definition”, *JSJ* 7 (1990), 46-57. See also Gaston, *Paul and Torah*, 107; and D. C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (SNTW; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 24-27.

Finally, in attempting to trace the outlines of the broader context of the Galatian crisis, we need not be limited to Paul's letter to Galatia as our only source for constructing a detailed picture of Paul's Christian Jewish opponents. A combination of Galatians itself and the other Pauline letters, most notably Romans, Philippians and the Corinthian letters, along with the Acts of the Apostles, especially the initial fifteen chapters, provides sufficient information to demonstrate that the question of the continuing validity of the Law remained the subject of vigorous debate throughout the earliest Christian decades. Moreover, the possibility that Galatians 2:1-10 and Acts 15:1-29 represent primary and secondary sources for reconstructing the Apostolic Council at Jerusalem, presents us with a coincidence of historical data that cannot be ignored. However, using Acts to supplement the Pauline texts is not without its own set of methodological problems.

## 2.2. *The Use of Acts*

It must be admitted that making use of Acts as a source of supplementary data to fill in the gaps in the Pauline record is a highly speculative enterprise. The data supplied by Luke in Acts is late and secondary and, since the time of Baur, scholars have continued to debate Luke's historical reliability. According to Baur, a thorough comparison of Acts and the Pauline letters raised serious questions about the veracity of the Lukan account of Paul's career.<sup>123</sup> After a careful comparison of the differing pictures of Paul presented in Acts and the authentic Pauline letters, Baur concluded that Acts was a dubious source of information about Paul and the early church. According to Baur, Acts attempts to gloss over the depth of the divisions between Paul, Jerusalem and the agents of the Jerusalem church evidenced in the *Hauptbriefe* and, thus, "historical truth can only belong to one of them".<sup>124</sup> A careful analysis of Acts reveals that the author has woven together disparate and conflicting traditions to present an artificially idyllic picture of primitive Christianity.

Similarly, and more recently, E. Haenchen, like Baur, emphasised the pivotal role that Luke's theological agenda played in the selection, shaping and arrangement of the various source materials that Luke incorporates into Acts.<sup>125</sup> Haenchen argues that in

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<sup>123</sup> Baur, *Paul*, 252.

<sup>124</sup> Baur, *Paul*, 5.

<sup>125</sup> Haenchen, *Acts*, 112-116; and *idem*, "The Book of Acts as Source Material for the History of Early Christianity", in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 258-278. A similar view has

composing Acts Luke's apologetic concerns have led him to play down all instances of conflict and division. Thus, the Paul presented by Acts is radically different from the Paul that emerges from the authentic letters. As Haenchen notes, "the real Paul, as known to his followers and opponents alike, has been replaced by a Paul seen through the eyes of a later age".<sup>126</sup>

More recent scholarship has been willing to view Luke in more positive terms. For example, I. H. Marshall, while acknowledging Luke's unique theological perspective, insists that Luke is a careful and accurate historian, at least by the standards of first century historiography.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, M. Hengel, a prominent proponent of the historical veracity of Acts concurs that "Luke is no less trustworthy than other historians of antiquity" and, hence, Luke's "account remains within the limits of what was considered reliable by the standards of antiquity".<sup>128</sup>

Regardless of where we stand on this issue, it is true to say that most modern commentators caution that Acts can only be used to reconstruct the origins of the factional divisions with the earliest Christian communities with extreme care.<sup>129</sup> In painting his portrait of the earliest Church, Luke has probably woven together disparate and even conflicting materials from a variety of sources that are no longer extant and, therefore, must be reconstructed. Only by the use of close, critical analysis might it be possible to tease out relevant, genuine, historical reminiscences from the tapestry of the Lukan text, which may help us to fill out and augment the material drawn from our primary source – Galatians.

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been expressed by P. Vielhauer, "On the 'Paulinism' in Acts", in *Studies*, ed. Keck and Martyn, 33-50. See recent discussion of Haenchen and Vielhauer in S. E. Porter, *The Paul of Acts: Essays in Literary Criticism, Rhetoric, and Theology* (WUNT 115; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 187-206. Porter, by contrast, does not see "any significant or sustainable contradictions" between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the letters (205). However, he does admit that there are "differences in emphasis and focus" that can be explained by the specific "theological issues" raised by Acts (206).

<sup>126</sup> Haenchen, *Acts*, 116.

<sup>127</sup> I. H. Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 75. Similarly, C. K. Barrett, *Luke the Historian in Recent Study* (London: Epworth Press, 1961), 24-25, characterises Luke's work as giving the "impression of a screen upon which two pictures are being projected at the same time – a picture of the church of the first period, and, superimposed upon it, a picture of Luke's own times".

<sup>128</sup> M. Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, tr. J. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1979), 60-61.

<sup>129</sup> So rightly J. Jervell, "The Law in Luke-Acts", *HTR* 64 (1971), 21-36; P. F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lukan Theology* (SNTSMS 57; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 110-130; A. Le Grys, *Preaching to The Nations: The Origins of Mission in the Early Church* (London: SPCK, 1998), 72-76; and F. Thielman, *The Law and the New Testament: The Question of Continuity* (CNT; New York: Crossroads, 1999), 136-141.

In his commentary on Acts, G. Lüdemann offers a viable and widely accepted method for separating “tradition” from “redaction”.<sup>130</sup> Tradition here refers to that material which derives ultimately from Luke’s sources, either oral or written. Redaction refers to that which derives from Luke’s editorial reworking of the source material through revision, augmentation, or even creation *de novo*. The task of separating the two is a difficult one, but Lüdemann suggests that material that appears to serve Luke’s own peculiar purposes is more likely to be redaction. Where an individual pericope or a whole episode seems to work at cross purposes to Luke’s themes, or even directly contradicts other data in Acts, it is likely that we are dealing with traditions drawn from Luke’s sources. However, traditional materials *sans* any significant corroboration from other sources may be historically worthless and, thus, the historical veracity of such materials must be confirmed directly from data drawn from other earlier and contemporary sources (e.g., Paul’s letters) or indirectly by comparison with related data found in both canonical and noncanonical sources.

Lüdemann rightly notes that we should not expect exact correspondences between Acts and our other sources.<sup>131</sup> In such a case, Acts would provide us with little in the way of viable extra information with which to fill out our picture of events surrounding the Galatian crisis. Rather Lüdemann’s method seeks to delineate information that is compatible with both the general picture, if not the more specific details, concerning developments within the early Church that can be garnered from other sources especially, in our situation, from the Pauline corpus.

It has become axiomatic in Pauline studies that we treat Acts as secondary to the letters which rightly, according to the canons of historical research, constitute our primary evidence. In accordance with this methodological principle and the criteria for mirror reading discussed above, it would seem that the most appropriate process for reconstructing the broader context of the Galatian crisis would be to focus on the issues

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<sup>130</sup> G. Lüdemann, *Early Christianity According to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1987), 19-23. For an appraisal of Lüdemann’s method see the discussion in M. A. Powell, *What Are They Saying About Acts?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 83-86.

<sup>131</sup> Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 20-21.

raised by Paul in Galatians, and then attempt to recreate an historical portrait of the events surrounding the crisis drawing on both Acts and the other Pauline letters.

As we noted earlier, the nature of the genre of this letter is such that it is occasional in character; it was intended to address a specific situation at a specific time in Paul's career. We do not have direct access either to the views of the Judaisers at Galatia or the apostolic authorities at Jerusalem. We do have access to Paul's reactions to the crisis; which, in reality, play out in terms of a dialogue between Paul and his community at Galatia. As H. D. Betz points out, "Paul never addresses his opponents directly, but he addresses the issues which they had introduced".<sup>132</sup> Therefore, we must begin with the issues Paul raises and then attempt to extrapolate how these issues may have first emerged, not only at Galatia, but wherever else their emergence may reflect or have even effected both the origins and the outcome of that conflict.<sup>133</sup>

### **3. The Plan of the Thesis**

The thrust of this study is encapsulated in the title – *Paul, Jerusalem and the Judaisers: The Galatian Crisis in Its Broader Historical Context* – which reflects what I believe to be the way forward in identifying the nature of the situation addressed by Paul in his letter to the Galatians. No event in history occurs in isolation, and no adequate appreciation of any single historical event is possible without a consideration of other related events that have either contributed to or derived from that event. The position taken in this study is that the Galatian crisis was initiated by a group of Judaising opponents of whose ilk Paul knew from previous conflicts with the Jerusalem church.

Paul's defence of himself as the divinely appointed Apostle to the Gentiles involves his negative response to the claims and accusations made by the Judaisers at Galatia. It also raises questions about both the origins of the Gentile mission and Paul's conversion, two issues that Paul explicitly introduces into his apologetic response to the charges. However, Paul's few autobiographical comments in Galatians tell us very little of the events that transpired prior to his conversion (c. 34 C.E.) and his initial association with the communities in Jerusalem (Gal 1:11-20; 2:1-10), Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21),

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<sup>132</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 5.

<sup>133</sup> Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxxxix.



and Antioch (Gal 2:11-14). Our only other, significant source of information on the earliest period is the initial eleven chapters of the Acts of the Apostles which, as we noted above, carry a number of inherent interpretive difficulties. Each stage and circumstance related by Luke in these chapters must be assessed independently on its own historical merits and checked against other contemporary sources, both canonical and non-canonical. In the first chapter, therefore, we set out to consider the material in Acts 1-11, in conjunction with Galatians and other significant data in the Pauline corpus, in an attempt to reconstruct developments within the earliest communities of believers in Jesus Messiah, from the time of the nascent apostolic association at Jerusalem through to the period of Paul's involvement with the Antiochene church. The purpose of this enterprise is to establish a backdrop against which we can later explore the charges laid against Paul by his opponents. The aim is to uncover and reconstruct the roots of the Galatian crisis.

Paul's opponents apparently cited Jerusalem as the source of and the warrant for their Law-observant gospel. In Galatians, Paul alludes to events involving Jerusalem that transpired prior to the outbreak of the crisis at Galatia. However, Paul provides only scant details of these events. Our only significant source of supplementary data is again found in Acts. Chapter two will therefore introduce the accounts of the Jerusalem Council (Gal 2:1-10; Acts 15:1-29). These will be compared, contrasted and used to attempt a reconstruction of all the events that surround these intriguing episodes that appear prominently in Paul's defence of his apostolate in Galatians. In addition several background issues will be discussed. These include the issue of chronology, the advent of the Antiochene mission to Cyprus and Asia Minor, as well as the rise of Jesus' brother James to the leadership in Jerusalem. It will be argued here that one of the chief causes of the Jerusalem Council was the Antiochene initiative to widen the scope of the Law-free mission into Cyprus and Galatia.

In the second half of this chapter, the Antiochene dispute (Gal 2:11-14) will occupy our attention as we try to reconstruct the events that contributed to this divisive debate. We will attempt to determine how this event in Antioch relates to the foregoing Jerusalem Council, and what it tells us about the outcome of the Council. We are interested in exploring here the possibility that these events led to a decisive and irrevocable split between Paul and Jerusalem. The evidence seems to suggest that from

this point onwards in his career, Paul operated as an independent missionary with no vestigial links to his former associates at Antioch or Jerusalem. Thus, it will be argued in this chapter that the Antiochene dispute that arose in the wake of the Jerusalem Council constitutes the immediate background to the Galatian crisis. The same people who caused the problem at both Jerusalem and Antioch are likely to be related in some way to those who later invaded Paul's Galatian communities.

The conflict in Galatia itself will be the focus of the third chapter as we attempt to explore the links between events at Jerusalem and Antioch with those at Galatia. The primary avenue for this examination will be via a consideration of Paul's argument in Galatians. By the careful use of the mirror-reading technique, we will attempt to discover the message and the origins of Paul's opponents. Here again the issue of chronology plays a significant role, as well as the issues of provenance. If we can establish clear chronological and thematic links between the composition of Galatians and the events surrounding Paul's earlier problems, that in itself might help flesh out our picture of the Galatian opponents. This chapter, therefore, begins with an exploration of questions surrounding the location of the Galatian churches and the date of the letter's composition. It will be suggested that the churches of Galatia were located in the southern regions of the Roman province of that name; therefore, they represented communities established under the auspices of the Antiochene church during Paul's first missionary journey. This conclusion will form the basis for relating the subjects discussed in the previous chapters to the central issues raised by this study: the relationship between the Galatian crisis and previous conflicts at Jerusalem and Antioch; the relationship between the Judaisers and Paul; as well as the Judaisers' relationship with Jerusalem.

Accordingly, this third chapter forms the key component of the thesis. It will be argued in this chapter that following their success at Antioch, the Judaisers moved on to the churches in Galatia with a view to bringing these communities under the authority of Jerusalem. The Jerusalem authorities would have been keen, not only to reclaim the Antiochene community for the Law-observant mission, but also to gain control of the communities beyond Antioch, which had been established and continued to operate under the authority of the Antiochene mission. Paul had previously warned the Galatians of a possible incursion by rival missionaries preaching a different gospel (Gal 1:9). And the

close parallels he draws between the situations at Antioch and Galatia can only lead us to conclude that the content of the Judaisers' gospel included the Law-observant position of James' circumcision party at Jerusalem. Thus, if these conclusions should prove correct, then it must be the case that the conflict in Galatia be seen as a continuation of the dispute that led to the Jerusalem Council and culminated in Paul's bitter split with Peter, Barnabas and James' people at Antioch.

Chapter Four will take us beyond the immediate context of Galatia to examine the aftermath of the crisis. We shall explore the Corinthian correspondence and Philippians for possible echoes of an ongoing rift between Paul and the Judaisers. There is little doubt that Paul continued to experience problems with Judaising opponents at Corinth, on account of which he also warns the Philippians. But our interest will be in attempting to determine if such problems were a direct result of the earlier conflict at Galatia. In addition, in the second part of this chapter, we shall consider the data Paul supplies in Romans concerning fears about his third visit to Jerusalem. Noting the way in which Paul responds to all these threats, we will argue that his opponents were Judaisers. They seem to have been well informed of Paul's previous difficulties with the Jerusalem church. In both Galatians and the Corinthian letters, Paul appeals to his numinous experience of the risen Jesus (Gal 1:12-16; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; 2 Cor 3:4-6; 5:11-21) as the legitimation of his independent apostolic status and, both explicitly in Galatians (2:1-14) and implicitly in 1 Corinthians (9:3-6; 15:9-11; cf. Phil 3:4-11), he seeks to set the record straight concerning his past problematic relationship with the Jerusalem Apostles. Taken together this conspicuous coincidence in the details that Paul supplies concerning these various opponents provides a strong cumulative argument for viewing them all, not only as representatives of a single Judaising faction, but one which had strong links to Paul's earlier opponents at Antioch and Jerusalem.

These conclusions necessarily raise further questions – to what extent were Peter, James and the Jerusalem church directly responsible for the opposition Paul encountered following his departure from Antioch? In this concluding chapter, it will be maintained that our strongest evidence for propounding such a relationship comes from Galatians, where Paul himself expressly connects the events surrounding the roles played by Peter and James in both the Jerusalem Council and the Antiochene incident with the activities of the

troublemakers at Galatia. As to the Corinthian letters, we will find a number of explicit links in 1 Corinthians between the Cephas party at Corinth and the apostolic circle around Peter and James at Jerusalem. We will note that the language and the arguments employed by Paul in both 1 and 2 Corinthians implicitly correlate with those he used earlier against his opponents in Jerusalem, Antioch, and Galatia. On this basis, we will contend that the letters of recommendation that Paul's opponents bore at Corinth (2 Cor 3:1) derived their authority from Jerusalem, which explains why the arrival of these people in Corinth resulted in some of Paul's converts joining in a new allegiance to Peter and the Jerusalem church against Paul's party of supporters. Since it is highly unlikely that Peter himself had ever visited Corinth, the only logical explanation is that Paul's opponents at Corinth were accredited envoys of either the Jerusalem church or some other community where the Law-observant gospel of Peter and James held sway. In the light of these findings, we will assert that the various Law-observant opponents whom Paul encountered in Galatia and Corinth, and of whom he warns the Philippians, were directly commissioned by James, Peter and the Jerusalem church.

In addressing the Pauline controversies and issues raised by those disputes as outlined above, it is hoped that we might be able to provide a broader context for the study of Galatians. As we noted at the outset, the letter itself tells us very little about the troublemakers or the situation at Galatia. Accordingly, we are forced to reconstruct their identity and their Judaising program by mirror-reading Paul's comments. This study takes a slightly different approach, utilising mirror-reading but also incorporating and taking account of material from other related sources. An important aspect of this approach is a consideration of the chronology and the order of the various events that either contributed to or complicated Paul's response to this dispute. The ultimate aim of this study is to attempt to provide a more complete picture of the Judaisers who initiated the crisis in Galatia that impelled Paul to pen this letter.

## *Chapter 1*

### THE ROOTS OF THE CRISIS:

#### HEBREWS AND HELLENISTS

The primitive Christian movement during the period of Paul's ministry was a diverse phenomenon. As argued in this thesis, by the time of the Galatian crisis the movement was composed of two competing factions: Law-Observant Christian Judaism and Law-Free Christianity. While our earliest and most direct data on the clash between these two factions is derived from Paul's letter to Galatia, this epistle provides very little information about events that occurred before Paul's conversion (c. 34 C.E.) and his early ministry in Antioch. The purpose of this chapter is to determine the roots of the controversy that would later exercise Paul's attention at the time of writing Galatians.

According to Acts (6:1-6), the first significant schism in the pre-Pauline Church occurred with the advent of the Hellenists (οἱ ἑλληνισταὶ) at Jerusalem. Nowhere in Acts does Luke explicitly tell us who these Hellenists were. Nor does he explain how they came to be converted to the Jesus movement. They are presented to us rather abruptly in Acts 6:1 as protagonists in a dispute with another wing of the Jerusalem church, labelled in a similarly cryptic fashion as the Hebrews (οἱ ἑβραῖοι). Luke's account of this dispute is short on details. But within the overall context of Luke's storyline the Hellenists' conflict with their Hebrew co-religionists effects a significant turning point, serving to demarcate the Law-observant mission to the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 1-5) from the Law-free mission in Samaria (Acts 8:1-40) and Syrian Antioch (Acts 11:19-26). This leads us to suspect that the dispute between the Hebrews and the Hellenists went much deeper and lasted much longer than Luke's terse report in Acts 6:1-6 would lead us to believe. Indeed it will be argued here, that a close, critical analysis of the events surrounding this conflict indicates that this early dispute marks the origins of the controversy over the Law that would later dominate

the crisis in Galatia. Accordingly, in this chapter we will examine the available evidence in Acts, Galatians, and other Pauline texts concerning these developments, beginning with the earliest Hebrew and Hellenist communities at Jerusalem through to the time when Paul became an active and prominent member of the community at Antioch.

### **1.1. The Earliest Jesus Movement**

In Acts (1:13-14), Luke relates that it was shortly after the shock of Jesus' death and resurrection that some of Jesus' more intimate disciples and members of his immediate family established themselves in Jerusalem as the first community of believers in Jesus Messiah. Peter and the circle of the Twelve formed the nucleus of this community (1:13). In Acts 1:15-26 Luke details the reconstitution of the Twelve with a description of the election of Matthias to fill the vacancy left by the suicide of Judas Iscariot. Thenceforth, in the ensuing four chapters he focuses on further episodes where Peter, either in the company of John or the Twelve as a group, dominates the narrative – Pentecost (2:1-41); two healing stories (3:1-26; 5:14-16); two trials before the Sanhedrin (4:1-22; 5:22-42); a miraculous escape from prison (5:17-21); and the fraud of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11). For the most part this scant series of stories is padded out with lengthy speeches attributed to Peter (2:14-36; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-31), along with summary passages detailing the idealistic life and rapid growth of the community (2:42-47; 4:32-35; 5:13-16, 42; 6:7; 8:1, 25). Despite the fragmentary nature of the Lukan narrative, this section of Acts does provide some important information about the constituency and faith-practice of the earliest apostolic community in Jerusalem.

#### ***1.1.1. The Apostolic Community at Jerusalem***

To begin with, there seems little reason to doubt Luke's assertion that the first community of believers in Jesus Messiah was established in Jerusalem. Some scholars speculate that many of Jesus' erstwhile supporters remained behind in Galilee. However, Luke tells us nothing of these. Nor does he relate any post-resurrection Christophanies that may have occurred in Galilee, as Mark (16:7) implies, and Matthew (28:16-20) and John (21:1-23) testify. The most likely scenario is that the first Christophanies occurred in Galilee. After a short interval, a group of Jesus' disciples led by Peter relocated to Jerusalem, where they

continued to experience further apparitions of the risen Jesus.<sup>134</sup> There is no evidence to suggest, at this early stage, that there remained behind in Galilee any disciples of Jesus, let alone any who may have been organised into communities similar to that in Jerusalem.<sup>135</sup> We should not overlook the earlier evidence from Paul who, in referring to events in Palestine, speaks only of the community in Jerusalem (Gal 1:18-20; 2:1-10; 2:1; 1 Cor 16:1-4; Rom 15:19, 25-28, 31) or alternatively, Judea (1 Thess 2:14; Gal 1:22; 2 Cor 1:16; Rom 15:31).<sup>136</sup>

Similarly, Luke is probably correct in designating Peter and the Twelve as the core leadership group within the community. Their central role is corroborated by the ancient creedal statements concerning the witnesses to the resurrection preserved in 1 Corinthians (15:5-7), which attribute the first Christophanies to Peter and then the Twelve. So too in the Gospels (Mk 16:7; Lk 24:12, 33; Jn 20:3-7; 21:2-21) Peter is assigned a principal part in the post-resurrection narratives. The four extant lists of the Twelve all place Peter first; which is remarkable in the fact that the lists are apparently independent of each other.<sup>137</sup> Finally we have Paul's testimony in Galatians 1:18-19 describing his first visit to Jerusalem (c. 37 C.E.), which explicitly casts Cephas (Peter) as the leading apostolic authority there with whom Paul consulted during his fifteen day stay.

In addition to the Apostles, Acts (1:14) numbers amongst the constituency of the earliest Jerusalem church "several women". This is probably to be taken as a reference to those women who had accompanied and supported Jesus during his ministry (Lk 8:2-3), including Mary of Magdala, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James who were the first to discover the empty tomb (Lk 23:55; 24:9-11). There is mention also of Jesus' immediate family, his mother and brothers (1:14; cf. Lk 8:19-21). Later, Jesus' brother James will play

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<sup>134</sup> A good overview of the evidence supplied by the traditions concerning the resurrection, both canonical and non-canonical, is provided by K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 1-23. See also Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 40-41 and É. Trocmé, *The Childhood of Christianity*, tr. J. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1997), 13-15.

<sup>135</sup> Trocmé, *The Childhood of Christianity*, 16. See also R. E. Brown, C. Osieck, and P. Perkins, "Early Church", in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. R. E. Brown, J. A. Fitzmyer, and R. E. Murphy (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989), 1338-1354 (1343).

<sup>136</sup> W. P. Bowers, "Mission", in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G. F. Hawthorne and R. P. Martin (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 608-619 (611).

<sup>137</sup> Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 40. For further discussion, see Haenchen, *Acts*, 370.

a prominent leadership role at Jerusalem, as attested by both Acts (12:17; 15:13-21; 21:18-25) and Galatians (1:19; 2:9, 12). It is significant that in 1 Corinthians 15:7 Paul counts James amongst the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection.

It seems then, that the initial membership of the community was drawn from amongst the family and the original followers of Jesus, all of whom were Jews from Galilee. Luke claims that following the events at Pentecost the small band of Galilean followers of Jesus was augmented by the addition of new converts to the movement (2:41). He implies that this influx was derived from a broad range of nationalities and language groups (2:9-11). However, Luke explicitly notes that they were all Jews or Jewish proselytes (2:5, 10), both residents of Jerusalem and pilgrims from the Diaspora. The image of the Jerusalem community as a thoroughly Jewish foundation is confirmed by Paul's claim in Galatians (2:7-8) that Peter, and by extension the Jerusalem congregation, exercised a mission exclusively amongst Jews.

Luke will later attribute the origins of the Law-free Gentile mission to Peter's conversion of the household of the Roman centurion Cornelius at Caesarea (10:1-11:18). As will be discussed below, there are serious reasons to doubt the veracity of this claim; not least, in the fact that it runs counter to the contrary evidence of Paul in Galatians. Nevertheless, Luke tells the story with all the trappings of divine intervention – an angelophany to Cornelius (10:3-8), a vision to Peter (10:10-16), and an outpouring of the Spirit similar to that of the earlier Pentecost experience (10:44-46; cf. 2:1-13; 4:31). This would seem to indicate Luke's awareness that the conversion of the first Gentiles, without insisting on circumcision, represented a radical (albeit divinely ordained) departure from the previous practice of the apostolic community.<sup>138</sup> Luke's report of Peter's return to Jerusalem (11:1-18) has Peter attempting to justify his commerce with the “uncircumcised men” (*andraš akrobustian*) of Cornelius' house before “the circumcised believers” (*oiek peritomhß*) in Jerusalem (11:2-3). In his defence, Peter stresses his previous faithful adherence to the purity codes of the Mosaic Law and justifies his lapse by recounting the miraculous signs attendant to the conversion of Cornelius. So while we might cast doubts

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<sup>138</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 23; and Dunn, *Partings*, 73. See also C. L. Blomberg, “The Law in Luke-Acts”, *JSNT* 22 (1984), 53-80 (68-69); and H. Räisänen, *Jesus, Paul and the Torah: Collected Essays* (JSNTSS 43; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 288-293.



on the historicity of the Cornelius episode, it does provide further confirmation of what we have already learned from Luke and Paul. When the disciples and relatives of Jesus first met in Jerusalem to decide what would be their departed leader's legacy they apparently did not consider their fledgling community as the start of an entirely new religious movement independent of their Jewish faith. This can be demonstrated further by reference to the faith-practice of the apostolic community.

At the outset of Acts the constituents of the community are described as chosen Apostles (1:2) and "men of Galilee" (1:11) who looked to Jesus as their risen Lord and Messiah (2:36; 5:23), as the one who was to restore the kingdom to Israel (1:6; 2:38-39; 3:21). This description is confirmed by Paul who indicates that the first followers of Jesus saw his resurrection as a vindication of his messianic status (Rom 1:3-4), the first fruit of the general resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 6:14; 15:12-23; 1 Thess 4:13-18; Rom 8:11), which would signal the start of the eschatological reign of God (1 Cor 15:23-28).<sup>139</sup> The constituents of the earliest Jerusalem church probably lived in daily expectation of the parousia of Jesus. Their constant prayer was most likely that of the ancient Aramaic invocation preserved in 1 Corinthians (16:22), **Marana qam** "Our Lord, Come!" (cf. Rev 22:20). Conscious of living on the cusp of the *eschaton*, the community members lived a distinctive communal lifestyle, expressed primarily in the relinquishment of individual property rights and the pooling of funds into a common purse administered by Peter and the Twelve (2:44-45; 4:32-35; 6:1). Luke also notes that the community met regularly, even daily, to pray and share a common meal (2:41, 46; 5:12-13, 42; 20:7, 11).

Scholars have often noted the striking similarities between the faith-practice of the earliest Christian communities as described in Acts, as well as Paul, and that of the Qumran community that emerges from the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>140</sup> Both communities were

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<sup>139</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: SCM Press, 1990), 323, correctly observes that Paul, writing twenty years after the events described in Acts 1-5, can hardly have created *de novo* this belief in an imminent eschaton.

<sup>140</sup> These parallels have been examined extensively by many scholars. For more detailed discussion than is possible here, see J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Semitic Background of the New Testament: Combined Edition of Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament and A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (The Biblical Resources Series; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 271-303. Other important contributions include, J. Pryke, "The Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion in the Light of the Ritual Washings and Sacred Meals at Qumran", *RevQ* 5 (1966), 543-552; S. J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 166-171; B. Reicke, "The Constitution of the Primitive Church in the Light of Jewish Documents", in *The Scrolls and the New Testament*,

consciously apocalyptic in their outlook. Conceiving of their respective communities as the climax of Judaism, the faithful remnant that was destined to constitute eschatological Israel, both communities lived according to a communistic ideal expressed in the sharing of resources and a common table.<sup>141</sup> It is not entirely clear that Luke's "breaking of the bread" (2:42, 46; cf. 1 Cor 10:16) is meant as a reference to the Eucharistic celebration; although Luke does indicate elsewhere that this practice would become a central aspect of Christian fellowship (cf. Luke 24:25; Acts 20:7).<sup>142</sup> Moreover, there are obvious parallels between the practice as described by Luke and that of Paul's description of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians (11:17-34), which was similarly enacted in the context of a full communal meal (1 Cor 11:21-22, 33-34), celebrated frequently (Luke suggests both daily in Acts 2:46 and on the first day of the week in Acts 20:7), and involved the entire community (1 Cor 11:18). We shall also see in chapter three that such was the significance of the table fellowship in the earliest communities that it would become the instance for division at Antioch when Peter withdrew from sharing a common table with the Gentiles for fear of the circumcision putsch out of Jerusalem (Gal 2:12-13).

On the issue of the commonality of goods, Lukan idealism may have exaggerated the extent to which the Jerusalem church lived the common life. But the community's commitment to the communal ideal is confirmed implicitly in the numerous Pauline references to the "poor" in Jerusalem for whom he initiated a collection throughout his communities in Greece and Asia Minor (Gal 2:10; 1 Cor 16:1-4; Rom 15:25-28). Indeed, according to Galatians (2:10), the sole injunction laid upon Paul and Barnabas following the Jerusalem Council was "only that we remember the poor" (*monon twh ptwcwh i&a mnhmoneuwmn*). It has been noted that the term *oi ptwcoi* used by Paul (Rom 15:26; Gal 2:10) may be drawn from the Hebrew word *h'bywnym*, which appears sporadically in the Dead Sea Scrolls as a self-designation of the Qumran community (1 QpHab 12:3, 6, 10; 1

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ed. K. Stendahl and J. H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroads, 1992), 143-156; E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds to Early Christianity*, 2nd edn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 493-497; and B. Capper, "The Palestinian Cultural Context of Earliest Christian Community of Goods", in *The Book of Acts*, ed. Bauckham, 323-356.

<sup>141</sup> Fitzmyer, *Semitic Background*, 298-301; and Dunn, *Unity*, 237-238, 322-325.

<sup>142</sup> Dunn, *Unity*, 323, takes these references as indicative of ordinary meals, continuing Jesus' practice of table-fellowship described in Luke's Gospel (5:29; 15:2). Similarly, K. Giles, "Is Luke an Exponent of 'Early Protestantism'? Part 1", *EvQ* 54 (1982), 193-205 (202-205); and I. H. Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 126-133.

QM 11:9, 13; 13:14).<sup>143</sup> It is entirely possible that a similar title emerged early on at Jerusalem to describe this first community of messianic Jesus people who pooled their resources and established a community at Jerusalem in anticipation of the coming *eschaton*.

This appropriation of contemporary Jewish restoration theology is probably also implicit in the felt need to reconstitute the circle of the Twelve. It is noteworthy that the leadership of the Twelve at Jerusalem has been compared to the ruling council at Qumran, which was composed of twelve men and three priests – although it is uncertain if the three priests were distinct from the twelve (1QS 8:1).<sup>144</sup> Whether or not one can draw a direct connection between the two organisational practices, it seems that for both communities the number twelve held eschatological significance. At Qumran, the *War Scroll* speaks of the division of the Sons of Light during the coming apocalyptic war into twelve armies representing the twelve tribes of Israel (1QM 3:13-14; 5:1-2). Within the primitive Christian movement, according to the earliest stratum of Gospel traditions derived from the hypothetical sayings source Q, the Twelve were thought destined to occupy the thrones of glory and judge the regathered twelve tribes of Israel (Lk 22:30; Matt 19:28). Later in Revelation (21:12-14), the Twelve Apostles are reckoned as the twelve foundation stones of the New Jerusalem, akin to the twelve gates upon which are written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Despite these obvious parallels, the Jerusalem church differed in many respects from the constituents of the Qumran community. Most importantly, they were not as stridently sectarian. The Christian Jews at Jerusalem saw no need to separate themselves from the wider Jewish society. Nor did they see themselves, like the Qumran Covenanters, as a priestly community established as an alternative to the corrupted Temple cult in Jerusalem. From the end of his Gospel and on throughout Acts, the picture Luke consistently paints of the earliest constituency of the Jerusalem church is that of a Jewish group that saw no conflict between their devotion to Jesus Messiah and their status as devout Jews; that is, as faithful adherents to the Temple and the Torah (Lk 24:53; Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:42; 10:14, 28, 45; 11:1-18; 15:1, 5; 21:23-24). The fact that the

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<sup>143</sup> Fitzmyer, *Semitic Background*, 288.

<sup>144</sup> Fitzmyer, *Semitic Background*, 291-292; and also Reicke, "Constitution", 151.

disciples of Jesus chose Jerusalem as the venue for their community indicates their continuing allegiance to the Temple cult in Jerusalem. Jerusalem stood at the heart of Jewish religious sentiment and observance. The whole system of sacrifice, atonement and forgiveness, as well as ritual purity so fundamental to Second Temple Judaism was focused entirely on the Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>145</sup> Even after the loss of political independence in 63 B.C.E., Jerusalem remained the “holy city” (Is 52:1; 60:14; Ezek 43:6-7; Sir 36:18-19) for Jews in both Palestine and the Diaspora. Philo (*Legat.* 281) makes the point that even for residents of the Diaspora their identity as **Joudaibi** was conceived in terms of a people whose true homeland was Jerusalem.<sup>146</sup>

Accordingly, Acts explicitly depicts members of the Jerusalem community like Peter and John as going frequently, or even daily, to the Temple to pray at the traditional hours set aside for the morning and evening sacrificial services (2:46; 3:1; 5:12, 21; cf. Ps. 141:2; Lk. 1:10; 24:53).<sup>147</sup> In what is probably information drawn from his sources, Luke relates that such gatherings occurred in “Solomon’s Portico” on the eastern side of the Temple (5:12; cf. 3:11; Jn. 10:23). It was most likely there in the eastern precincts of the Temple that the inaugural preaching and teaching took place (3:11; 5:12, 20-21, 25, 42). However, we should not read into this any attempt on the Apostles’ part to usurp the role of the Temple priesthood, or to instigate conflict with the Temple authorities. The outer court was a public place traditionally set aside for teaching and other activities that may not have been possible elsewhere in the city. Acts 6:7 tells us that “a large number of priests” joined the roster of the Jerusalem church. One prominent member of the congregation, the Joseph Barnabas who will later play a significant role at Antioch, is described as a Levite (4:36). But there is no indication that these priests and Levites exercised a sacerdotal function

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<sup>145</sup> See the exhaustive description of the sacrificial practices and related purity concerns in E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 B.C.E.-66 C.E.* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 103-116, 213-240.

<sup>146</sup> Perkins, *Abraham’s Divided Children*, 9.

<sup>147</sup> Haenchen, *Acts*, 213-224; G Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 25-49; and Dunn, *Partings*, 57-60. See also the detailed discussion in D. K. Falk, “Jewish Prayer Literature and the Jerusalem Church in Acts”, in *The Book of Acts*, ed. Bauckham, 267-302.

within the Jerusalem community.<sup>148</sup> Nor is there any suggestion that the Twelve adopted a priestly role with regard to the rest of the believers.<sup>149</sup>

Acts (4:1-22; 5:20-21) records two instances of conflict, where members of the apostolic circle were arrested, imprisoned, questioned, and in the second episode flogged (5:40) at the instigation of the Sadducean party in the Sanhedrin. In 1 Thessalonians (2:14), Paul confirms that the churches in Judea did suffer mistreatment from the “Jews”. Still, there is no indication that these instances of mistreatment were anything more than isolated events.<sup>150</sup> More to the point, there is no evidence in the account of either event in Acts that the members of the church were censured because they had gone beyond the limits of acceptable Jewish practice and questioned the validity of the Temple cult or the Mosaic Law. In Acts 1-5 Luke stresses the community’s continued allegiance to the Temple and, later, in Acts 11:1-18 he signals that the Jerusalem congregation also remained faithful to the precepts of the Law. Moreover, the Jerusalem church survived and flourished for four decades, up until the fall of Jerusalem (70 C.E.), which can only be explained if we conclude that any persecution the community suffered was relatively minor and infrequent. The best explanation for this is that the constituents of the first community of believers in Jesus Messiah remained throughout the life of their congregation in Jerusalem manifestly loyal and Law-observant Jews. In subsequent chapters we shall demonstrate that Luke’s account of both the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1, 5, 24) and Paul’s final visit to Jerusalem (21:20-26) confirms his earlier presentation of the Jerusalem church as a strictly Law-observant community. Similarly, we shall see that Paul’s own account of the Jerusalem Council (Gal 2:1-10) and his report of the Incident at Antioch (Gal 2:11-14) adds further weight to the argument for viewing the majority constituency of the Jerusalem church as Law-observant, Christian Jews. The only indication we have of anything to the contrary in Acts occurs with the introduction of the Hellenists.

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<sup>148</sup> Whether these priests were functionaries of the Jerusalem Temple, members of the Essenes or both cannot be determined. See Haenchen, *Acts*, 21-69; D. A. Fiensy, “Composition of the Jerusalem Church”, in *The Book of Acts*, ed. Bauckham, 213-236; and O. Cullmann, “The Significance of the Qumran Texts for Research into the Beginnings of Christianity”, *JBL* 74 (1955), 213-226.

<sup>149</sup> Dunn, *Partings*, 59.

<sup>150</sup> See discussion in Haenchen, *Acts*, 213-224. See also Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 55-60; Dunn, *Partings*, 57-60; and H. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on Acts of the Apostles*, tr. J. Limburgh (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 31-34, 40-43.

### 1.1.2. *The Hellenists*

In Acts 1-5, Luke paints an idyllic picture of life in the earliest Jerusalem church. From Acts 6 onwards however Luke sounds the first notes of discord, which comes with the description of a conflict between two groups whom Luke designates as the Hellenists (οἱ ἑλληνισταὶ) and the Hebrews (οἱ ἑβραῖοι). Luke tells us that the issue at stake in the Hellenists' dispute with the Hebrews was the latter's financial administration of the community's funds. "Now in those days when the number of disciples was increasing, there was a grumbling of the Hellenists against the Hebrews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food" (6:1). This problem was resolved immediately by the Apostles commissioning seven Hellenist administrators – Stephen, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus – as a sort of oversight committee to control the common purse (6:3-6). Despite the innocuous tenor of this conflict and the amicable nature of its resolution, the account of this contest serves to introduce a series of further controversies and dramatic developments. Stephen embarks on a ministry of preaching amongst the other Diaspora Jews in Jerusalem, resulting in his trial and execution on the charges of apostasy and blasphemy (6:8-8:1). His circle of supporters amongst the Hellenists is subsequently persecuted and dispersed (8:1-4). Philip carries the Christian message to Samaria (8:4-40), and other refugees of the persecution establish a mission amongst the Gentiles in Syrian Antioch (11:19-26, 13:1). However, a closer reading of the story reveals a number of significant anomalies and raises several important questions. Who were the Hellenists? What was the nature their relationship with the Hebrews? Is there any clear evidence to suggest that the split between the two groups was more a matter of ideological rather than financial differences?

According to the scholarly consensus, the designations ἑλληνισταὶ and ἑβραῖοι need mean no more than "Greek speakers" and "Aramaic speakers" respectively; a view that dates back to John Chrysostom (*Hom.* 11, 14, 21). Various other interpretations have been canvassed, but since the publication of C. F. D. Moule's seminal article, "Once More,

Who Were the Hellenists?” (1978), a consensus has been building in favour of the traditional view of John Chrysostom.<sup>151</sup>

The designation “Hebrew” appears only here in Acts. Elsewhere Luke employs the adjective **ebraiōs**, but always as a reference to the spoken language of the Hebrews (Aramaic). This suggests that the **ebraioi** of Acts 6:1 were Jews who spoke exclusively Aramaic, or at least whose primary mode of communication was Aramaic; and thus were most likely native-born Palestinian Jews. Similarly, Luke employs the term **hellenistai** only three times; most significantly here in Acts 6:1-6, and again in 9:29, where Paul following his conversion returns to Jerusalem and debates with certain **hellenistai** who attempt to kill him.<sup>152</sup> In each of the cases in Acts 6 and 9, it seems improbable that Luke has in mind “Greek Gentiles” for whom his usual practice is to use the term **hellenes** (14:1; 16:1; 19:17; 21:18). The best interpretation is that the “Hellenists” were “Grecian Jews” (NIV) – that is, Jews born in the Diaspora but now resident in Jerusalem who spoke only Greek. There is further evidence that supports this interpretation.

The seven named as the leaders of the Hellenist community all bear good Greek names, as opposed to the predominantly Semitic names of the Twelve, the family of Jesus, and those others who in Acts 1:13, 23 are nominated as the founding members of the Jerusalem church. The text makes it clear that the term “Hebrews” is to be understood specifically (but not exclusively) as referring to the Apostles who were the administrators of the common fund. As we noted earlier, the disciples in Jerusalem lived communally with the Twelve forming the central authority. Furthermore, Luke singles out Nicolaus of Antioch as “a convert to Judaism”. This implicitly suggests that all seven Hellenists were Jews, with Nicolaus being *the exception that proves the rule*; the other six were Jews by birth.<sup>153</sup> Nicolaus was an expatriate of Antioch in Syria. And Acts 6:9 indicates that Stephen, and by implication all the Hellenists, were members of “the Synagogue of the

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<sup>151</sup> C. F. D. Moule, “Once More, Who Were the Hellenists?”, *ExpTim* 90 (1978), 100-102. See also Haenchen, *Acts*, 259-261; Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 22-24; and Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 4-11.

<sup>152</sup> The third usage occurs later (11:20), when Luke describes the Antiochene outreach to the **hellenistai** which in that case alone must be read as non-Jewish “Greeks”, since the term is used in contrast to the “Jews”. So rightly, Haenchen, *Acts*, 365 n. 5; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 87; and Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 134.

<sup>153</sup> Haenchen, “The Book of Acts”, 264. See also C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 2 vols (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994, 1998), 1:315.

Freedmen”, an institution that catered to Greek-speaking Jews from the Diaspora (including Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, and the provinces of Cilicia and Asia). Taken together, this evidence suggests that when Luke uses the terms “Hebrews” and “Hellenists” he does so in order to distinguish between those converts to the Jesus Movement who were Aramaic-speaking Jews of Palestinian origin and those who were Greek-speaking Jews from various parts of the Diaspora now resident in Jerusalem.

Precisely how Jesus’ Aramaic-speaking disciples effected the initial conversion of the Greek-speaking Hellenists is impossible to ascertain. We can only assume that at least some of the Hebrews were conversant in Greek. Conversely, it is also possible that Diaspora Jews resident in Jerusalem would have acquired a modicum of Aramaic. Whatever the process of commerce between the two groups, communication would have been limited and restricted only to those in each community who were sufficiently bilingual.<sup>154</sup> But this, of course, raises another important issue. What was the nature of the relationship between these two groups?

If we accept at face value Luke’s presentation of the situation then it seems that the Hellenists enjoyed quite amicable relations with their Aramaic-speaking fellows in the Jerusalem church. As in the foregoing chapters of Acts, the picture Luke paints here for his readers is an idyllic one, where the constituents of the community, albeit defined by two distinct language groupings, live harmoniously with each other. When problems do arise they are settled by the Twelve through consultation with the whole assembly of believers (6:2, 5). Thus, the Seven Hellenists are elected by a general consensus and confirmed in their office by the Apostles (6:6). The Twelve, now freed of the onerous demands of charity work, are able to dedicate themselves more fully to their higher calling as “ministers of the Word” and leaders of community prayer (6:2, 4). Most modern commentators on Acts, however, have correctly questioned this idealistic depiction of events.

First, the motif of the widows’ neglect is problematic. Having earlier described the Jerusalem church as an ideal community, where property and goods were shared and distributed according to need (2:44), Luke fails to explain how or why these women were

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<sup>154</sup> Hengel, *Jesus and Paul*, 14.



overlooked on a regular basis. Second, it is not entirely clear how the Apostles' delegation of their administrative tasks would solve the purported problem, let alone heal the rift. How could seven administrators be more effective than the twelve were? Or, if one must assume that the Seven were to serve the needs only of the widows in their own Hellenists' circle, who would look after the needy amongst the Hebrews' community? Certainly not the Apostles, for they claimed that they could no longer bear the burden of welfare service because it forced them "to abandon the service of the Word" (Acts 6:2, 4). Finally, even more puzzling is the end result of the Apostles' decision. Luke tells us that the Seven were commissioned "to serve tables" (6:2-3). But Stephen, the pre-eminent leader of the Hellenists whose ministry is immediately described, is not portrayed as a welfare worker. Rather, he is presented to us as an evangelist and public apologist for the Jesus movement amongst the Greek-speaking Jews of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (6:8-10). Or in other words, he is presented as a "servant of the Word"; an office reserved exclusively and explicitly to the Apostles (Acts 6:4).<sup>155</sup> Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that Stephen was alone in these evangelistic endeavours. Other members of the Hellenists' circle must have also preached their newfound faith in Jesus Messiah amongst their fellows in the city's Greek-speaking Diaspora community. Thus, those commissioned "to serve tables" exercised rather a ministry of evangelism.

If nothing else, these discrepancies force us to doubt Luke's presentation of the Seven as ministers subordinate to the Twelve in both function and authority.<sup>156</sup> Indeed the more likely interpretation of the evidence is that, despite Luke's attempts to present a different scenario, the Hellenists constituted a community and conducted missions that were independent to that of the Hebrews. Some scholars have even doubted the historicity of the whole episode, or at least Luke's peculiar telling of it. Such scholars dismiss the Hellenist widows' plight and the appointment of the Seven as editorial devices meant to disguise the real issues involved.<sup>157</sup> But perhaps we should not be too hasty. The situation

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<sup>155</sup> R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1951, 1955), 1:55-56.

<sup>156</sup> These points have been raised by numerous scholars, see for example Haenchen, *Acts*, 266-268; Dunn, *Unity*, 270; Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 65-67; and R. Scroggs, "The Earliest Hellenistic Christianity", in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. J. Neusner (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 176-206 (180).

<sup>157</sup> So, Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 74-76; and Conzelmann, *Acts*, 44. Other scholars argue that Acts 6:1-6 does rest on genuine historical reminiscences, but Luke has told the story in such a way as to render what once was a serious dispute innocuous. This is the basic thrust of the theory advanced most notably by Barrett, *Acts*, 1:305-306; and, before him, J.

of the widow's plight is plausible enough, since there is evidence that many elderly men and women from the Diaspora did migrate to Jerusalem and its surrounds in order to die and be buried there.<sup>158</sup> Even after the destruction of the Temple, Diaspora Jews still sought to be buried in Jerusalem.<sup>159</sup> Moreover, if we are right in assuming that the Hellenists and the Hebrews did not share either a common language or a common cultural heritage, that fact alone might account for the widows' neglect, especially since it was apparently the Hebrews who controlled the communal purse.

As Greek-speaking Jewish immigrants to Palestine, the Hellenists probably lived apart from the Hebrews in a distinctive social quarter in the city, where they most likely held gatherings quite separate from those of the Hebrews.<sup>160</sup> The Hellenists who spoke only Greek and even those among their number who could function with a minimum of Aramaic would have found it impossible to participate fully in the Aramaic-language services of the original Jerusalem community.<sup>161</sup> As Diaspora Jews they would have been accustomed to different Scriptures (the Septuagint as opposed to the Aramaic Targum) and differing exegetical traditions; and they belonged to a different synagogue association.<sup>162</sup> All of these were divisive pressures that must have made not just the distribution of charity amongst the two groups, but also basic social commerce between the Hellenists and Hebrews, extremely difficult. The advent of two distinct liturgical groupings within the Jerusalem church, each with its own language, its own Scriptures, its own worship services, its own leadership group, and its own missionary fields must have led inevitably to a significant divide between the two. Therefore, it is not hard to imagine why the Hellenist widows were initially overlooked, nor how it came about that from within the Hellenist community natural leaders emerged to assume *de facto* the pastoral and missionary functions that the Apostles performed (in effect only) for the Hebrews.

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Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1967), 56-57. However, see Haenchen, *Acts*, 268, who speculates that the selective neglect of the Hellenist widows is of such a nature as to indicate that it was a symptom of a more serious rift between the two groups.

<sup>158</sup> For discussion of the migration of Diasporan Jews to Palestine, see Fiensy, "Composition", 231-232.

<sup>159</sup> Perkins, *Abraham's Divided Children*, 10.

<sup>160</sup> Fiensy, "Composition", 235; and also Dunn, *Unity*, 269.

<sup>161</sup> Hengel, *Jesus and Paul*, 14.

<sup>162</sup> This factor has been noted by B. F. Meyer, *The Early Christians: Their World Mission and Self-Discovery* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1986), 14-15.

Whatever the historical worth of the precise details of Luke's story, Acts 6:1-6 does present us with sufficient evidence to assume that from its earliest days the Jerusalem community was a divided one. Whether the actual spark that ignited the flare-up was as Luke asserts, the Hebrews' administrative dereliction, we can no longer be sure – given Luke's editorial adeptness and the paucity of corroborating evidence. But the *prima facie* conclusion that the "Hebrews" and the "Hellenists" constituted two socially and culturally distinct communities within the Jerusalem foundation cannot be avoided. This conclusion necessarily raises further issues that must be explored. Was this division determined by theological or ideological differences as well by language and culture? Did the Hellenists champion a theology and faith-practice that was different from, or perhaps even at odds with, that espoused by their Hebrew co-religionists?

To answer questions concerning the faith-practice of the Hellenist community we must leave behind the story of the Hellenist widows and their troubles, which provides no real evidence about theological differences, and focus on the ensuing narratives about Stephen (Acts 6:8-8:1) and Philip (8:4-40). For it is precisely here that we encounter the first clear hint that the dispute between the Hebrews and the Hellenists was more an ideological conflict rather than merely a disagreement over administration.

Immediately following his description of the Hellenists' dispute with the Hebrews and the appointment of the Seven, Luke directs his readers' attention to the ministry of the pre-eminent member of the Seven, Stephen, "a man full of grace and power" (Acts 6:8). We noted earlier that Luke reports how Stephen conducted a mission in the Greek-speaking synagogues of Jerusalem (Acts 6:9-10), a mission in which others of the Hellenists' community were probably involved. In the course of his preaching, Stephen was arrested and brought to trial before the Sanhedrin, accused of apostasy against the Law and blasphemy against the Temple (Acts 6:11, 14). In spite of a long and detailed speech (Acts 7:2-53) on Stephen's part, he is dragged from the council by an angry mob and stoned (Acts 7:54-60). His Hellenist circle of supporters is subjected to a severe and sustained persecution, which forces them all to flee the city (Acts 8:1). As we shall see below, this persecution apparently affected only the Greek-speaking wing of the Jerusalem church – Acts implies that the Aramaic-speaking members were left unscathed (Acts 8:1b). As with Acts 6:1-6, there are a number of problematic aspects to Acts 6:7-8:1.

For one, the entire account of the Stephen affair is replete with many distinctive Lukan additions. The best example of this is the setting of Stephen's defence within a trial before the Sanhedrin (6:12, 15; 17:1), which bears strong echoes of Jesus' trial before the same body. The idea that Stephen was tried before the Sanhedrin seems highly improbable, given that in the end he was killed by the spontaneous actions of an angry lynch mob.<sup>163</sup> Similarly, the presence of Saul (Paul) at Stephen's stoning contradicts Paul's own claim in Galatians (1:22) that prior to his conversion he was "not known by sight to the churches of Christ in Judea".<sup>164</sup> Finally, Luke makes every attempt to exonerate Stephen of the charges laid against him by first claiming that Stephen's accusers were "false witnesses" (Acts 6:13), and then later in Stephen's speech he has him affirm the enduring value of the Law (Acts 7:38). While there is no similar affirmation of the Temple and its apparatchiks, the speech contains no strident or explicit rejection of the Temple either.<sup>165</sup> If we wish to reclaim the theological position of Stephen, and by association that of the Hellenists, it would seem that the details of Stephen's trial and execution, and the substance of his speech offer no direct primary information. But the charges levelled against Stephen and the note on the persecution of the Hellenists are of a totally different character.

Luke reports that during his missionary activities in the Greek-speaking synagogues of Jerusalem, Stephen upsets his fellow Diaspora Jews who perceived that what he preached constituted a blasphemy against Moses and God (Acts 6:11) and against the Holy Place and the Law (Acts 6:13). More specifically, they charged that he claimed Jesus would "destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down" to them (Acts 6:14). Luke calls these latter two charges "false" (Acts 6:13), but this hardly proves

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<sup>163</sup> Munck, *Acts*, 58-59; Haenchen, *Acts*, 270-274; Hengel, *Jesus and Paul*, 19-21; and Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 79-86, 90-93.

<sup>164</sup> The historicity of Luke's claim that Paul was present at Stephen's stoning is tied up with the equally controversial claim in Acts 22:3 that Paul could boast of being raised in the city of Jerusalem and educated by the prominent Pharisaic rabbi, Gamaliel I. In the past scholars have been willing to accept these twin claims; probably nowhere better argued than in the classic treatment of the question in W. C. van Unnik, *Tarsus or Jerusalem: The City of Paul's Youth* (London: Epworth, 1962). However, see Schmithals, *Paul and James*, 32; Haenchen, *Acts*, 292-299; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 60-61; and G. Bornkamm, *Paul* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1975), 3-12, all of whom argue plausibly that Acts 22:3 must be taken as one further example of Luke's attempt to present Paul as a good, Law-observant Jew.

<sup>165</sup> Only Acts 7:48, which states that God does not dwell in a house made with hands, can we find anything approaching real criticism of the Temple. See the fulsome discussion of Stephen's speech in Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 69-76. Also G. N. Stanton, "Stephen in Lukan Perspective", *Studia Biblica* 3 (1978), 345-360 (349-353); and E. Larsson, "Temple-Criticism and the Jewish Heritage: Some Reflections on Acts 6-7", *NTS* 39 (1993), 388-395. For a contrary position, which argues for a significant critique of the Temple in Stephen's speech, see Dunn, *Partings*, 64-67.

an intent on Luke's part to promote Stephen as a paradigm of Law-abiding Christian Judaism. It should be noted that within the overall context of Luke's two-volume work these charges appear not so much as "false" but rather as inaccurate, or at best exaggerated.<sup>166</sup> In Luke 21:5-28, Jesus does predict the Temple's destruction, although he does not say that he will "destroy" it. There is here a clear reflection of the charge brought against Jesus at his trial (cf. Mk. 14:58). But Luke has not followed Mark by including this accusation in his narrative of Jesus' trial. Therefore, the supposed "echo" is clearly not intended here to merely parallel Stephen's trial to that of Jesus, but perhaps to highlight the fact that Stephen (like Jesus before him) did predict the end of the Temple.<sup>167</sup> Elsewhere in Luke, Jesus portends a clear change to Mosaic traditions, most notably with regard to Sabbath observance (Lk. 6:1-11) and the dietary proscriptions (Lk. 11:37-41). While these passages are replete with their own set of interpretative problems, they serve to cast doubts upon Luke's allegation that the witnesses gave "false" testimony regarding Stephen's claims for Jesus' part in changing the Mosaic customs.

While Luke does label "false" this (second) pair of charges (Acts 6:13-14), he fails to make a similar caveat about Stephen's supposed blasphemy against God and Moses (Acts 6:11), even though there is a clear thematic overlap between the two sets of indictments. If he had wanted to avoid this ambiguity, Luke could have put the reference to the false witnesses first or noted the falsity of the charges in both cases. All of this suggests that the author of Acts is again attempting to "paper over the cracks" and play down what in fact was quite clear from his sources – that the charges brought against Stephen were justified. Stephen had attacked the Law and the Temple.<sup>168</sup> This would explain why Luke fails to exonerate Stephen of the charge of blasphemy. Indeed, it could be argued that Luke calls the witnesses false, not because they accused Stephen of blasphemy, but because they

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<sup>166</sup> L. T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (SP 5; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 109, 112-113.

<sup>167</sup> So Dunn, *Partings*, 63-67. Similarly, Haenchen, *Acts*, 275-290; Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 86-90; and Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 135-145.

<sup>168</sup> Dunn, *Partings*, 64. See also J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 368, who concludes that Stephen's "attitude towards the Temple" is not that of Luke's, and indicates that some of the details of Stephen's attack on the Temple and his subsequent defence "must have been inherited by Luke from a pre-existing source". An even stronger argument in support of the presence of genuine traditions dating back to Stephen is made by H.-W. Neudorfer, "The Speech of Stephen", in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, ed. I. H. Marshall and D. Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 275-294.

distorted the exact import of Stephen's preaching. According to Luke, Stephen did not teach, as was claimed by the witnesses, that Jesus would destroy the Temple and the Law. Rather, he taught that Jesus was the one in whom the Law and the Temple found fulfilment, predicting that judgment was coming on Jerusalem because of its failure to acknowledge Jesus' messianic status. This of course probably reflects more the post-70 perspective of Luke, after the Temple had been destroyed, than that of Stephen.

Exactly what the content of Stephen's and the Hellenists' anti-Temple/anti-Law rhetoric entailed can no longer be determined. We can only assume that the Hellenists' criticisms of these central institutions of Judaism must have been sufficiently radical to warrant the violent response of the Diaspora Jews who stoned Stephen and initiated a concerted, if somewhat spontaneous, persecution of his circle of followers.<sup>169</sup> Only this would explain why in the ensuing persecution only the Hellenists were targeted. According to Acts (8:1b), the Apostles were left unscathed during the crisis. Since it is inherently difficult to believe that only the leaders of the Aramaic-speaking Jesus movement escaped persecution, we must assume that all the members of the "Hebrew" faction were spared.<sup>170</sup> This suggests, as argued previously, that the two arms of the Jerusalem church were quite separate and distinct, and were perceived as such by the wider Jewish community in the city.

It is probably also significant that nowhere in the account of Stephen's trial and execution do we find mention of the Hebrews, despite the fact that previously in Acts (4:1-22) Peter and John boldly defied the Sanhedrin and spoke out with confidence before its assembly in support of their faith. Why is there no similar resistance offered when Stephen is brought to trial in the same venue? J. D. G. Dunn has remarked that Luke's silence in this regard is particularly incriminating.<sup>171</sup> Significant too is the report that Stephen was buried and mourned, not by the Apostles who remained in Jerusalem following the attack on the Hellenists, but by certain "devout" (ευλαβεῖς) men (Acts 8:2), a term used elsewhere by

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<sup>169</sup> Bornkamm, *Paul*, 14. This point is also made strongly by J. C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1980), 341-342; and F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), 214-215.

<sup>170</sup> This interpretation is widely accepted, see Hengel, *Acts*, 74-75; Johnson, *Acts*, 141; Dunn, *Unity*, 273; *idem*, *Partings*, 67; Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 91-93; and Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 71.

<sup>171</sup> Dunn, *Unity*, 273-274; and, similarly, Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 71.

Luke to denote devout Jews (Lk. 2:25; Acts 2:5; 22:12). Dunn proposes that Luke is here attempting to cover up the fact that the Hebrews abandoned Stephen and the Hellenists to their fate. They neither identified themselves with nor came to the defence of their comrades. This implicitly suggests that the Hebrews agreed with the punitive actions taken against the Hellenists because Peter, John and their party repudiated Stephen's critical views on the Law and the Temple. Unlike the Hellenists, the Hebrews continued to uphold the traditional practices of Judaism, were not implicated in the affair, and took no part in defending Stephen and his supporters.

Further explicit evidence of the rift between the Hebrews and the Hellenists can be found in the subsequent narrative on the Samaritan mission (8:4-40). Again, there is much in this section of Acts that may be pure Lukan invention. However, there are several points at which we might plausibly see a genuine historical reminiscence. First, there seems no reason to doubt Luke's claim that following the martyrdom of Stephen and the dispersal of the Hellenists, the Christian mission spread to Samaria and the regions around Caesarea under the aegis of Philip, another of the seven named as leaders of the Hellenists.<sup>172</sup> Some scholars have even argued for a direct Samaritan influence on the Stephen traditions; a theory that gains support from the manner in which Luke's account of Stephen's ministry, trial and death introduces Philip's mission amongst the towns and villages of Samaria (Acts 8:5-25).<sup>173</sup> Luke later draws on traditions concerning Philip in Acts 21:8, which place Philip at Caesarea where he resides with his four daughters and plays host to Paul during Paul's final visit to Jerusalem. This Samaritan source theory has attracted little acceptance in scholarly circles.<sup>174</sup> Still, it is well known that even prior to the rise of Christianity there were ongoing tensions between the Samaritans and the Jews of Judea and Galilee. The issue at the heart of their dispute was the question of the centrality of the Jerusalem Temple. The Samaritans had in protest to the exclusivist claims of the devotees to the Jerusalem Temple built a competing tabernacle on Mount Gerizim in the fourth century B.C.E. John Hyrcanus in about 128 B.C.E. destroyed the Gerizim Temple. Yet the dispute

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<sup>172</sup> Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 100-101.

<sup>173</sup> So, for example, C. H. H. Scobie, "The Origin and Development of Samaritan Christianity", *NTS* 19 (1972), 390-414 (391-398); and J. Coggins, "The Samaritans and Acts", *NTS* 28 (1982), 423-434.

<sup>174</sup> See E. Plummer, "The Samaritan Pentateuch and the New Testament", *NTS* 22 (1976), 441-443; and E. Richard, "Acts 7: An Investigation of the Samaritan Evidence", *CBQ* 39 (1977), 190-208.

continued long into the first century, as is clearly reflected in John 4:20 where a Samaritan woman points out to Jesus, “Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that where we must worship is in Jerusalem”. That Luke should attribute the advent of the Samaritan mission to one of the Hellenists associated with Stephen, who were themselves persecuted as apostates and blasphemers, makes eminent sense when we consider the significance of the Temple with regard to the ongoing conflict between the Samaritans and the Jews. Who else would have been better suited to initiate the Samaritan mission than someone who had already begun to see devotion to Jesus apart from being a devout and strictly Law-observant Jew?

Similarly, Luke plausibly indicates that Philip initiated the Samaritan mission without prior consultation with the apostolic authorities in Jerusalem.<sup>175</sup> Luke implicitly suggests that such was Philip’s success in Samaria that the Apostles in Jerusalem were caught by surprise, and he records that Peter and John were dispatched north on a tour of inspection to assess the situation (8:14-25). Given the disastrous events of Stephen’s martyrdom and the persecution of the Hellenists, any mission on the part of the disgraced Hellenists amongst the Samaritans would have been controversial. Moreover, it is entirely feasible that the Hebrew remnant of the Jerusalem church would have been keen to send someone to investigate. Less credible however, is Luke’s claim that the purpose of this tour was so that Peter and John could confirm the converts in Samaria with the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>176</sup> As J. D. G. Dunn has observed, the motif of the apostolic conferral of the Spirit on the Samaritan converts has probably been inserted by Luke to “make a point of maintaining a *heilsgeschichtlich* continuity between Jerusalem and the Samaritan expansion”.<sup>177</sup> Accordingly, the apostolic community in Jerusalem is seen to sanction the legitimacy of Philip’s Samaritan mission. Viewing this as a creative editorial device on the part of Luke helps explain the curious anomaly of Philip’s baptism without a conferral of the Spirit (8:15-16). In Luke’s scheme, the Holy Spirit operates only when there is

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<sup>175</sup> Hengel, *Jesus and Paul*, 24-25; and Dunn, *Unity*, 270.

<sup>176</sup> Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 96-97, 99-100.

<sup>177</sup> Dunn, *Partings*, 71. See also Johnson, *Acts*, 151-153; and R. J. Dillon, “Acts of the Apostles”, in *New Jerome*, ed. Brown, Fitzmyer, and Murphy, 722-767 (742-43).



communion with the Jerusalem Apostles.<sup>178</sup> If this insert rests on any reliable historical information, it is more likely that Peter and John travelled to Samaria in the wake of Philip's endeavours in order to oppose his Samaritan mission, and to do so with the same vigour with which they opposed the Hellenists' independent mission in the Greek-speaking synagogues at Jerusalem. After all, if the Hebrews were to accept the Hellenists' admission of Samaritans into the Jesus movement, the wider Jewish community in Jerusalem would have seen this as a sign of their disloyalty to the Jerusalem Temple; an attack against which, on Stephen's part, had already resulted in fatal consequences.

### ***1.1.3. Contrary Views***

Not all scholars accept this reconstruction of events. Recently, C. C. Hill has cast doubts on any such interpretation of Acts 6-8 that argues for a split within the earliest Jerusalem church based on the issues of the Law and the Temple. His alternative view rests principally on the grounds that Stephen was martyred and the Christian Hellenists suffered persecution not at the hands of the Jewish authorities *per se*, but rather at the instigation of their fellow members in the Hellenistic-Jewish synagogues of Jerusalem.<sup>179</sup> Therefore, he claims we can infer nothing about their relationship to the Aramaic-speaking constituency of the Jerusalem church except from what Luke tells us in Acts 6:1-6, and there is nothing there to suggest that the Hellenists can be identified as a distinct group within the wider Jerusalem community.

Appealing to contemporary studies that demonstrate that almost all first century Jews were Hellenised to some extent, Hill argues that we cannot assume *a priori* that a group of Christians drawn from Diaspora Judaism would differ "as a block" from their fellow Christians with roots in Palestine.<sup>180</sup> According to Hill, "It is far more reasonable to suppose that there were broad differences of opinion within both groups".<sup>181</sup> Hill argues that this assumption is justifiable if we consider the fact that some members of the Hebrews

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<sup>178</sup> Conzelmann, *Acts*, 65; and Johnson, *Acts*, 50-51, 148.

<sup>179</sup> Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 32-40.

<sup>180</sup> Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 16-17, 21-24.

<sup>181</sup> Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 21.

too at other times suffered persecution at the hands of Jewish authorities.<sup>182</sup> Along with M. Hengel, Hill further argues that Luke's account of the appointment and the commissioning of the Seven by the Twelve Apostles (6:6) may well indicate that the foundation of a separate Hellenist community with its own specific missionary focus was effected at the instigation of the Apostles themselves.<sup>183</sup> After all, who else would be better equipped to carry the word to the Greek-speaking community in Jerusalem and beyond than converts from within that community itself?

Hill is probably right in some respects. First, it is entirely possible that the Apostles recognised the authority of the Seven, and may have even had a hand in their appointment. However, even if we were to accept this line of argument, it would seem that the Hellenists' circle embraced their newfound autonomy and, under the leadership of Stephen, Philip, and others, grew increasingly more independent of the wider Jerusalem church, and soon eclipsed the missionary endeavours of their Hebrew co-religionists.<sup>184</sup> Second, we should not exaggerate the extent of the persecution of the Hellenists in Jerusalem. Luke's claim that there was a great persecution following the death of Stephen and that this was actively pursued and officially sanctioned by the civil and religious authorities in Jerusalem (9:1-2) are most likely exaggerations of the actual situation. There is no evidence to suggest that any Hellenists other than Stephen were executed at the hands of a mob in Jerusalem. Perhaps there were some further cases of physical violence, but on an *extempore* rather than an organised basis. Luke records no further arrests, trials, or punishments visited upon the Hellenists in Jerusalem. However, he does record that Saul led a concerted effort to round up and imprison the troublemakers (8:3), applying to the High Priest for letters of authority to pursue Stephen's circle of followers beyond the bounds of Palestine (9:1-2). In Galatians (1:13-14), 1 Corinthians (15:9) and Philippians (3:6), Paul confirms that he was a zealous and merciless persecutor of the Church. As we noted earlier, Paul claims that he was "not known by sight to the churches of Christ in Judea" (Gal 1:22), nor did he visit the Jerusalem Apostles until three years after his

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<sup>182</sup> Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 36-37. Similar views have been expressed earlier by Munck, *Paul*, 218-228; and, more recently, by Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church", 429.

<sup>183</sup> Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 24-28; but also, Hengel, *Jesus and Paul*, 15-16.

<sup>184</sup> So Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 66.

conversion (Gal 1:16-20). This suggests that the persecution in which Paul was involved occurred outside Jerusalem. It is therefore likely that those he persecuted were the Hellenists who fled Jerusalem in the wake of Stephen's death.

It is noteworthy that Paul's statements in Galatians and Philippians regarding his former persecution of the Church occur within the context of his claim to have been a strict adherent of the Law prior to his conversion. In Philippians (3:5-6), he says he was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews...with reference to the Law, a Pharisee; with reference to zeal, a persecutor of the Church; with reference to righteousness which comes from the Law, blameless" (cf. Gal 1:13-14; 2 Cor 11:18-29). This suggests that what he found blameworthy about those he persecuted was their active advocacy of apostasy from the Law – precisely that for which Luke implies Stephen and his Hellenist circle were persecuted.

Finally, Hill is probably right in claiming that the whole affair was confined within the expatriate Hellenistic-Jewish community in Jerusalem. But, as we noted earlier, this hardly explains the total absence of the Hebrews from Luke's account of these sad events. Their failure to come to the defence of Stephen can only point to their agreement with the actions of Stephen's opponents. Alternatively, we are forced to believe that such was the isolation of the Hellenists from the wider Aramaic-speaking Christian community, that the latter simply knew nothing of the persecution of the former. This is an incredible notion in itself. But even so, it serves only to underline the depth of the divisions between the two groups. Hill argues that one must equate Stephen's martyrdom and the persecution of the Hellenists to earlier and later instances of persecution meted out to members of the Aramaic-speaking arm of the church, the likes of Peter and John, and the Apostles. Again, as we saw earlier, these incidents of conflict with the Temple authorities appear to have been both minor and isolated. The issues at stake were not the same. There is no suggestion that Peter, John, or their circle, unlike Stephen, Philip, and the Hellenists, were ever persecuted because they repudiated the Law or the Temple. Indeed, the overwhelming weight of the evidence supplied by Acts 1-5 that points to the disciples' continuing devotion to the Temple and the Law makes it highly unlikely that they ever would have been. The fact that the Aramaic-speaking disciples and their followers established a

community in Jerusalem that survived and prospered for forty years, further suggests that this community generally enjoyed cordial relations with the city's wider Jewish society.

It is particularly striking that Hill in what is an otherwise thorough survey of the Hellenists-Hebrews conflict never addresses this topic. As such he fails to mark the serious theological and liturgical differences that must have existed between the two communities, and which are implied by the Lukan narrative. In his review of Hill's contribution to the debate, P. F. Esler makes the comment that Hill does not deal adequately with the central piece of evidence – the fact that Acts 6:1 marks a clear demarcation point between two distinct and clearly opposing groups.<sup>185</sup> Hill is quick to state that it is reasonable to assume that there were broad differences of opinion both within the Hellenist camp and the wider Hebrew community. But he nowhere makes reference to the express evidence in Acts 1-5 that the earliest Aramaic-speaking members of the apostolic community, despite their distinctive messianic and apocalyptic beliefs, were devout Jews. Accordingly, he never adequately explains how or why the Hellenists differed so markedly from their Hebrew co-religionists. Moreover, the various discrepancies raised by Luke's tendentious account of the dispute in 6:1-6 can only make sense if we suspect Luke of glossing over much more serious divisions between the two groups; divisions that appear to be expressed across a wide spectrum of issues, liturgical, linguistic, social, administrative, pastoral, and theological.

#### ***1.1.4. Reasons for the Hellenists' Defection***

We can only speculate as to the reasons why the Hellenist members of the Jesus movement embraced views so at odds with those of the Hebrews. J. D. G. Dunn, M. Hengel, E. Haenchen, and others have argued that the Hellenists seized upon that emphasis in Jesus' teaching with regard to the Law and the Temple that raised the opposition of the Jewish religious authorities, and resulted in Jesus' trial and execution.<sup>186</sup> In particular, the Hellenists, as a charismatic eschatological group, focused on Jesus' apocalyptic pronouncements regarding the imminent destruction of the Temple (Matt 26:61; Mk 14:58;

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<sup>185</sup> P. F. Esler, "Review of C. C. Hill's *Hellenists and Hebrews*", *Biblical Interpretation* 3 (1995), 119-123.

<sup>186</sup> Haenchen, *Acts*, 67-68; Hengel, *Jesus and Paul*, 22-24; Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 92, 101; *idem*, *Partings*, 63; Meyer, *Early Christians*, 71; and Conzelmann, *Acts*, 45.

15:29; Lk 21:5-36; Jn 2:19), the corruption of its cult (Mk 11:15-17; Matt 21:12-13; Lk 19:45-46; Jn 2:13-22), and the inadequacies of the laws governing the dietary proscriptions (Matt 15:10-20; 23:25-26; Mk 7:14-23; Lk 11:37-41) and Sabbath observances (eg., Mk 3:1-6; Matt 12:9-14; Lk 6:1-11).

Such a theory has one obvious fault – Jesus did predict the end of the Temple, which the Hebrews most likely knew. However, that knowledge did not encourage them to criticise the Temple cult or the Mosaic Law that governed its practice. On the contrary, it led them to become quite exemplary in their observance of the Law and their devotion to the Temple. Attempting to tie the Hellenists’ criticisms of the Law and the Temple to Jesus traditions requires that we assume that Jesus’ original disciples understood the import of Jesus’ message far less than the Hellenists who were converted to the movement only after his death.<sup>187</sup> But, surely, the only knowledge the Hellenists had about Jesus was what they had received by way of catechetical instruction from the Hebrews. Are we then to imagine that the former were able to separate the misunderstanding of the latter from the real intent of Jesus’ message? This is a rather difficult assertion to defend. It is far more reasonable to assume that the Hellenists’ negative views on these two Jewish cultural institutions represented a radical departure from the theological position of the original followers of Jesus and their Aramaic-speaking converts. This was a departure that the Hellenist converts to the movement instigated and which, as we shall see presently, ultimately led them to initiate the mission to the Gentiles in Antioch.

H. Räisänen has offered another explanation of the Hellenists’ views.<sup>188</sup> Drawing on recent studies of Jewish attitudes to the Law in the western Diaspora, Räisänen suggests that the Hellenists brought to their newfound faith in Jesus Messiah certain preconceptions about the Law typical of some Diaspora Jews. They saw the Law as an appeal to the individual conscience rather than as rules regulating ritual observances. For such Jews, distant from the Temple in Jerusalem and challenged by the vicissitudes of the surrounding Gentile environment in which they lived, the essence of Law-observance was necessarily seen as being fulfilled by adherence to the “spirit” of the Mosaic Law rather than to the

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<sup>187</sup> See discussion in Räisänen, *Jesus, Paul and Torah*, 89-90, 164-165.

<sup>188</sup> Räisänen, *Jesus, Paul and Torah*, 190-197; who is followed by Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 70.

exact “letter” of the Law. Following Räisänen’s argument, D. C. Sim draws attention to the possible parallels between the Hellenists and those Alexandrian Jews, mentioned by Philo (*De Mig.* 93), who interpreted the Law allegorically, dismissing even the practice of physical circumcision.<sup>189</sup> However, Sim notes that it is difficult to determine the extent to which these “spiritualising” tendencies in Hellenistic Jewish thought influenced the Diaspora Jews who converted to the Jesus movement in Jerusalem. Moreover, the fact that the Hellenists had chosen to migrate to Jerusalem suggests that, prior to their conversion to the Jesus movement, they must have held both the Temple and the Law in high regard. This observation alone sounds a cautionary note to anyone who would wish to draw a simple parallel between Luke’s Jerusalem Hellenists and Philo’s Alexandrian allegorisers.

The problem that confronts us here is that we simply have no firm data to determine precisely what factors led the Hellenists to eschew their previous attachment to Law-observance and Temple worship. We can certainly surmise that, given that most Hellenists could function linguistically only in Greek, the Hebrew-language services of the Temple would have made it extremely difficult for the Greek-speaking Hellenists to participate either fully or enthusiastically in the national cult. Similar linguistic and social differences probably also led to the isolation of the Hellenists from the Aramaic-language ceremonies celebrated by the original Palestinian-Jewish converts to the Jesus movement. But these details alone do not adequately explain why the Hellenists went much further than their fellow believers in Jesus Messiah at Jerusalem by openly criticising both the Temple and the Law.

Ultimately, the paucity of information makes it impossible to explain their actions. We must assume that it was something unique to their community’s interpretation of the Christ event that led them to depart from the faith-practice of their Jewish and Christian Jewish fellows. But, all we can say with certainty is that, whatever the cultural, philosophical, or social ingredients that went into the ideological mix predisposing the Greek-speaking Christian Hellenists to their views, it was they who first developed a spirituality and a faith-practice distinct from the Jewish Temple cult and the Mosaic Law,

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<sup>189</sup> Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 18, 70. For a more complete examination of the influence of Hellenistic philosophy and religion on Jewish thought in the Diaspora, see J. J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (New York: Crossroads, 1983).

not the Aramaic-speaking, Palestinian-born Hebrews, and not the later Gentile converts to Christianity.<sup>190</sup> As a consequence, the Hellenists' pre-eminent leader Stephen was stoned and their community members alone were scattered. Even though Luke attempts to veil much of the divisive nature of this episode, and we are unable to explain why the division occurred in the first place, these problems should not tempt us to dismiss the dispute as a temporary spat over unimportant financial matters. On the contrary, we have demonstrated that Luke's material on the Hebrews and the Hellenists reveals explicit evidence of two distinct factions within the earliest Jerusalem church.

## **1.2. The Advent of the Gentile Mission**

There is one further piece of this puzzle that requires examination if we are to fully appreciate the depth of the divisions that existed between the Hellenists and the Hebrews; and this concerns the advent of the Gentile mission. Luke testifies in Acts that, dispersed to Samaria and to other cities and villages in Palestine, the Hellenists established communities devoted to aggressive missionary efforts. In these, they spread their conviction that following Jesus no longer necessarily entailed acknowledging the validity of the Temple cult in Jerusalem and adhering to the Laws of Moses. Through a series of narrative vignettes, Acts advances the story of the Hellenists in such a way that it is not difficult to picture how Stephen's companions steadily began to realise the full implications of their divorce from the Temple and its cult. Via the agency of these refugees and others from Jerusalem, the Hellenistic *kerygma* is carried first to Jewish communities outside Jerusalem (8:1b), and beyond Judea (11:19). Thence, it travels to the Samaritans (8:4-25), to an Ethiopian Eunuch on the Gaza Road (8:26-39), and eventually to the Gentiles in Syrian Antioch (11:19-21). With each step, the mission moves progressively beyond the original principles of the original Christian Jewish foundation in Jerusalem. Ultimately, this sequence of events climaxes with the admission of the Gentiles, signalling the emergence of these new, multi-cultural congregations as an identifiably distinct Law-Free Christianity

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<sup>190</sup> A point made strongly by H. Conzelmann, *History of Primitive Christianity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), 83.

(11:26).<sup>191</sup> Not for the first time however, Luke muddies the waters by providing conflicting information about the first Gentile missions.

### ***1.2.1. The Conversion of Cornelius***

One account of the advent of the Gentile mission is given to us in Acts 10:1-11:18, which describes Peter's conversion of Cornelius, a Roman centurion of the Italian Cohort stationed at Caesarea. Luke reports how Peter, during a missionary tour of the coastal towns of Lydda and Joppa (9:32-43; 10:9), accepts an invitation of hospitality from the household of Cornelius, whom he subsequently visits (10:24-28), evangelises (10:34-43) and, following a spontaneous outpouring of the Spirit, baptises (10:44-48). Returning to Jerusalem, Peter is forced to justify his behaviour by recounting the miraculous events that led to Cornelius' conversion (11:1-18). On hearing Peter's defence, his erstwhile detractors conclude: "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life" (11:18). Similarly when Paul and Barnabas travel from Antioch to Jerusalem to consult with the apostolic authorities there, Peter again appeals to his experience with Cornelius to support the legitimacy of the Gentile mission at Antioch (15:7-13). This threefold recounting emphasises that what is being reported here with the Cornelius incident is not just another conversion story, but the very origins of the Law-free mission to the Gentiles – a subject that will dominate the subsequent chapters of Luke's story. However, the consensus opinion held by commentators on Acts is that the Cornelius story can hardly be historical, at least in present form.<sup>192</sup>

It has often noted that the Cornelius episode is replete with numerous literary features and legendary motifs that are unique to Luke. F. Watson, who is prepared to dismiss the story as a clear Lukan creation on this basis alone, has catalogued several of

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<sup>191</sup> Some scholars argue that the Hellenists initiated the Gentile Mission prior to their expulsion from Jerusalem; see Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 157-159; and Räisänen, *Jesus, Paul and Torah*, 166-168. However, a close reading of the Lukan narrative suggests that the Hellenists had not previously approached the Gentiles, either during their time in Jerusalem or in the initial stages of their missions beyond the city. Luke makes no mention of a Gentile mission in Jerusalem or Palestine, and that is what we might expect. For surely, the Law-free mission to non-Jews would have only developed later, when the dispersed Hellenists embarked on their missions in the more culturally mixed environments of Syria, Phoenicia, and Cyprus.

<sup>192</sup> See, for example: Haenchen, *Acts*, 357-363; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 78-86; Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 124-133; and Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 95-97.



these traits.<sup>193</sup> First, there is the figure of Cornelius who is but one of a series of devout centurions populating the pages of Luke (7:1-10; 23:47) and Acts (27:1-3, 30-32, 42-44), testament to Luke's concern to demonstrate the generally favourable attitude of the Roman authorities to the new Christian movement. Second, the motif of divine guidance given through the agency of angels and visions is also typical of Luke (Lk 1:11-20, 26-38; 2:9-14; 24:2-7; Acts 1:10-11; 5:19-20; 7:55-56; 8:26; 9:3-6, 10-12; 12:7-11; 16:9-10; 18:9-10; 23:11; 27:23-24). Finally, the description of the descent of the Spirit on Cornelius and his household and their subsequent gift of glossolalia is clearly composed to mirror the reports of the events of Pentecost and similar outpourings of the Spirit in Acts (2:1-13; cf. 4:31; 8:14-17; 19:1-7). These considerations force us to suspect that the Cornelius episode is a Lukan literary construct.

Still it could be argued that despite Luke's creative work, the story of Cornelius' conversion may contain some reliable historical information. Luke may have exaggerated, embellished, and conflated earlier traditions concerning Peter's vision and the conversions of certain individual Gentiles who joined the movement in its initial phase – that is, in the period prior to the advent of the large-scale mission to the Gentiles.<sup>194</sup> After all, Cornelius is described in terms reminiscent of a God-fearer (10:2, 22) which, as we saw in the Introduction, refers to that category of Gentiles who had attached themselves to the Jewish synagogue and adopted some Jewish customs and faith-practices. It is often assumed that many if not all the earliest Gentile converts to Christianity were probably either proselytes to Judaism or God-fearers. As individuals with a pre-existing affinity for Judaism and an established relationship with Jewish synagogues, one might see them as the most likely candidates for any mission amongst the Gentiles. Moreover, C. C. Hill makes the point that nowhere in Acts 10:1-11:18 does Luke say that Cornelius and his family joined the community in Jerusalem.<sup>195</sup> Cornelius, like other individual Gentiles who converted to the Jesus movement in its initial stages, were seen as exceptional cases that posed no more

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<sup>193</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 23-25.

<sup>194</sup> This is the view taken by M. Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (London: SCM Press, 1956), 121-122. His arguments are rehearsed anew by S. G. Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts* (SNTSMS 23; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 172-173. Cf. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 80. Others who accept that the Cornelius story contains a kernel of historical truth include Hengel, *Acts*, 92-98; Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 132-133; Dunn, *Partings*, 72-73, 125; Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 122-125; and Barrett, *Acts*, 1:496-498, 535.

<sup>195</sup> Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 123; and Dunn, *Partings*, 125.

threat to the essential Jewish character of the movement than they did formerly as God-fearers and proselytes attached to the Jewish synagogues.

There are certain problems with this proposal. First, it is important to note that Peter accepts Cornelius into the movement without first insisting that he and the other male members of his household submit to circumcision. The whole thrust of the Lukan account of Peter's vision and the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit on the Gentile converts, as well as Peter's later problems with the circumcised brothers of Judea, serves to stress this point. Second, as we noted above, Luke's purpose is not just to note the extraordinary character of this event, but to signal the initiation of the Law-free Gentile mission *per se*. Cornelius is presented by Luke, not as the exception to the Jerusalem's current Law-observant faith-practice, but as the first instance of a new Law-free policy on the part of the Jerusalem church with regard to the Gentile converts (Acts 11:18; cf. 15:7-11), which will later be ratified at the Jerusalem Council (15:13-29). Such is the radical nature of this departure that Luke's Cornelius story seems incredible, especially in the light of our preceding reconstruction of the constituency and faith-practice of the earliest apostolic community. If our foregoing conclusions concerning the Law-observant Jerusalem community are correct, then we must assume that any change of policy that allowed the admission of uncircumcised Gentiles would have been unthinkable, particularly at this early stage in the development of what appears to be a thoroughly Jewish movement.

Finally, this incredible development is one that appears even more improbable if we are to accept that Peter was the primary advocate for this change of policy. Any line of argument that credits Peter with initiating a mission to the Gentiles, or even playing a part in admitting individual, uncircumcised Gentiles to the movement, seems unlikely when we consider all that we know of Peter and the Jerusalem church in both Acts and the letters of Paul. Most importantly, the notion that Peter would have taken the revolutionary step of admitting an uncircumcised Gentile to the movement stands in contradiction to the primary evidence of Paul in Galatians (2:1-10). While Paul admits that Peter and the other "Pillars" James and John were not opposed to the Gentile mission, he mentions nothing of Peter's prior engagement with that mission. In point of fact, Paul asserts that it was widely accepted that Peter was commissioned to exercise his apostolic ministry exclusively amongst the Jews (2:7-8). The import of this statement cannot be blunted even if we

contend that Luke has simply placed the Cornelius story too early in the chronology of events, prior to rather than after the Apostolic Council.<sup>196</sup> There is no indication in Galatians (2:1-10) that, as result of Paul's consultation with the Pillars at Jerusalem, there was to be any modification of procedure in the future. Paul seems to have understood the agreement forged at Jerusalem in terms of a strict demarcation of the mission field. He would go to the Gentiles, while Peter and by extension the Jerusalem church would continue as before to focus on the Jews in Palestine. Any attempt to argue for an historical core to the Cornelius story by affirming a role for Peter in the Gentile mission, albeit limited, ultimately founders on the evidence in Galatians 2:1-10.<sup>197</sup> With this observation and the other points noted above in mind, we can only concur with the conclusion of F. Watson that Luke has probably created the Cornelius story *de novo*. Moreover, it is likely that Luke inserted it into the narrative at this point to vindicate the Gentile mission by bringing it under the apostolic authority of Peter and the Jerusalem church, rather than attributing it to the questionable authority of Paul or, more importantly at this stage, the Hellenists.<sup>198</sup>

### **1.2.2. The Hellenists in Antioch**

Luke provides an alternative and much more plausible explanation of the origins of the Law-free mission to the Gentiles in his subsequent narrative on the Hellenists in Antioch (Acts 11:19-16). At this point (11:19) Luke again picks up the thread of the "Hellenists Story Cycle", describing how those who had been scattered following the death of Stephen carried the Christian message as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Syrian Antioch. In the ensuing verse, he relates that in Antioch the Hellenists focused initially on the Jewish community. But certain men from Cyprus and Cyrene eventually took the next step and approached the "Greeks" (11:20). As noted earlier, the term Luke uses here is rendered in some manuscripts as *Ἑλληνισταί* (Hellenists), rather than *Ἕλληνες* (Greeks or Gentiles). However, given that Luke uses this term in contrast to the "Jews" we must assume that it is

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<sup>196</sup> As argued by Beker, *Paul*, 100.

<sup>197</sup> So noted by Haenchen, *Acts*, 361; Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 23; Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 95-96; and Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 89.

<sup>198</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 25. See also Haenchen, *Acts*, 360.

Gentiles he has in view.<sup>199</sup> The implication here is that this was the first time that the Christian message was addressed to Gentiles. This clearly contradicts his previous account of the conversion of Cornelius and probably, therefore, indicates that Luke has drawn this information from an independent source. If we are correct in arguing that the entire Cornelius story is a creation of Luke, then it is likely that this source was a reliable one.<sup>200</sup> Several additional points speak in favour of this view.

For one, it is reasonable to assume that in consideration of the earlier presentation of the Hellenists as holding liberal views regarding the Temple and the Torah it would be they who would take the radical step of approaching the Gentiles. For another, while Luke does not specifically name those who first initiated this outreach, we might plausibly speculate that Nicolaus, the proselyte from Antioch and one of the Seven named in Acts 6:5 as a leader of the Hellenists, played some role in this mission.<sup>201</sup> One name that is specifically linked with the Antiochene mission is Joseph Barnabas (11:22-26, 30; 13:1; 15:2-4) who was mentioned twice previously as a prominent member of the Jerusalem community (4:36-37; 9:27). There remains some contention regarding the manner in which Barnabas came to be involved in the affairs of the church at Antioch. According to Acts 11:22-23, Barnabas travelled to Antioch as an envoy of the Jerusalem church tasked with the mission to offer support and encouragement to the fledgling community. Scholars have rightly regarded this information as a pure Lukan device, intended as yet one more attempt

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<sup>199</sup> See further Haenchen, *Acts*, 365 n. 5. Also Conzelmann, *Acts*, 87; Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 134; Barrett, *Acts*, 1:550-551; and Johnson, *Acts*, 203.

<sup>200</sup> In the past, scholars have proposed that behind the initial chapters of Acts lie two sources: (a) a Jerusalem-Caesarea source behind Acts 3:1-5:16; 8:5-40; 9:31-11:18; 12:1-23, supplemented by certain legendary components (2:1-41; 5:17-42); and (b) an Antiochene-Jerusalem source focusing on the “Hellenists Story Cycle” (6:1-8:4; 11:19-30) and the events surrounding the Jerusalem Council (12:25-15:35). This theory was first suggested by A. Harnack, *New Testament Studies III: The Acts of the Apostles*, tr. J. R. Wilkinson (CTL 27; London: Williams & Newgate, 1909), 162-202, and has been retained and modified by subsequent commentators; see the discussion in Haenchen, *Acts*, 14-50, 81-90; Hengel, *Acts*, 65-66; and Conzelmann, *Acts*, xxxvi-xxxviii. Recent trends in scholarship have tended to stress Luke’s creative use of source material without directly attempting to reconstruct that material, appealing to the extreme difficulties presented by the lack of any similar extant sources on the pre-Pauline period. The consensus appears to be that whatever Luke had was probably no more than fragmentary and anecdotal – see Hengel, *Acts*, 61-62; Dillon, “Acts”, 722-767; and Johnson, *Acts*, 3-4. Still, most commentators on Acts agree that with regard to the advent of the Gentile mission in Antioch Luke was in possession of some reliable information – see e.g. Haenchen, *Acts*, 371; Hengel, *Acts*, 99-100; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 87; and Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 136.

<sup>201</sup> W. A. Meeks and R. L. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978), 14.

to secure the continuity between the apostolic community in Jerusalem and the latter missions of the early Church.<sup>202</sup>

As a Greek-speaking Cypriot, Barnabas was probably once a member of the Hellenist faction in Jerusalem who, when the split between the Hebrews and Hellenists first occurred, sided with the Hebrews. With the failure of Peter and John in Samaria, the authorities in Jerusalem may have felt that Barnabas, as a former colleague of the Hellenist ringleaders at Antioch, would have more success in stemming the rising tide of the Law-free Hellenist mission as it gained further ground in Syria.<sup>203</sup> Luke implies that this strategy fared no better than the Samaritan gambit. Barnabas, apparently impressed by the success of the Gentile mission, promptly joined the Antiochene community and quickly became one of the foremost figures in the Gentile mission (13:1; 15:2-4). In view of these considerations, it would appear that Luke is correct; former members of the Hellenists from Jerusalem did establish the community in Antioch and were responsible for initiating at Antioch the first large-scale missionary outreach to the Gentiles.

The notion that the Hellenists' mission to the Gentiles was Law-free is given credence by Acts 11:26, which relates that it was at Antioch that the followers of Jesus first became known as Christians. É. Trocmé observes that *Cristiano* is a political term (Latin suffix *-ianos*) that may have been used in a derisory fashion ("supporters of the oiled one"), and thus indicates a first contact with pagans who, lacking any biblical background, did not fully comprehend the Jewish roots of the term *Cristo*.<sup>204</sup> As such, the popular recognition of the movement in Antioch as "followers of the *Cristo*" is significant. It testifies both to the success of the Gentile mission in Antioch and its emergence as an innovative religious movement that was considered by the wider, multicultural society in Antioch as independent of its Jewish origins. It is unlikely that such a designation would have been devised earlier in Jerusalem.

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<sup>202</sup> Haenchen, *Acts*, 370-371. See also Bornkamm, *Paul*, 29-30; Meeks and Wilken, *Jews and Christians*, 14-15; and G. Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2 vols (HTKNT; Freiburg: Herder, 1980, 1982), 1:354.

<sup>203</sup> Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 74-75.

<sup>204</sup> Meeks and Wilken, *Jews and Christians*, 15-16, 18; Trocmé, *The Childhood of Christianity*, 32; and Dunn, *Partings*, 73. See also P. Zingg, *Das Wachsen der Kirche* (OBO 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 217-222.

As Aramaic-speaking, Law-observant followers of Jesus the Messiah from Nazareth, the initial membership of the Jerusalem community would have been perceived as no more than another Jewish sect (24:14; 28:22; cf. 5:17; 15:5). Perhaps amongst their fellow Jews the Christian Jews at Jerusalem were even known commonly as the “Sect of the Nazarene”, as Luke suggests in Acts 24:5. It is only later, when the Hellenists had severed their attachment to the Torah, and initiated a vigorous and successful Law-free mission amongst Gentiles in the predominantly pagan city of Antioch, that such a term could arise. No longer were the Hellenists perceived as mere Jewish apostates – as happened in Jerusalem, leading to Stephen’s tragic death and the persecution of his circle of supporters. But with the addition of their Gentile converts at Antioch, they came to be seen increasingly as the tradents of an entirely new religious tradition in which the established boundary markers distinguishing Jew from Gentile (circumcision, Sabbath observance, and the dietary and purity proscriptions of the Torah) were completely abolished.

### ***1.2.3. Paul and the Hellenists***

It may be pertinent to conclude this chapter with a discussion of Paul’s association with the church in Antioch. Paul is notably circumspect about his early connection with the Antiochene community. In Galatians (1:11-17), he attributes both the content of the Law-free gospel he preached among the nations and the commission to preach it to a “revelation from Jesus Christ”, which he did not receive via any human agency (1:11-12). One might be forgiven for imagining that Paul is here claiming sole responsibility for the advent of the Gentile mission. A recent trend in the study of Paul has stressed that Paul never speaks of his revelatory experience as a conversion to new community of faith *per se*, but rather as a call or a commissioning to be the apostle to the Gentiles.<sup>205</sup> F. Watson argues that behind Paul’s claims for the import of his revelation lies the historical reality that it was Paul (in the company of Barnabas) who first initiated the mission to the Gentiles.<sup>206</sup> In Watson’s view Paul began first as an unsuccessful Christian missionary among the Jews who, in response to his failure and in the cause of missionary expediency, turned to the Gentiles in

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<sup>205</sup> So W. D. Davies, “Paul and the People of Israel”, *NTS* 24 (1977-78), 4-39 (5-7). See also Munck, *Paul*, 11-35; and Stendahl, *Paul*, 1-23.

<sup>206</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 28-38.

Antioch. But this reconstruction of events can only be sustained by denying the historicity of the entire “Hellenists Story Cycle”, a move that lacks any solid, logical justification. Luke’s redaction of the material on the Hellenists does present certain exegetical problems, but there seems no reason to reject this entire section of the story as pure fabrication. To do so, raises a number of additional problems and questions.<sup>207</sup>

First, it appears that although Paul seems to have been aware of his status as an apostle from early in his career (cf. 1 Thess 2:7), his understanding of that office seems to have developed over time.<sup>208</sup> When he would later face vigorous challenges to his apostolic status, as he did at Galatia, he typically responds by stressing his independent credentials. We shall see in chapter three, that such emphatic and repeated claims to independence must reflect the fact that Paul’s apostolate has been portrayed by the opponents in Galatia as derivative from former apostolic authorities - perhaps specifically from either Cephas and James in Jerusalem, or Barnabas in Antioch, since all of these play a role in the stories related by Paul.<sup>209</sup> Against such claims, Paul asserts that he first went to Jerusalem in order to get “acquainted” with Peter (1:18), not to be “taught” or “receive” the content of the gospel he preached (1:12) or the “call” to preach it (1:15-16).<sup>210</sup> Both his gospel and his apostolic commission (1:15) are the products of the revelation (1:12) he received three years prior to his initial meeting with Cephas and James (1:15-17) and fourteen years before the Council meeting that recognised the legitimacy of his Apostleship among the Gentiles (2:1-10).<sup>211</sup>

However, it is not entirely clear that from the very outset Paul understood the nature of his revelation as a specific vocation to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Nowhere in his letters does Paul explicitly describe the exact nature of the revelation he received. We know only that it was an experience of the Son accorded to him by the Father (Gal 1:16), in

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<sup>207</sup> Räisänen, *Jesus, Paul and Torah*, 151-158; and Bowers, “Mission”, 611.

<sup>208</sup> C. Roetzel, *Paul: The Man and the Myth* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999), 47.

<sup>209</sup> The argument that 1:1 was composed as a direct response to accusations that Paul’s apostolate was derivative, either of Jerusalem or Antioch, is widely accepted. See, for example, Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 27-28; Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 12; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 4; Dunn, *Galatians*, 25; Martyn, *Galatians*, 92-95; and Esler, *Galatians*, 118-120.

<sup>210</sup> Matera, *Galatians*, 68-69; and Martyn, *Galatians*, 171-172.

<sup>211</sup> Similarly, Gaventa, “Galatians 1 and 2”, 313; and J. H. Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, (SNTSMS 26; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 128-158.

which he “saw Jesus the Lord” (1 Cor 9:1). Paul equates this experience with that of the post-resurrection Christophanies granted to the official witnesses, suggesting that the only difference between his vision and theirs was that his vision took place much later (1 Cor 15:5-8). Luke claims (Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:12) and Paul implies (Gal 1:17c; cf. 2 Cor 11:32-33) that the incident occurred near Damascus.<sup>212</sup> Both situate the episode within the context of Paul’s pursuit and persecution of the infant Church (Gal 1:13-16; Acts 9:1-2; 22:4-5; 26:11-12). Therefore we must assume that it was in Damascus that he became acquainted with the Christian gospel, and more specifically with the Law-free version of the Gospel propagated by the Hellenists who had fled there following Stephen’s martyrdom. Only that form of the Christian message would have incited a Law-abiding Jew like Paul to persecute the Christian community and thus, his revelation diverted him from the path of persecution of the Law-free mission onto the path of propagation.<sup>213</sup>

It is quite clear from Galatians that Paul’s association with any other form of the Christian movement was extremely limited. Even by his own admission it was not until three years after his call that he made his way to Jerusalem to consult with those who were Apostles before him (Gal 1:18). Paul does not tell us what transpired at his initial meeting with Cephas. But it does not stretch the bounds of reason to assume that he would have received some form of instruction during his fifteen-day stay. Despite his protestations to the contrary, Paul is certainly beholden to the original tradents of the Christian message. There are numerous places in his letters where Paul demonstrates an awareness of traditional material about Jesus’ life and teachings, death, resurrection and post-resurrection appearances (e.g. 1 Thess 4:15; Gal 1:19; 4:4; 1 Cor 7:10; 9:14; 11:2, 23-25; 15:3-7; Rom

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<sup>212</sup> Paul says that after his revelation he withdrew to Arabia (1:17b) and then later “returned” to Damascus (1:17c) – the verb “returned” (*upēstreyā*) implies that the former revelation occurred in or near Damascus.

<sup>213</sup> This view has been consistently maintained by J. D. G. Dunn in a series of recent publications. See Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 251-266; *idem*, *Partings*, 119-122; *idem*, “Paul’s Conversion - A Light to Twentieth Century Disputes”, in *Evangelium, Schriftauslegung, Kirche. P. Stuhlmacher Festschrift*, ed. J. Ådna, S. J. Hafemann, and O. Hofius (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 77-93; and *idem*, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 352. According to Dunn’s thesis, Paul persecuted the Hellenists, not because they proclaimed Jesus as Messiah, but because they accepted Gentiles without requiring circumcision, which he perceived to be a serious threat to “Israel’s integrity and purity” (“Paul’s Conversion”, 90). Thus, the “immediate” and “primary feature” of Paul’s conversion was his call to the Gentile mission. Paul’s understanding of what his Gentile mission meant in terms of its “implications for the law and its bearing on the Gospel” was only a “corollary”, which was “worked out with increasing sharpness over the early years of his work as a missionary to the church in Antioch” (*Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 92).



1:3). Even in Galatians, as H. D. Betz observes, Paul makes extensive use of early confessional and liturgical traditions (1:3-4; 2:16, 20; 3:13-14, 27-28; 4:4-5).<sup>214</sup>

Following his initial meeting with Cephas, Paul went to Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21), and it was probably at this time that he joined the community in Antioch. He did not return to Jerusalem until fourteen years later (Gal 2:1). During the intervening years he seems to have exercised his ministry in Antioch, where he quickly became a leading member of that community. But the evidence in Acts suggests that Paul's initial role was inferior to that of Barnabas and others, such as Simeon Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen (Acts 13:1), who were already involved in a vigorous and successful Law-free mission to the Jewish and Gentile citizens of Antioch.<sup>215</sup> In the traditional list of the prophets and teachers who constituted the leadership at Antioch in Acts 13:1, Paul's name appears last. When Acts (13:1-14:26) has the church in Antioch embark on a mission to expand the scope of the Law-free Gentile mission into Cyprus and Asia Minor, Barnabas is named before Paul as the head of the embassy (13:2; cf. 13:7). Thus, as H. Räisänen rightly contends, both Acts and the letters of Paul indicate that it was during and probably as a result of Paul's affiliation with the Hellenists' mission in Antioch that Paul worked out the full implication of his "call" to preach the gospel among the Gentiles.<sup>216</sup>

Finally, we must consider Paul's relationship with Barnabas at Antioch. Acts (11:25-26) credits Barnabas with having sought out Paul in Tarsus to enlist his help with the Gentile mission at Antioch. While some scholars are prepared to accept the veracity of this information, it must be seen that the historicity of this episode depends heavily upon the historical worth of Barnabas' earlier association with Paul at Jerusalem in Acts 9:26-

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<sup>214</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 26-28.

<sup>215</sup> Haenchen, *Acts*, 370.

<sup>216</sup> H. Räisänen, "Paul's Conversion and the Development of His View of the Law", *NTS* 37 (1987), 404-419; cf. *idem*, *Jesus, Paul and Torah*, 288-295; and *idem*, *Paul and the Law*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1987), 251-263. As noted in the footnote above, this same view has been expressed consistently by Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 251-266. Recently, S. Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 1-84, has criticised Dunn's view for separating (in chronological terms) Paul's call to be a missionary amongst the Gentiles from Paul's antinomian theology, especially in regard to the "works of the law" as Dunn defines them. However, Kim also accepts Dunn's view that Paul must have learned of Jesus' teaching and ministry from the Hellenists. In particular, Kim argues that Paul was heir to Jesus' disregard for the rules of the covenant (Mark 2:15-17; Matt 11:9/Luke 7:34) and his teaching critical of the food laws as Pharisaically interpreted (Mark 7:1-23/Matt 15:1-20), as they were directly relevant to the Gentile mission of the Hellenists (*Paul and the New Perspective*, 43; cf. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 92, 101).

30.<sup>217</sup> In that prior episode (9:27) Barnabas is seen as the only member of the Jerusalem church to offer his assistance and encouragement to the newly converted Saul (Paul), introducing Saul (Paul) to the Apostles and supporting Saul's cause. The story serves not only to present Barnabas as the champion of the newly converted Paul (9:27), but also to explain how Paul was forced to escape to Tarsus following a series of disputes with, and threats made on his life by, certain Greek-speaking Jews in Jerusalem (9:29-30). But this entire episode conflicts with Paul's own statements in Galatians (1:16-24) regarding his initial career in the Jesus movement, which says nothing of any association with Barnabas or of any attempt on his part to join the apostolic mission in Jerusalem.<sup>218</sup>

In view of Paul's silence, it seems difficult to maintain that either Acts 9:26-30 or Acts 11:25-26 represents solid historical information. J. Painter is doubtless correct in dismissing these episodes as yet another attempt by Luke to gloss over the ongoing dispute between the Hebrews and the Hellenists.<sup>219</sup> By having Paul join the work of the Hellenists at Antioch only at the request of Barnabas acting as the representative of the Jerusalem church, Luke both distances Paul from the Hellenists and averts any notion of a sustained conflict between the leaders of the churches in Jerusalem and Antioch. The more likely scenario is that Barnabas and Paul met when Paul made his way independently to Antioch following his visit to Cephas (Peter) in the year 36 C.E. when, as Paul himself states, he went to Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21). Moreover, it was in Antioch that Barnabas and Paul became both fast friends and convinced allies of the Gentile mission initiated by the Hellenists.<sup>220</sup> Paul did not return to Jerusalem until fourteen years later (Gal 2:1). During the intervening years he seems to have exercised his ministry in Antioch, where he quickly became a prominent figure and a leading proponent of the Law-free mission to the Gentiles.

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<sup>217</sup> Scholars who accept the historicity of this episode include Hengel, *Acts*, 101-102; J. Becker, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1993), 85; and B. Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (CBNTS 11; Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1978), 63.

<sup>218</sup> Haenchen, *Acts*, 335. See, also, Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 117-119; and J. Painter, *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition* (SPNT; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 46-48.

<sup>219</sup> Painter, *Just James*, 46. A similar observation is made by Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2:88, 91-92.

<sup>220</sup> Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 76.

It is at this point that we can properly speak of two distinct and independent movements within the primitive Church. On the one hand, we have a Law-observant Christian Judaism persisting in Jerusalem following the expulsion of the Hellenists, and on the other, a Law-Free Christianity developing in Antioch under the aegis of the Hellenist refugees who fled north in the wake of Stephen's martyrdom. With the defection of Barnabas, the conversion of its once zealous persecutor Paul, and the continuing success of the Law-free mission to the Gentiles in Antioch, the battle lines between the Law-free Christians and their Law-observant, Christian Jewish opponents were now clearly drawn and further skirmishes were soon to break out.

### 1.3. Conclusions

Jerusalem casts a long shadow over events at Galatia; and probably with good reason. Our available evidence suggests *a priori* that the origins of both Law-observant Christian Judaism and Law-Free Christianity must be traced back to Jerusalem in the years prior to the conversion of Paul. It must be admitted that our only significant repository of data on this period is the Acts of the Apostles, a secondary and somewhat suspect source. Nevertheless, despite these exegetical difficulties, Acts does provide some valuable information about the origins of the two missions. The picture Luke consistently paints in Acts 1-5 of the apostolic community is that of a group that saw no conflict between their devotion to Messiah Jesus and their devout adherence to the precepts of Jewish faith-practice. While much of this material is clearly tendentious, it is partly corroborated by Paul's statements in Galatians indicating that Peter and the apostolic circle focused their proclamation of the gospel exclusively on the wider Jewish population in Judea. Acts 6:1-6, however, marks a defining moment in Church history, describing the first instance of a factional conflict that must have occurred early on in the life of the Jerusalem church.

This conflict involved two competing groups whom Luke labels the Hellenists (οἱ ἑλληνισταὶ) and the Hebrews (οἱ ἑβραῖοι). Luke's account of this dispute is short on details. But an analysis of his material in conjunction with Paul's letters and other contemporary texts suggest that this dispute led to the advent of two distinct liturgical groupings within the Jerusalem church, each with its own language, its own Scriptures, its own worship services, its own leadership group, and even its own missionary fields. Consequently,

within the overall context of Luke's storyline the Hellenists' conflict with their Hebrew co-religionists effects a significant turning point, serving to demarcate the Law-observant mission to the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 1-5) from the Law-free mission in Samaria (Acts 8:1-40) and Syrian Antioch (Acts 11:19-26). The attention Luke devotes to the whole Stephen affair, the detail with which he recounts the advent of the Samaritan and Gentile missions resulting from the persecution that Stephen's martyrdom unleashed, underline the paradigmatic significance of the dispute between the Hebrews and Hellenists at Jerusalem and later in Samaria and Antioch. While Luke attempts to gloss over the conflict-ridden character of these episodes, and we are at a loss to adequately explain why the divisions occurred in the first place, these difficulties should neither force us to dismiss the entire Hellenists' story-cycle as a pure Lukan invention, nor delude us into the opinion that the clash was a short-lived squabble over trivial financial matters. On the contrary, we have demonstrated in this chapter that a careful review of all Luke's material on the Hebrews and the Hellenists reveals explicit evidence of a sustained conflict between the two groups. Thus, it seems clear that here we find the origins of a controversy over Law-observance that would continue to shape developments in the early Church in the coming decades.

## Chapter 2

### THE BACKGROUND TO THE CRISIS:

#### ANTIOCH AND JERUSALEM

In this chapter we focus on Paul's report of his meeting with James, Peter and John in Jerusalem (Gal 2:1-10) and his bitter dispute with Peter, Barnabas and the James party at Antioch (Gal 2:11-14). Paul's record of these two events in Galatians plays a significant role in Paul's defence against the onslaught of his opponents at Galatia and, therefore, these two disputes appear to present the immediate background to the Galatian crisis. As noted in the Introduction, most commentators argue that there would seem to be here in Paul's account of the Jerusalem and Antiochene incidents a clear reflection of possible claims by the Galatian troublemakers that Paul, like they, had similarly received both the gospel and their commission to preach it by way of Jerusalem.<sup>221</sup> Before we can adequately address this argument, we must first attempt to recover the historical details of the Jerusalem and Antiochene meetings from the available sources.

In reconstructing the historical circumstances surrounding these two disputes at Jerusalem and Antioch, Paul's record must remain our primary source. However, it is widely recognised that Luke probably supplies a further, albeit late and secondary, account of the Jerusalem meeting in Acts 15:1-29. There are significant differences between the two reports, and neither Luke nor Paul furnishes a complete exposé of the events that brought Paul and his contingent from Antioch to Jerusalem.<sup>222</sup> Furthermore, Acts contains no parallel report of the so-called "Incident at Antioch" (Gal 2:11-14). Consequently,

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<sup>221</sup> See, for example, Bruce, *Galatians*, 26; Betz, *Galatians*, 64-66; Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 97-98; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 36, 42, 44-45, 61-62; Dunn, *Galatians*, 72-78; Martyn, *Galatians*, 117; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 25; and Perkins, *Abraham's Divided Children*, 12.

<sup>222</sup> See the discussion and extensive bibliography on the subject in Betz, *Galatians*, 80-83. A succinct outline of both the agreements and the differences can be found in Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 171-173. See also Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 13-20.

scholars remain divided on issues concerning the chronology and order of these divisive events in Jerusalem and Antioch, the number and nature of the various incidents that contributed to these disputes, and the ultimate outcome of this sequence of conflicts. As with the foregoing chapter, when we dealt with the advent and early progress of the Jesus movement in Jerusalem and then Antioch, close critical analysis is necessary if we are to tease out the various threads of historical reminiscence from the tapestries of the Pauline and Lukan accounts of these conflicts.

## **2.1. Historical Background**

Before we can effectively tackle the issues concerning the Lukan and Pauline accounts of the Jerusalem Council and the Antioch dispute, we must first consider events that preceded and probably also precipitated these two divisive episodes. The evidence of both Paul and Luke suggests that two significant developments occurred just prior to the Council that were to have profound effects on the outcome of that meeting and the subsequent controversy at Antioch. The first concerns the changing role of James at Jerusalem, and the second entails the Antiochene initiative to expand the reach of the Law-free mission into Cyprus and Asia Minor. We shall deal with each of these in turn.

### ***2.1.1. The Ascendancy of James***

Galatians implies that between Paul's first visit to Cephas in Jerusalem and his second visit to attend the Council, James displaced Peter as head of the community in Jerusalem. Both Paul and Luke bear testimony to this transition. We saw in the previous chapter that Acts (1-5) clearly presents Peter and the Twelve as the initial leadership of the Jerusalem church. The priority of Peter is confirmed by Paul in Galatians (1:18), which suggests that when Paul first travelled to Jerusalem three years after his conversion Peter was still recognised as the leading authority at Jerusalem. Paul stayed fifteen days with Peter, and met with none of the other Apostles "except" (eijmh) Jesus' brother James (1:18-19).

The later part of the statement appears ambiguous. Some scholars have suggested that Paul's reference to having not seen any of the other Apostles except James indicates that, even at this early stage, the circle of the Twelve had completely disappeared, leaving

Peter as the sole leader of the church.<sup>223</sup> But this need not be the case. Paul's concern was to stress that the meeting was a private affair between himself and Cephas. Paul asserts that his first visit to Jerusalem was merely to get "acquainted" (*istorhsai*) with Peter (1:18). He did not meet with the whole church, let alone the full college of Apostles. Such was the fleeting nature of Paul's visit that he implies (1:21-22) that the majority of the Jerusalem church would not have even recognised his face if they had encountered him on the street. We cannot, therefore, draw any firm conclusions regarding the presence of the Twelve during this first visit to Jerusalem. By the time of his second visit for the Jerusalem Council the situation seems more certain.

In Paul's account of this conference there is no mention of the apostolic circle. Paul and Barnabas meet with a group Paul calls the "Pillars" (*stuloi*) – James, Cephas, and John (Gal 2:9). It is probably significant that here, unlike in the account of Paul's first visit, James is named first. This may indicate that by the time of the Council James was considered the pre-eminent leader of the Jerusalem church. Similarly, in the Lukan account of the Council both James and Peter contribute to the proceedings, but it is James who resolves the impasse and suggests the content of the decree sent forth to the Antiochene church (Acts 15:13-29).<sup>224</sup>

It is not entirely clear when this transition of power from Peter to James occurred. However, Luke does offer a possible explanation in Acts (12:1-19). In this pericope Luke relates that during the reign of Herod Agrippa I (37-44 C.E.) a persecution of the Jerusalem church was initiated by the king in which James, the brother of John, was martyred and

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<sup>223</sup> Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 41. See also W. Schmithals, *The Office of an Apostle* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), 81-82.

<sup>224</sup> Painter, *Just James*, 42-44, 54-57, 105-158 has recently argued that this data need not imply a change in leadership. Relying on later patristic evidence that identifies James as the first bishop of Jerusalem, Painter contends that Luke has intentionally glossed over the fact that James was always the leader of the Jerusalem community while, even in Acts, Peter's role is seen more in terms of apostolic mission. One might, however, question the methodology that seeks to read later patristic evidence back into the apostolic period. Furthermore, one must challenge the notion that Peter's role in Acts is limited only to mission. Peter does make all the major missionary speeches in the initial chapters of Acts (2:14-40; 3:12-26; 4:8-12), and it is Peter who makes missionary journeys to Samaria (in the company of John) and Caesarea, where he is credited with the conversion of Cornelius (8:14-25; 9:32-11:18). But Peter is also the one who appears to have inaugurated and initially administered the Jerusalem church, to have initiated and directed the election of Matthias to reconstitute the circle of the Twelve (1:15-26), and to have disciplined Ananias and Sapphira for their fraudulent behaviour (5:3-9). It may be true that the Lukan narrative in Acts is a synthetic creation of various source materials and Luke's own theological bias. But there does not seem to be any justifiable reason to argue that Luke was keen to cover James' initial leadership while at the same time eager to credit James with a central role in later events, especially the Apostolic Council which is so pivotal to Luke's story.

Peter was arrested and imprisoned. After a miraculous breakout (12:7-11) Peter, pausing only to send word of his escape to “James and the brothers”, fled Jerusalem to an undesignated locale (12:17). This account makes it clear that the James referred to is the same James, the brother of the Lord, who figures in Galatians (1:19; 2:9, 12) and later in Acts (15:13-21; 21:18). This is confirmed by the elimination of the only other conspicuous James, the brother of John, via the latter’s execution. We might assume that the term “brothers” refers to the constituents of the Jerusalem church as a whole. However, the close association of these brothers with James raises the possibility that Luke is referring to Jesus’ brothers as a group (cf. Acts 21:17; Jn 2:12; 7:3, 5, 10). James, by virtue of being the eldest (Mk 6:3) and a recipient of a post-resurrection christophany (1 Cor 15:7), was clearly the principal figure in the circle of Jesus’ brothers.<sup>225</sup> If Luke is here drawing on reliable information then it seems that the family of Jesus, led by James, assumed the administration of the church in the wake of Peter’s departure.<sup>226</sup> Further, the evidence of both Acts and Galatians suggests that James maintained his authoritative role even when Peter returned, which probably occurred at some stage after the death of Herod (44 C.E.) as related in Acts (12:19b-23).<sup>227</sup>

R. R. Hann has suggested that James’ rise to power was probably engineered with the support of the priestly (Acts 6:7) and Pharisaic (Acts 15:5) members of the Jerusalem community.<sup>228</sup> Hann’s view is supported by the accounts of the martyrdom of James (c. 62 C.E.). There are a number of problems associated with some of the records of James’ death

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<sup>225</sup> Painter, *Just James*, 43.

<sup>226</sup> It has been noted that the preceding episode in Acts 11:27-30 has famine relief sent from Antioch to “the elders” at Jerusalem. This has been read as indicating a change in the leadership of the Jerusalem community from the circle of the Twelve to a council of elders, and the present episode signals James’ assumption of the leadership of that council. The same situation is present in Acts 21:17, where Paul reports to James and the elders. See Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Church”, 439-440.

<sup>227</sup> So Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 44-52, who argues that the creedal statement in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 represents a synthesis of two “legitimising formulae”; one of which places Peter at the head of the Twelve as the first recipients of post-resurrection Christophanies (15:5); and the second, which has James listed first before “all the Apostles” (15:7). Lüdemann contends that these rival traditions could only have arisen in Jerusalem in the midst of the power struggle between the supporters of Peter and James. See also Hengel, *Acts*, 95; and Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 82.

<sup>228</sup> R. R. Hann, “Judaism and Jewish Christianity in Antioch: Charisma and Conflict in the First Century”, *JRH* 14 (1987), 341-360 (344-345).



(e.g. Eusebius, *H.E.* 2:23), which are late, idealised, and in part historically incredible.<sup>229</sup> However, a more objective account is provided by Josephus (*Ant.* 20:197-203). According to Josephus' information, which is common to all other reports of the incident, James was tried and stoned at the sole instigation of the High Priest Ananus the Younger, whom Josephus (*Ant.* 20:199) describes as "rash and daring" and a sympathiser with the Sadducees. Accordingly, Ananus' execution of James was opposed by many of those citizens of Jerusalem who were "faithful to the Law and highly respected" (*Ant.* 20:201) – a description which many scholars believe best fits the Pharisees, the traditional political opponents of the High Priestly family and its Sadducean supporters.<sup>230</sup>

Connections between the Pharisees and the earliest Jerusalem church have been noted. Acts 15:5 suggests that from its earliest years the Jerusalem church proved attractive to many Pharisees. By the time of the Jerusalem Council their numbers had increased to the point where they constituted a distinct sub-grouping within the fledgling Jesus movement at Jerusalem. Moreover, it is the Pharisaic membership of the Jerusalem church who are credited with leading the opposition against the delegates of the Gentile mission at the Council. Given the role played by the Pharisees in Acts, it would seem *a priori* that the Pharisees were the most likely group in Jewish society to have later denounced Ananus' punitive action against James.<sup>231</sup> This may add further weight to Hann's argument that James' ascendancy was partly engineered by members of the Jerusalem community who desired to enforce strict adherence to the Jewish Law upon all members of the Jesus movement.

The notion that James may have been supported by members of the Jesus movement who favoured strict Law-observance is confirmed by Luke's account of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35) and Paul's report of the subsequent dispute at Antioch (Gal 2:11-14). In these episodes, as we shall see presently, Luke implies that the Law-

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<sup>229</sup> See further Painter, *Just James*, 118-142. Also Conzelmann, *History of Primitive Christianity*, 60-62; Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 62-63; and Trocmé, *The Childhood of Christianity*, 2-27. See also R. Crotty, "Just James in the History of Early Christianity", *ABR* 44 (1996), 42-52.

<sup>230</sup> So Painter, *Just James*, 138-141; Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 62; and Crotty, "Just James", 44.

<sup>231</sup> The account in Eusebius, which derives from Hegesippus, attributes James' martyrdom to the scribes and the Pharisees rather than the High Priest and his party. But Crotty, "Just James", 45, is probably right to see this as a later addition to the tradition when Christian invective tended to present the Pharisees as the perennial opponents of Jesus and the early Church.

observant agitators who initiated the controversy in Antioch that led to the conference in Jerusalem originated from Jerusalem (Acts 15:24). Similarly, Paul explicitly links James to the pro-circumcision putsch, which derived from Jerusalem and subsequently brought further problems to the Gentile mission at Antioch (Gal 2:12).

The picture of James that emerges from all of these sources is that of an able politician and a strict adherent of the Mosaic Law, who having consolidated his authority over the Law-observant, Christian-Jewish church in Jerusalem would have been keen to extend both his authority and his Law-observant policy over the Christian communities in the Diaspora.<sup>232</sup> We might even speculate that one of the reasons for James' initial claim to leadership at the expense of Peter was that Peter had in the past failed to resolve the ongoing problem of the Law-free mission of the Hellenists at Antioch.<sup>233</sup> Whatever the value of such speculation, it will become clear that James played a central role in attempting to force Law-observance on the Law-free Antiochene community. Therefore, his rise to power at Jerusalem was an important contributing factor in the advent and progress of the controversies that developed prior to, and continued during, the Council and the later Antiochene conflict.

### ***2.1.2. The Expansion of the Gentile Mission***

This brings us to our second point. Luke claims that, at the time of James' rise to power at Jerusalem, the Hellenists' community at Antioch embarked on a large-scale mission to widen the boundaries of their Law-free mission. In Acts (13:1-14:26), Luke describes an extended mission on the part of Barnabas and Paul into Cyprus and on to southern Asia Minor, in the locales of Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and the nearby Pisidian Antioch. It is most unlikely that this was the only mission sent forth from Antioch, and we might reason that there were numerous other missionary excursions into the territories surrounding the Hellenists' foundation at Syrian Antioch. We might speculate that when news of this development reached Jerusalem it would have been met with shock, and we must further surmise that James would have gathered even more support for his campaign to reclaim the renegade Hellenists for Law-observant Christian Judaism.

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<sup>232</sup> Trocmé, *The Childhood of Christianity*, 23-27.

<sup>233</sup> Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 82.

The question of chronology is crucial here. Some scholars have argued that it is historically more credible to assume that the advent of the mission to the Gentiles occurred after the Jerusalem Council (Gal 2:1-10; Acts 15:5-35) where the representatives of Antioch and Jerusalem agreed on the ground rules governing a Law-free outreach to Gentiles.<sup>234</sup> On this view, all the missionary journeys occurred after the Council and, therefore, Luke has incorrectly placed the account of the mission to Cyprus and Asia Minor before his report of the conference. Another variation on the same theme is the hypothesis that the meeting with the Pillar Apostles described in Galatians 2:1-10 is to be identified with the famine visit detailed in Acts 11:27-30.<sup>235</sup>

In favour of the latter view is the number of apparent parallels between Luke's account of the famine visit and Paul's report of the Jerusalem conference. The conferences reported in Galatians 2:1-10 and Acts 11:27-30 are both presented as second visits by Paul to Jerusalem. In Galatians (2:2), Paul speaks of having gone to Jerusalem because of a revelation. In Acts (11:27-28), we are told that prophets came to Antioch from Jerusalem. One of the prophets, Agabus, predicted that a future, widespread famine would afflict the entire Roman world. In the light of this prediction, the Antiochene church entrusts Barnabas and Paul with famine relief for the Jerusalem church. Similarly in Galatians (2:1, 9), it is Paul and Barnabas who travel to Jerusalem as representatives of the community at Antioch. Although Luke says nothing of any discussion about the legitimacy of the Gentile mission, proponents of this theory argue that an agreement on that issue must have been worked out then. Moreover, this agreement was probably like that of Galatians 2:9-10, but unlike that of Acts 15:28-29, in that it laid no restrictions on the pursuit of the Law-free mission amongst the Gentiles.

If we accept this scenario then it is possible to suggest that Paul's letter to Galatia was written after the meeting described in Galatians 2:1-10, which coincides with Luke's famine visit (Acts 11:27-30), but before that described in Acts 15:5-35. Rearranging the

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<sup>234</sup> See Haenchen, *Acts*, 439; G. S. Duncan, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (MNTC; London: Hodder, 1934), xxii-xiii; S. D. Toussaint, "The Chronological Problem of Galatians 2:1-10", *BSac* 120 (1963), 334-340 (338-339); and D. R. Catchpole, "Paul, James and the Apostolic Decree", *NTS* 23 (1977), 428-444 (442).

<sup>235</sup> So Marshall, *Acts*, 242-247; and Bruce, *Galatians*, 19-32. But also suggested by Duncan, *Galatians*, xxii; Toussaint, "The Chronological Problem", 339; Catchpole, "Paul, James and the Apostolic Decree", 432-434; Barrett, *Acts*, 1:560-566; and G. Lüdemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology* (London: SCM Press, 1984), 75.

order of events in this manner would go a long way to resolving many of problems arising from the ostensible discrepancies that occur if we associate Acts 15:5-35 with Galatians 2:1-10. However, arguments supporting the view that one should equate Acts 11:27-30 with Galatians 2:1-10 can be challenged on a number of points.

First, despite appearances to the contrary this proposition depends on a fairly uncritical reading of Acts. We are asked to accept that while Luke may have got the chronology of events wrong, or omitted certain salient facts concerning Paul's visits to Jerusalem, he is basically correct in presenting a close relationship between the two communities in Jerusalem and Antioch. In his account of the famine visit (Acts 11:27-30), Luke pictures Barnabas and Paul as travelling from Antioch to Jerusalem and staying there for some time. During their stay, Herod Agrippa I (37-44 C.E.) instigates the aforementioned persecution of the Jerusalem church, which claims the life of the apostle James (the brother of John) and leads to the arrest of Peter (12:1-25). It is only after the death of Herod (44 C.E.) that Barnabas and Paul return to Antioch (12:25). However, there is no suggestion in the account of Galatians 2:1-10 that Paul's second visit to Jerusalem was an extended stay, and Paul says nothing of any of the events associated with the persecution described by Luke. While some scholars are prepared to attribute a measure of historical credibility to some details of the story, most assign the episode as it stands to the creative hand of Luke.<sup>236</sup>

A close reading of the pericope reveals that in composing this episode Luke appears to have stitched together disparate traditional elements that belong later in the story of Paul. The motif of Agabus travelling from Jerusalem to Antioch parallels a later mention (21:10-11) of the same prophet who foresaw Paul's demise. So too Paul's delivery of aid to Jerusalem appears to reflect traditions concerning the collection Paul made for Jerusalem during his missionary endeavours in Asia Minor and Greece (1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:1-13; Rom 15:31). Luke makes no explicit reference to the collection in his later account of Paul's final visit to Jerusalem, but it is implicit in Paul's statement that the purpose of this

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<sup>236</sup> Haenchen, *Acts*, 376-379; and Conzelmann, *Acts*, 138-139. Somewhat less sceptical is Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 138-139. According to his reconstruction, while one must rule out the story on the basis of Pauline chronology, this does not preclude the possibility that Luke's famine visit report reflects traditions concerning early collaboration between the churches in Jerusalem and Antioch.

latter visit was “to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings” (Acts 24:17). Luke fails to elaborate on this statement, for reasons that will be discussed further in the final chapter. For the moment we need only observe that in transferring this motif of Paul bringing aid to Jerusalem to the earlier famine visit Luke lends support to his consistent view of an amicable relationship between the different movements of the primitive Church. In the episode of the famine visit, the Antiochene church via the embassy of Paul and Barnabas are seen to extend their support to the Jerusalem church in a time of need characterised by both famine and persecution. The reality is, however, that Luke’s famine visit is probably little more than a literary fiction, which clearly runs counter to Paul’s own claims regarding his early commerce with Jerusalem in Galatians.

Second, accepting the view that all the missionary activities of the Antiochene community occurred after the Council assumes that the two Christian movements in Antioch and Jerusalem were in regular contact. However, if we proceed on the assumption that they were not in frequent contact or more likely, as I argued in the previous chapter, in outright conflict, it seems improbable that the Hellenists at Antioch would have sought the sanction of the Hebrews at Jerusalem prior to embarking on further missions to spread their Law-free gospel. Paul designates a significant chronological gap between his first two visits to Jerusalem; the first to Cephas in 36 C.E. (Gal 1:18-20) and the second for the Apostolic Council in 48 C.E., which bears sufficient testimony to the independence of the two missions. Moreover, if our prior reconstructions of events that led first to the split between the Hebrews and the Hellenists, and second, to James’ ascendancy at Jerusalem, are fundamentally accurate, it stretches the bounds of reason to assume that James and the Jerusalem church would have been inclined to condone a further expansion of the Gentile mission. Rather, we must assume that James and the Hebrew remnant at Jerusalem would have viewed this development with alarm, and would have been more inclined to act against the widening influence of the Hellenists than to condone it. If we accept this scenario then we must also accept that the Antiochene initiative to expand the spread of the Law-free gospel into Cyprus and Asia Minor in the mid-forties must have contributed directly to the calling of the Jerusalem Council, which met some four years later.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Becker, *Apostle to the Gentiles*, 87; and Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 78-79.

Finally, the most obvious problem with placing the mission to Cyprus and southern Asia Minor after the Council described in Galatians is that this reconstruction of affairs fails to fit Paul's chronology of events. According to Acts (15:39-40; cf. Gal 2:13), Paul parted company with Barnabas soon after the Council. Therefore, it seems highly improbable that Paul would have embarked on an extended mission to Cyprus and Asia Minor with Barnabas after their falling out. One way to resolve the dilemma is to suggest that the mission to Cyprus and Asia Minor occurred between the Council and the dispute at Antioch that led to Paul's split with Barnabas. But this leaves little time for Paul and Barnabas to complete a mission of the magnitude implied by Acts 13:4-14:25. Consequently, Luke's chronology at this juncture fits our available information best.

We must imagine that following his first visit to Cephas in 36 C.E., Paul went to Antioch where he became aligned with the Hellenists' Law-free mission to the Gentiles and that some time during the mid-forties he engaged in a series of missionary endeavours in the company of Barnabas. Paul makes no explicit mention of this mission. However, we shall argue in the next chapter that there may be grounds for designating Galatians as a letter addressed to communities evangelised during the mission described in Acts 13-14. Should that possibility prove fundamentally correct, this alone might explain why the Jerusalem Council figures prominently in the opening chapters of Galatians. Leaving that issue aside for the moment, we must now turn to an examination of the Jerusalem Council.

## **2.2. The Jerusalem Council**

In Galatians 2:1-10 Paul describes his second visit to Jerusalem, the purpose of which was to have a conference with the "Pillars", James, Peter and John. It is usually accepted that Acts 15:1-35 supplies a further report of this meeting. As we noted at the outset of the chapter, attempts to harmonise the two accounts have met with varying degrees of success. There is a remarkable agreement between the two reports, at least in terms of when, where, and with whom Paul's meeting occurred. But there are also significant differences. We might suspect that Luke's account reflects a later perspective and serves his own

theological agenda. However, despite being a first-hand report, Paul's account appears to be no less tendentious.<sup>238</sup>

What is immediately apparent about Paul's report of the Council is its tortured syntax. Thoughts left incomplete (2:4, 6a) and lengthy parenthetical explanations (2:6, 8) give the impression that Paul is narrating an event, the outcome of which did not wholly conform to his present line of argument against his opponents at Galatia. We will speak more of this in our next chapter. For the moment we are interested in eliciting historical information about the Council, the reasons for its calling, the identity of the protagonists involved, and the outcome of the deliberations. In this respect, the Lukan account in Acts 15 provides another perspective from which to view, analyse, and augment the various relevant facets of Paul's report.

### ***2.2.1. Reasons for the Calling of the Council***

The first issue that presents itself is the question of purpose. What was the occasion for the conference in Jerusalem and why was Paul there? In Galatians 2:1-10, Paul reports that after fourteen years he went up to confer with the Jerusalem Apostles "in response to a revelation" (*kata; apokaluyin*) (2:2) to "set before them the gospel I preach among the Gentiles". He does not make clear whether this revelation was to himself directly or to someone else. It will become clear presently that the Council was basically a meeting in Jerusalem between delegates of the two centres of the Jesus movement, with representatives from the Antiochene Hellenists travelling to confer with the Hebrew remnant of the Jerusalem church. So it may be possible that Paul is making reference here to some numinous experience, revelation or prophetic pronouncement mediated by one or more other members of the Antiochene community. Paul does not supply sufficient information for us to make any definitive judgement. Despite the variety of possibilities,

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<sup>238</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 81, observes that the "purpose of his report was not to give an objective eyewitness account, but to use it as proof in his defence. This must have led to a certain selectivity and tendency in his account, but does not necessarily render the facts reported unreliable". Similarly, Bornkamm, *Paul*, 32; and Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography*, 132-133. See also J. T. Sanders, "Paul's 'Autobiographical' Statements in Galatians 1-2", *JBL* 85 (1966), 335-343 (343), who says that "Paul does not give an *historical* but rather an *historic* account", which is meant primarily to signal the significance and the relevance of the Council's deliberations to the matters at hand.

however, it seems obvious enough that Paul intends to emphasise that his visit to Jerusalem was primarily in obedience to God, not at the behest of any human authority.<sup>239</sup>

This appeal to revelation maintains an earlier theme in Galatians that stressed the tension between revelation and human tradition. From the very opening lines of the letter, Paul claims that he is an apostle “sent neither from human authorities (*ouk apl ajqrwpwn*), nor by human commission” (*di ajqrwpou*) (1:1). Similarly, the source of his gospel is not “of human origin” (*kata ajqrwpou*), nor did he “consult with flesh and blood” (*prosaneqemhn sarki; kai; aiati*) following his initial revelation of Jesus Christ that sent him forth on his mission (1:11-16). We need therefore to be careful of reading too much into Paul’s claim that it was via a revelation that he went to Jerusalem. We have already noted the inherent problems in trying to tie Galatians 2:1-10 with the famine visit detailed in Acts 11:27-30 on the basis of parallel references to revelation (Gal 2:2; Acts 11:27-28). Luke had his own theological and ideological reasons for creating the famine visit story and appropriating motifs from other available materials on Paul. Similarly, here, Paul has his eye on the situation at Galatia and, as we shall see in the next chapter, his appeal to revelation serves to further underline his independence from the “human authorities” at Jerusalem.

Next, we may safely dismiss Paul’s remark that the meeting was a private affair focused solely on Paul and his peculiar gospel message. It is unlikely that at this stage in his career that Paul was acting independently of the Antiochene community. Paul explicitly mentions the presence of Barnabas at the conference, which indicates that it was not Paul’s ministry alone that was in question.<sup>240</sup> Acts (15:2) speaks of a delegation that included not only Paul and Barnabas but also “some others” (*ti naß a[louß*) from Antioch. Paul (Gal 2:3) specifically names the Gentile Titus as one among that deputation. Similarly, the agreement worked out by the delegates at the meeting is sealed with the “right hand of fellowship”, which is extended by James, Peter and John to both Paul and Barnabas (2:9). We must conclude on the basis of this data that, despite Paul’s rather individualistic

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<sup>239</sup> That this was Paul’s emphasis is generally recognized: for example, Schmithals, *Paul and James*, 39; Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 102; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 47; and Smiles, *The Gospel*, 38. See also P. Stuhlmacher, *Das paulinische Evangelium*, 2 vols (FRLANT 95; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 1:67.

<sup>240</sup> So Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 16-33. But see also Haenchen, *Acts*, 464; and Martyn, *Galatians*, 195-196.



perspective, he, Barnabas, Titus, and probably others went to Jerusalem as official representatives of the Antiochene church. This brings us back to the question with which we began this present discussion – why did Paul go to Jerusalem?

Paul says it was via a revelation; but surely this alone does not explain the precise reasons for the visit, since it was clearly a summit meeting between Antioch and Jerusalem. Acts 15:1 suggests that the Jerusalem Council was preceded by an earlier controversy at Antioch. So it might appear that other factors must be taken into account. There seems no reason to doubt Luke's assertion that the conference was precipitated by certain men from Judea who had previously arrived in Antioch teaching the Gentile converts to the movement that they must adhere to the Mosaic Law in order to be saved. Paul speaks of "false brothers" (*yeudadelphoi*) who "had been secretly brought in (*pareisakto*) to spy on the freedom (*kataskophsai thn eλευtherian*) we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves (*katadoulw*)" (Gal 2:4). Presumably, Paul is implying that these false brothers were allowed access to his meeting with the Pillars and that they were advocating that the Gentile members of the Christian community must submit to the demands of the Law. Elsewhere in Galatians, Paul claims that Jerusalem is in slavery (*douleu*) with her children to the Law (Gal 4:25) and, therefore, draws a direct analogy between Law-observance and slavery. Luke confirms that the problem concerning the demands of the pro-circumcision putsch were raised at the meeting in Jerusalem, this time in the shape of the Pharisaic members of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:5). The constituents of the "Pharisee party" demanded that "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the Law of Moses" (15:5). So while Luke and Paul agree that the issues at stake concerned the imposition of Law-observance upon the Gentile converts, they offer ambiguous data about the location of the initial dispute. Accordingly, it is not entirely clear as to whether these false brothers appeared at Antioch prior to the Jerusalem Conference or at the meeting itself.<sup>241</sup>

In Galatians the appearance of the false brothers is related to the question of whether or not the Gentile Titus, who accompanied Paul and Barnabas, should be

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<sup>241</sup> That Paul implies that the problem appeared first in Antioch is accepted by a majority of scholars; see, for example: Haenchen, *Acts*, 467; Hengel, *Acts*, 113; Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 50-51; Betz, *Galatians*, 89-90; and Dunn, *Galatians*, 89-90.

circumcised. The reference to the false brothers being “secretly brought in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus” clearly suggests that the incursion of the false brothers occurred at Jerusalem. But this need not preclude an earlier infiltration by the false brothers into the Law-free community at Antioch.<sup>242</sup> As noted previously, it is difficult to accept at face value Paul’s claim that it was only via a revelation that he came to Jerusalem with a delegation from Antioch. It makes eminent sense to assume that the dispute must have begun in Antioch and continued in Jerusalem, and this reading is to be preferred to Paul’s claim that he went to Jerusalem only because of a revelation.<sup>243</sup> We must note that Antioch sent a delegation *to* Jerusalem to seek a ruling on the issues, and this must add weight to the speculation that the Antiochene church was seeking to resolve the issue at its source. This raises the further issue of authority. Under whose authority were the troublemakers acting?

Some scholars have been inclined to view the false brothers as non-Christian Jews, who sought to pressure the Jerusalem church into acting against the Law-free mission in Antioch.<sup>244</sup> This reading fails to appreciate the fact that Paul does not normally imply deception on the part of non-Christian Jews, whom elsewhere he calls “my brothers...according to the flesh” (Rom 9:3). It is worthy of note that, regardless of where Paul encountered them, he harbours a bitterness towards these opponents because they claim to be brothers in Christ Jesus (Gal 2:14; cf. 1:22), while at the same time attempting to undermine him.<sup>245</sup> Moreover, given that Paul later equates the false brothers with James’ pro-circumcision party at Antioch (Gal 2:12) it seems unlikely that he has non-Christian Jews in mind.<sup>246</sup>

To be fair to the sources, Luke claims that one must distinguish the position of the pro-circumcision putsch from that of James, Peter and the bulk of the Jerusalem church.

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<sup>242</sup> Dunn, *Galatians*, 97. Similarly, Martyn, *Galatians*, 218, notes the use of the language of espionage suggests that the false brothers had previously carried out reconnaissance “by slipping into meetings of the daughter churches of the church of Antioch, thus playing a significant role in precipitating the Jerusalem meeting itself”.

<sup>243</sup> It is not beyond reason that both explanations are true. It is possible that the decision to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem was reached by the prophetic leaders of the church in Antioch (cf. Acts 13:1-3) in response to the crisis engendered by the arrival of the false brothers in Antioch – see Haenchen, *Acts*, 464; and Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 37.

<sup>244</sup> Most notably and recently, Nanos, *Irony*, 13, 130-131. See also Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, 14; and Bruce, *Galatians*, 131.

<sup>245</sup> So Betz, *Galatians*, 88-89; Martyn, *Galatians*, 218; and Perkins, *Abraham’s Divided Children*, 50-51.

<sup>246</sup> Esler, *Galatians*, 131; and Martyn, *Galatians*, 218.

Paul is also keen to drive a wedge between the Pillar Apostles and the false brothers who are presented as infiltrators with no rights at the Jerusalem meeting, which is seen as a private consultation (Gal 2:4). But this hardly exonerates the Jerusalem Apostles of complicity in the events surrounding to the Council.<sup>247</sup> We noted earlier in our examination of the Acts' account of the Hellenists, that on two previous occasions the authorities in Jerusalem had sent envoys to Samaria (Acts 8:14) and Antioch (11:22) with the intention of halting the spread of the Law-free gospel. So too here in Acts, it seems *a priori* unlikely that the troublemakers who arrived in Antioch were acting independently. *A posteriori*, the fact that both they and representatives from the Antiochene community returned to Jerusalem to seek a ruling on the dispute indicates that the troublemakers were originally acting on the initiative of the Jerusalem church. Similarly, it seems difficult to explain Galatians 2:4, that the false brothers were permitted a voice in the official proceedings of the apostolic summit, if they did not enjoy the confidence of the Jerusalem leadership. The clear implication of these statements is that the false brothers were not some fringe, ultra-conservative minority within the Jerusalem church, as both Luke and Paul attempt to paint them, but rather part of the mainstream that had the full backing and authority of the apostolic triumvirate of James, Peter and John.<sup>248</sup>

Further explicit evidence of this is found in Acts (15:24), where Luke has James write to the Antiochene church concerning those who “went out from us” and were responsible for disturbing and unsettling the community at Antioch. Luke attempts to blunt the force of this statement by adding that these people acted without James' official commission. However, we know of Luke's tendency to gloss over any evidence of hostility between the Hebrews at Jerusalem and the Hellenists at Antioch. So we might justifiably dismiss this caveat as a pure Lukan invention, which leaves us with the conclusion that one of Luke's sources indicated that those who caused the disturbance at Antioch had made their way north with the official sanction of James and the Jerusalem church. This view may be supported by our earlier discussion of James, which suggested that he was both a

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<sup>247</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 51-52; Martyn, *Galatians*, 195, 211-212; and Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 80.

<sup>248</sup> So Käsemann, “Legitimität”, 490, who notes that only the authority of the Jerusalem church would have had sufficient weight to undermine the authority that Paul wielded in his own churches. See also Martyn, *Galatians*, 18 and 218, who follows Käsemann.

capable strategist and a strict adherent of the Mosaic Law, who would have been keen to extend both his authority and his Law-observant policy over the renegade church in Antioch. More significantly, James' support for the false brothers may find a ready parallel in the Antiochene dispute (Gal 2:11-14) where agents of James opened a second front in the struggle between Jerusalem and Antioch. Therefore, we are probably correct in assuming that, in this case also, James was responsible for sending those the troublemakers to Antioch with the intention of halting the spread of the radical gospel of the Hellenists.

On this reading of the evidence in Acts, we might better comprehend Paul's statement in Galatians 2:2, which suggests that fear played a significant part in his motivation to go to Jerusalem suggests. Antioch may have felt it necessary to send delegates to Jerusalem for fear that the "Pillars", via the agency of those whom Paul calls "false brothers", might harm or hinder their evangelising efforts, both in the present congregations founded by Antioch in Syria, Cyprus, Asia Minor and elsewhere, and also in any future foundations. Paul explains that his purpose at the meeting was to lay before those of repute in Jerusalem the gospel he preached among the Gentiles for fear that all his preceding missionary activity might be undone; or, as Paul puts it, "lest, by any means, I should run, or had run, in vain". It seems then, that what drove Paul to Jerusalem was an apprehension that interference from the pro-circumcision putsch might undermine his missionary efforts. As we saw, Antioch had only recently embarked on a program to expand the reach of their Law-free mission amongst the Gentiles. The anxiety of the leadership at Antioch was for their missionary communities, which would certainly be jeopardised if Jerusalem continued to interfere in the Law-free outreach to the Gentiles. Such a continuing interference would also widen the schism between Antioch and Jerusalem, and every congregation would ultimately be placed in the position of having to choose between one gospel or the other – a decision that would undoubtedly split individual churches into separate Gentile and Jewish congregations.

Paul's fear and, by extension that of the Antiochene leadership, had a serious basis. Paul and the others from Antioch recognised that the apostolic authorities at Jerusalem had both the ability to invalidate the gospel upon which the Antiochene Gentile

mission was founded and the power to disrupt and even possibly destroy that mission.<sup>249</sup> A summit meeting between delegates from Antioch and the apostolic authorities at Jerusalem must have seemed the only reasonable path to an accommodation between the two communities. This seems the most likely reason why Paul went to Jerusalem. He went as a commissioned party with the Antiochene delegation, whose task was to negotiate a resolution of the differences that existed between Jerusalem and Antioch over the Gentile mission.

### 2.2.2. *The Meeting with James, Peter and John*

What transpired at this meeting between the Antiochene delegation and the Jerusalem church? Paul claims that despite the opposition of the false brothers, James and the other Pillars neither compelled Titus to be circumcised, nor decried the legitimacy of the gospel of uncircumcision, offering the right hand of *koinwnia* to Paul and Barnabas. Or in the exact terms of the agreement, the Pillar Apostles recognised the divine origin of the *eupaggelion thß akrobustiab* (2:7) Paul preached *eib ta:eanh* (2:8), as equal in status to the mission of Peter who exercised an equally God-given *apostolhn thß peritomhb* (2:7-8). The terms of this agreement as they are presented by Paul are ambiguous and tolerant of various interpretations. Commentators have identified three different ways of understanding the Jerusalem accord.

First, J. Painter has argued that the phrase *eib ta:eanh* (2:8) should be read not as exclusively restricting Paul's mission "to the Gentiles" in a purely racial or cultural sense, but inclusively "to all the nations", including Jews.<sup>250</sup> On this reading of Paul's report, the distinction between the two missions was drawn along *ideological* rather than *ethnic* lines. Painter argues that Paul is claiming that the Jerusalem church recognised the legitimacy of the Law-free gospel, and they agreed that Paul and the Antiochene Church were free to preach that gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike. Painter draws attention to the fact that throughout the letter, Paul demonstrates a clear hostility towards those who encroached on

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<sup>249</sup> That Paul's concern was for his churches, not the validity of his gospel, is the view of many interpreters: for example, Stuhlmacher, *Das paulinische Evangelium*, 1:85-88; Bornkamm, *Paul*, 38; Bruce, *Galatians*, 109; Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 102-103; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 49; Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 115; and G. Ebeling, *The Truth of the Gospel: An Exposition of Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 88.

<sup>250</sup> Painter, *Just James*, 61-62

his missions teaching a “different gospel” (1:6), which entailed a complete obedience to the Mosaic Law (3:10), circumcision (5:2-4; 6:12-13) and the observance of the Sabbath and the Jewish feast days (4:8-11). Thus we must assume that when Paul speaks of the distinction between his *eupaggelion thē akrobustia* (Gal 2:7) which he and the Antiochene community preached *eiō ta; eēnē* (2:8) and Peter’s *apostolēn thē peritomē* (2:7-8), he is suggesting that Jerusalem and Antioch agreed to disagree and go their separate ways. Therefore, when he later encounters agents of the Law-observant mission in Galatia, he complains that they have broken the Jerusalem agreement by attempting to proselytise those who had already converted to the Law-free gospel. In effect, if Painter is correct, this accord legitimised and consolidated the schism that already existed between Jerusalem and Antioch. There are, however, some inherent problems with this line of argument.

Reading Paul’s report of the outcome of the Jerusalem meeting as an agreement to divide the missionary field into two ideologically distinct movements is hardly equivalent to Paul’s later assertions that as a result “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything” (5:6; 6:15) and that in Christ “there is no longer Jew nor Greek” (3:28). Indeed, contrary to Painter view, the whole thrust of Paul’s argument in Galatians is to stress the unity of the Jesus movement, which is underlined by Paul’s explicit rejection of the notion that there might be two distinct gospels (1:6-9; 2:14). Even in his account of the Jerusalem Council, Paul is keen to emphasise the fellowship he shared with the Apostles. Important here is Paul’s use of the term *koinwnia*, which he introduces into the wording of the accord (2:9).

The term *koinwnia* and its cognates play an important part in Paul’s vocabulary, appearing thirteen times in Paul’s letters (1 Cor 1:9; 10:16; 2 Cor 6:14 8:4; 9:13; 13:13; Gal 2:9; Phil 1:5; 2:1; 3:10; Phlm 6).<sup>251</sup> The noun is used of the collection for the “Poor” in Jerusalem (Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:13). In 1 Corinthians (10:16) it is used of the Eucharist, and on other occasions it refers to the fellowship of believers with one another (Phil 1:5; Phlm 6), or with the Lord (1 Cor 1:9; Phil 3:10). In all these instances, Paul

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<sup>251</sup> Smiles, *The Gospel*, 83; and Esler, *Galatians*, 133.

appears to be thinking of the “fellowship” or the “sharing” that both expresses and facilitates unity and communion (Rom 15:26-27; Gal 6:6; cf. Acts 2:42-46; 4:32).

In the present context it is a reasonable assumption that Paul consciously chose to use *koinwnia* to describe the agreement reached at Jerusalem. Most commentaries concede that for Paul *koinwnia* is an apt choice, since the term serves first to exclude any notion of his own subjection to the authority of the apostolic triumvirate – the accord was one struck between equals and sealed with the “right hand of fellowship” (2:9). Second, within the context of the Galatian crisis, the use of *koinwnia* reminds the readers of the central theme of the letter, which is the fundamental unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ (3:28). Paul’s criticism of his opponents at Galatia stems from them having preached a message that Paul perceived, not as a legitimate competing gospel, but as a perversion of the one gospel of Christ (1:7). In this context it is difficult to maintain that Paul is presenting the agreement as an ideological division between two different gospels.

The second interpretation of the Jerusalem agreement holds that Paul is speaking of a *geographical* demarcation, whereby the Jerusalem church would continue to focus on the Jewish homeland while Antioch would have “the nations” outside Palestine as their mission field.<sup>252</sup> Advocates of this position argue that Paul speaks of his apostolate *among* the Gentiles rather than *to* the Gentiles (Gal 16; 2:2). By contrast, Peter’s ministry to the Jews appears to have been exercised almost exclusively in Palestine. When Peter does venture to Antioch, it seems that he neither exercised his apostolic ministry nor his authority as the erstwhile leader of the Jerusalem church. Following this line of argument, we would assume that Paul is claiming to have wrested from the apostolic authorities at Jerusalem recognition of Antioch’s exclusive warrant for missionary endeavours *outside* Palestine. However, once again there are some difficulties with this view also.

It seems improbable that in the long term the delegates of the Jerusalem church would have accepted any geographical demarcation between the Law-observant and the

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<sup>252</sup> E. de Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), 98. Similarly, Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 30.

Law-free missions at Jerusalem and Antioch, respectively.<sup>253</sup> The most obvious reason for such scepticism is that this agreement would have required James and the Jerusalem church to relinquish all previous claims to sole authority over the Christian mission, which amounted to an absolute reversal of their previous policy. What we know of James, and of the earlier attempts by Jerusalem to gain control in Antioch, renders this assumption improbable. James appears to have been a capable leader, whose political acumen had enabled him to wrest power from, and maintain his control over, the Jerusalem church and its erstwhile apostolic leadership. James does not seem to have been the type of character who would have readily accepted any diminution of his authority or any check on his plans to extend that authority over, what he must have perceived as a dissident and lawless faction of the Christian movement.

In any event, a strict geographical segregation of the mission fields would have been impractical, given that the vast majority of Jews were part of the Diaspora and lived outside Palestine.<sup>254</sup> An agreement of this kind would have limited the scope of the apostolic mission of Peter and the Jerusalem church, denying them access to Jewish communities and synagogues outside Palestine. More to the point, there is clear evidence that missionaries from Jerusalem did operate outside Palestine. In Paul's narrative on subsequent events (2:11-14) we find both Peter and others from Jerusalem active in Antioch. As we shall see presently, relations between Antioch and its Jerusalem visitors only become strained when Peter and the James party try to "force" the Gentile converts to Judaize (2:14), which Paul implies contravenes the Jerusalem accord. With that in mind, Paul's wording of the accord does not easily translate as a geographical demarcation of the mission fields.

The manner in which Paul juxtaposes his *eupaggelion th̄s akrobustias* (Gal 2:7) that he preached *eis ta; ēnē* (2:8) with Peter's *apostolēn th̄s peritomh̄s* (2:7-8) suggest that we are to read the terms as ethnic distinctions. Accordingly, we must read the agreement as a sanction allowing Paul and the Antiochene community evangelise Gentiles,

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<sup>253</sup> Several scholars have expressed reservations along these lines, most fully Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 83-88; and Martyn, *Galatians*, 208-211, 220-222. But see also Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 56; and Painter, *Just James*, 65-67.

<sup>254</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 142-143. See also Haenchen, *Acts*, 467.



while Peter, and by extension the Jerusalem church, would continue to focus on the Jews.<sup>255</sup> This makes perfect sense when we observe, as we shall see in the next section, that Paul's issue with the troublemakers at Antioch seems to have been primarily concerned with the "circumcision party" (2:12) overstepping their mandate by advocating Law-observance on the Gentiles. Thus, a more likely reading of Paul's report is that, on the one hand, Peter, James, and those whom Paul calls "false brothers" would continue to evangelise Jews, advancing a gospel of circumcision and Law-observance. On the other hand, Paul, Barnabas, and the Antiochene missionaries would continue to preach among the Gentiles a gospel free from the demand for circumcision. This constitutes the third view of Paul's report of the Council, and it is accepted by the majority of scholars.<sup>256</sup> However, while we might be inclined to acknowledge this view as an accurate representation of Paul's account of the agreement, we must also note that there is a good deal about the proceedings at the Council that Paul leaves unsaid.

Esler suggests that the language Paul employs to describe the Pillars as offering him and Barnabas "the right hand of fellowship" does not necessarily imply a unanimous and mutual agreement between equal partners.<sup>257</sup> Rather in the contemporary biblical literature, especially the Maccabees (1 Macc 6:58; 11:50, 62, 66; 13:45, 50; 2 Macc 4:34; 11:26; 12:11; 13:22; 14:19), "giving the right hand" refers to establishing a truce following the cessation of hostilities. The commander or superior party "gives the right hand" while the inferior, on occasion portrayed as the petitioner, takes it in recognition of his acceptance of the terms of the treaty. This makes it inherently difficult to read the accord as an agreement forged between equals who recognise each other's authority within clearly defined boundaries, be they ideological, geographical or even ethnic. Rather, the language

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<sup>255</sup> So Betz, *Galatians*, 100; Lüdemann, *Apostle to the Gentiles*, 72; and *idem*, *Opposition*, 37. Cf. Park, *Either Jew or Gentile*, 37.

<sup>256</sup> See, for example, Hengel, *Acts*, 114-121; Meeks and Wilken, *Jews and Christians*, 16-17; Bruce, *Galatians*, 119-124; Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 36-39; Meyer, *Early Christians*, 36-39; Achtemeier, *Quest*, 21-24; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 85-89; Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 35-38; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 56-61; Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*, 107-110; Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 107-115; and Becker, *Apostle to the Gentiles*, 90-92.

<sup>257</sup> Esler, *Galatians*, 298-299. See also Perkins, *Abraham's Divided Children*, 52, who follows Esler. Smiles, *The Gospel*, 48, makes the point that Paul's "qualification of *dexia* ("right hand") by *koinwnia* precludes the thought that those who 'gave the right hand' thereby demonstrated their superior position". Betz, *Galatians*, 100, also notes that *koinwnia* can be interpreted to mean "various forms of relationship, anything from unity to separation".

used by Paul seems to suggest that the outcome of the meeting was far from a decisive and clear-cut victory for Paul and the Antiochene delegation.

Paul's insistent assertions that he does not regard the Jerusalem Apostles as his superiors is probably meant to obscure the ambiguities inherent in the accord reached at Jerusalem. Esler's interpretation carries the military metaphor of espionage and conflict first introduced with reference to the false brothers over to the final accord with the Pillar Apostles, suggesting that any agreement would have been both fragile and conditional. Paul presents the agreement as final and binding on all participants. But the Jerusalem delegates may have understood it in terms of a provisional armistice, whereby the present, loose, ethnically-defined demarcation of the missionary communities was but a temporary measure to stave off any immediate re-engagement between the warring factions. In effect, any accord would have been little more than a moratorium. Clearly, the necessity of sharing a common table between Jewish converts and Gentile converts would require a definitive compromise on the part of one or other constituency in an ethnically diverse community like Antioch.

To pursue this issue further, it also seems that if any agreement was worked out in Jerusalem, several crucial issues were left unresolved.<sup>258</sup> Philip Esler has argued that the term *koinwnia*, which Paul uses to describe the accord, must in this situation be equated with its use in 1 Corinthians 10:16, where it specifically refers to Eucharistic table-fellowship.<sup>259</sup> On this reading of *koinwnia*, Paul claims that the Pillar Apostles agreed that, despite the separation of missionary foci, the members of the disparate communities could share the communal fellowship meal that set them apart as followers of Jesus Messiah. This explains why Titus was not compelled to be circumcised, and why Peter will later join in freely with the communal meals at Antioch.<sup>260</sup> However, one might wonder how such a compromise would work out in practical terms. It is not entirely clear how Law-observant Christian Jews were to enjoy fellowship or worship with Law-free Christians if the Law

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<sup>258</sup> This is precisely what most scholars believe to be the case. So Haenchen, *Acts*, 467; Conzelmann, *History of Primitive Christianity*, 86; Hengel, *Acts*, 120; Betz, *Galatians*, 82; and Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*, 125.

<sup>259</sup> Esler, *Galatians*, 133-134. Esler notes that *koinwnia* was "commonly used in the ancient world to denote table-fellowship, even in cases where human beings shared sacrificial meals with the gods" (134).

<sup>260</sup> Esler, *Galatians*, 133.

forbade observant Jews from sharing a common table with apostates and uncircumcised Gentiles. Clearly some sort of accommodation would have to be made to allow the two groups to share a common table. But given what would later occur at Antioch, when the people from James arrived to find Peter “living like a Gentile” (2:14), it seems unlikely that any such accommodation was worked out in Jerusalem. The only other possible alternative is that the Gentiles who converted to the Jesus movement would be expected to either become Jewish proselytes or adopt some measure of Law-observance, which in effect meant that they would retain the status of God-fearers and mere associates to the full members of the Christian community.

Following the same line of argument, we must also ask, would James and others of the pro-circumcision putsch in Jerusalem have even agreed to the legitimacy of ethnic Jews like Paul and Barnabas conducting Law-free missions, not only in Antioch but also further afield where their mission might come into contact with other Diaspora Jewish communities? Surely, the Pillar Apostles must have argued that this would brand Paul, Barnabas, and any other Jew who joined a Law-free community as apostates. Moreover, if they did sanction this move, it would have led to the incredible situation where the Christian Jews in Jerusalem would have been required to adhere strictly to the Mosaic Law, while ethnic Jews engaged in the mission to the Gentiles were freed from any such restrictions. This would not only compromise the integrity of the entire Christian movement, but also threaten the Law-observant mission to the Jews.<sup>261</sup>

We must imagine that the Christian Jewish movement would not have continued to be attractive to observant Jews if it were widely known that its leaders had countenanced a sister mission that stood outside the Law. Indeed they might even have risked outright hostility, which could have led to the same fatal consequences that earlier had brought the accused apostate Stephen to his untimely demise. In Galatians (6:12), Paul implicitly confirms this possibility by accusing his opponents of preaching circumcision so as to escape persecution. With the memory of the more recent oppression that resulted in the execution of John’s brother James fresh in their minds, the Jerusalem leadership would

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<sup>261</sup> This point is made strongly by Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 54-55.

have been little inclined to court a recurrence of Jewish antagonism by extending the hand of fellowship to the Law-free mission.

If Paul is to be believed then the delegates at the Jerusalem conference agreed to go their separate ways and completely overlook the plethora of problems raised by an agreement that constituted in all practical terms a segregation of the two missions in their respective locales. Luke, on the other hand, demonstrates an awareness of the inherent weaknesses of such an agreement.

According to Luke's version of the Council a compromise is suggested by James and accepted by all the delegates, whereby Gentile converts to the movement, while no longer required to undergo (male) circumcision or observe the whole Law, must adhere to a number of minimal rules. These were akin to the Levitical laws (Lev 17-18) regulating the behaviour of foreigners in the land of Israel, and were clearly aimed at facilitating ready commerce between the Jewish and Gentile members of the Christian movement.<sup>262</sup> However, this information stands against Paul's assertion (Gal 2:10) that the Pillars added nothing to him except the injunction that he, and by implication Barnabas and the Antiochene community, should continue to "remember the poor". It is sometimes argued that Paul's awareness of the agreement worked out at Jerusalem is reflected in 1 Corinthians (8:1-13; 10:14-33) where he makes a number of rulings concerning food sacrificed to idols, but the evidence is far from convincing.<sup>263</sup> Similarly, supposed echoes of the so-called Apostolic Decree in later canonical (Rev 2:14, 20) and extra-canonical literature (*Didache*, 6:2; Justin, *Dial.*, 34:8; Tertullian, *Apologia*, 9:13; Eusebius, *H.E.* 5:1:26) add nothing to the argument, and may be attributed to the authors' pre-existing knowledge of Acts 15.<sup>264</sup> In any event, it seems highly unlikely that Paul would have been inclined to accept the terms of this agreement. To do so would have amounted to a clear

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<sup>262</sup> See the recent discussion in J. Taylor, "The Jerusalem Decrees (Acts 15:20, 29 and 21:25) and the Incident at Antioch (Gal 2:11-14)", *NTS* 46 (2001), 372-380. Similar points are made by Conzelmann, *Acts*, 118-119; J. Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 232-233; and T. Callan, "The Background of the Apostolic Decree", *CBQ* 55 (1993), 284-297.

<sup>263</sup> For arguments in favour of this view, see J. C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (New York: Seabury Press, 1965), 254-259. For those against, see E. Franklin, *Luke: Interpreter of Paul, Critic of Matthew* (JSNTSS 92; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 44-46.

<sup>264</sup> See the various discussions in Schmithals, *Paul and James*, 99-100; Haenchen, *Acts*, 471-472; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 119; Achtemeier, *Quest*, 64-66; Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 144-145; and Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church", 464-466.

diminution of the “truth of the gospel” (Gal 2:5, 14) as he saw it; which amounted to freedom from Law (Gal 3:10; 4:8-11; 5:2-4; 6:12-15; 1 Cor 9:2; Rom 7:4-6) and the demolition of all barriers between Jew and Gentile (Gal 3:28; 6:13-15; Rom 1:16; 2:9-10, 28-29; 7:6; 10:12; Phil 3:3).<sup>265</sup> It was in defence of this “truth” that Paul would later at Antioch accost Peter for siding with the people from James, who were demanding that the Gentiles “live like Jews” (Gal 2:14).

Various attempts have been made to deal with this problem. The most prominent theory is that Luke has collapsed the records of two meetings into his account in Acts 15.<sup>266</sup> The first parallels Galatians 2:1-10 and describes a conference where the delegates from Antioch and Jerusalem agreed that no restrictions be placed on the Gentile converts. The second, occurring at some time after the initial Jerusalem Council, was presided over by James who promulgates the terms of the decree described in Acts 15. P. J. Achtemeier presents a variation of this theory by postulating that the second meeting transpired between the Jerusalem Council and the dispute in Antioch, and thus precipitated the problems that arose in Antioch after the issues had apparently been settled at Jerusalem.<sup>267</sup> This is an attractive line of argument and goes a long way towards accommodating the disparate accounts of the Jerusalem conference. However, again the problem is that nowhere in Paul’s letters does he demonstrate an awareness of the terms of the accord as they are described in Luke’s Apostolic Decree. Even more crucial, it seems improbable that the decree would have been acceptable in either Jerusalem or Antioch.

We noted above the possible adverse reaction of Paul to such a proposal. But the same must surely be said of James and his Law-observant supporters at Jerusalem. Given what we know of the Hebrew remnant at Jerusalem and their leader James, it appears incredible that they would have acquiesced to anything short of strict adherence to the whole Law on the part of any converts to the movement, be they Jew or Gentile. To argue otherwise requires that we accept an unbelievable level of perfidy on the part of James and

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<sup>265</sup> Catchpole, “Paul, James and the Apostolic Decree”, 430-431; Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 108-109; and Franklin, *Luke*, 46-47.

<sup>266</sup> See the overview of the history of this theory in Haenchen, *Acts*, 468.

<sup>267</sup> First outlined in P. J. Achtemeier, “An Elusive Unity: Paul, Acts, and the Early Church”, *CBQ* 48 (1986), 1-28; but later expanded and fully presented in *idem*, *The Quest for Unity in the New Testament Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 51-54, 83-85.

the Christian Jews at Jerusalem who, on this line of argument, must have wavered between outright rejection, complete support, and qualified acceptance of the Law-free mission. Whatever the origins of the Apostolic Decree, it is probably correct to assume that James was neither its author nor was it penned in Jerusalem during this period. To argue otherwise would require us to ignore all that we know of the rigid Law-observant policy of James and the Jerusalem church and, more importantly, overlook the total lack of evidentiary support from Paul.<sup>268</sup>

We return to the question with which we began this discussion. What transpired at the Jerusalem Council? The only honest answer we can give is that we simply do not know. Neither Paul nor Luke is telling us the whole truth; both have their own agendas and have shaped their accounts of the Council accordingly. Consequently, it is difficult to determine the immediate outcome of this meeting. Given the understanding that Paul and the Hellenists' delegation saw their mission as a Law-free outreach amongst the Gentiles in Antioch, it is difficult to accept that James and his Law-observant supporters would have readily sanctioned the Antiochene initiative. In any event, it does not matter that we are unable to determine the exact details of the deliberations at the Council. Paul's account of the subsequent incident at Antioch (Gal 2:11-14) provides us with clear indications of what the outcome of the Council meant in practical terms.

### **2.3. The Incident at Antioch**

As with Paul's report of the Council (Gal 2:1-10), so too his account of the dispute in Antioch (Gal 2:11-14) has been composed for the Galatian audience, with an eye to the relevance of this event to the situation in which the Galatians were embroiled. This factor makes it extremely difficult to determine historically the precise shape of the dispute, and a great deal of ink has been spilt in commentaries and monographs in this enterprise. Fortunately, for the purposes of the present thesis only two questions are paramount. What

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<sup>268</sup> Two possible explanations have been offered. The first is probably best represented by Schmithals, *Paul and James*, 100-101, who argues for a Diaspora Jewish origin within the context of problems raised by God-fearers sharing a common table with observant Jews. Accordingly, Luke has drawn on this tradition to compose the Apostolic Decree and incorporate it into his version of the council. Second, there is the theory presented by Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 106-109. Esler attributes the origins of the Apostolic Degree to an ethnically mixed Christian community, probably Luke's own community, which developed the terms of the accord as a means to facilitating full communion between its Jewish and Gentile constituencies. Whatever the merits of either theory Haenchen, *Acts*, 470-471, rightly concludes that the prohibitions of the Apostolic Decree had nothing to do with Jerusalem, and James cannot be the author, since both he and the Jerusalem church would have repudiated them.

was the identity and mission of the people from James? What was the outcome of their conflict with Paul?

### 2.3.1. *The People from James*

According to Paul, at some stage after the conference in Jerusalem, Peter came to Antioch, where he joined fully in the social and faith life of the community (2:11-12). However, with the arrival of some people (**tinaß**) who had been sent as envoys of James from Jerusalem, Peter withdrew from table fellowship with the Gentiles (2:12). Paul claims that it was fear of the “circumcision party” (**touß ek peritomhß**) that led not only Peter, but also Barnabas and all the Jews to separate themselves from the Gentile converts (2:12-13). Incensed by what he saw as “hypocrisy” (**upokrisiß**) on Peter’s part, Paul accuses Peter (2:14), a Jew (**Joudaibß**) who till the arrival of James’ people lived like a Gentile (**uparcwn ejnikwß**) and not like a Jew (**ojciAJoudaikwß**), of forcing (**ajagkazeiß**) the Gentile converts at Antioch “to live like Jews” (**Aloudaizein**).

The precise wording of 2:12 (**tinaß apo; Jakwbrou**) explicitly connects the interlopers to James, but some scholars have felt that this need not entail a specific commission by James to deal with matters at Antioch.<sup>269</sup> It could be that these people made their way to Antioch in much the same way Peter did, with no express purpose other than to visit the Antiochene community. However, J. Eckert correctly points out that one should not interpret **apo; Jakwbrou** as a description of the place from which these people came, but rather as a description of whose authority by which they came.<sup>270</sup> Paul explicitly claims that the interlopers came under the direct commission of James from Jerusalem, with the express intention of disrupting affairs at Antioch. And the manner in which he pursues the connections between events in Jerusalem and Antioch effectively draws attention to the parallels with the earlier incursion by the false brothers at Jerusalem.

Paul links the delegation from James with the pro-circumcision putsch in Jerusalem, saying that when James’ people came to Antioch, Peter withdrew from the Gentiles “because he was afraid of **touß ek peritomhß**” (2:12). H. D. Lietzmann takes the

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<sup>269</sup> Schlier, *Galater*, 83, who follows H. D. Lietzmann, *An die Galater* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971), 84. See also, A. Oepke, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (HTKNT; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1973), 57.

<sup>270</sup> Eckert, *Verkündigung*, 195-196.

phrase **τουσ ἐκ περιτομῆς** as a reference to all Jews who had become members of the Christian movement, rather than a further qualification of the identity of the people from James.<sup>271</sup> In a similar vein, J. D. G. Dunn suggests that the phrase refers to non-Christian Jews who were bringing pressure to bear on the Jewish membership of the Christian movement to separate themselves from the Gentile members.<sup>272</sup> According to Dunn, the situation in Jerusalem had become particularly difficult in the light of the contemporary increase in nationalistic and militant reaction to Roman rule. By flouting Jewish sensibilities regarding the separation of Jews from Gentiles, Peter, as one of the primary leaders of the Christian movement, was leaving the Jerusalem church open to persecution from the Jews (here understood as the **τουσ ἐκ περιτομῆς**).

However, C. C. Hill rightly notes the difficulty of seeing heightened tensions between the Jews and the Roman occupation forces as a contributing factor to increasing pressures on the Jerusalem church to force matters at Antioch. The rise in nationalistic discontent is probably better placed later on the eve of the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66 C.E. Following the work of M. Goodman, Hill observes that the escalation of militaristic ferment was both “rapid and dramatic” with little in the way of rising tensions prior to the outbreak of war in the mid-sixties.<sup>273</sup> In any event, it is unlikely that political concerns current in the wider Jewish community at Jerusalem would have been paramount in shaping the views of the people from James. More to the point, it is improbable that the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem would have been much interested in events that transpired in distant Syria, even if they knew of such events.

It may be true that the only other occurrence in Paul of the phrase “the ones of the circumcision” appears in Romans (4:12); and there **περιτομῆς** clearly refers to Jews in the

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<sup>271</sup> Lietzmann, *Galater*, 14-15. See also Schmithals, *Paul and James*, 66-68; Tyson, “Opponents”, 248 n. 1; Jewett, “Agitators”, 204-206; Bruce, *Galatians*, 130-131; and Longenecker, *Galatians*, 73-75.

<sup>272</sup> Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 133-135, who follows closely the arguments first advanced by Jewett, “Agitators”, 204. Others who follow Jewett include Bruce, *Galatians*, 131; and Longenecker, *Galatians*, 73-74. Similar arguments to Jewett have been advanced by Schmithals, *Paul and James*, 66-68; and Tyson, “Opponents”, 248. However, the majority of commentators take the phrase as representing Christian Jews, generally, and the James party, specifically; see, for example, Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 112; Betz, *Galatians*, 109-110; Stuhlmacher, *Das paulinische Evangelium*, 1:106; Lüdemann, *Paul*, 123-124; Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 141; Smiles, *The Gospel*, 91-92; Martyn, *Galatians*, 234, 236-240; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 156; and Burton, *Galatians*, 107.

<sup>273</sup> Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 130-131; and M. Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt against Rome, A.D. 66-70* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 7-19. A similar critique is offered by Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 155-156, although he is inclined to accept Jewett’s thesis despite the inherent problems.



ethnic sense (cf. Rom 3:30). However, Paul intends his account of the incident at Antioch to be read as the sequel to that of the Council. James' people are obviously equated with the false brothers (Gal 2:4) who earlier initiated the debate at Jerusalem, part of which included a call for the circumcision of the Gentile Titus (Gal 2:3-5).<sup>274</sup> More to the point, we are told that the people from James came from Jerusalem and persuaded Peter, Barnabas and the other Jews to withdraw from sharing a common table with the Gentiles, which had the effect of forcing the Gentiles to "Judaize" (*Ἰουδαΐζειν*). It is generally accepted that the verb *Ἰουδαΐζω*, used both here (Gal 2:14) and elsewhere (cf. Plutarch, *Cicero*, 7:6; Josephus, *War*, 2:17:10; Ignatius, *Magn.*, 10:3), means "to live as a Jew in accordance with religious customs".<sup>275</sup> Accordingly, Paul uses the term *τοῦς ἐκ περιτομῆς* to describe the people from James, since they clearly represent the same pro-circumcision putsch out of Jerusalem that had previously opposed the Law-free practice at Antioch, and who now were bent on forcing the Gentile constituency at Antioch to observe the quintessential practices of Judaism – circumcision, Sabbath observance, and the purity and dietary proscriptions that distinguished Jew from Gentile.<sup>276</sup> This brings us to our second issue – the message of the James' party.

C. C. Hill believes that J. D. G. Dunn's interpretation is correct in one respect. James and the delegation he sent to Antioch were not demanding that Gentiles observe the Law, but rather they were claiming that the Jerusalem accord required Jewish believers to live like Jews.<sup>277</sup> With Dunn, Hill agrees that the ethnically mixed community at Antioch had never completely abandoned the purity and dietary laws governing table fellowship,

<sup>274</sup> So Lüdemann, *Paul*, 75; Betz, *Galatians*, 108; Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 141; and Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 93.

<sup>275</sup> See the discussion of the term in Matera, *Galatians*, 87; Perkins, *Abraham's Divided Children*, 12-16; and J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 10. More fully, see W. S. Campbell, "Judaizers", in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G. F. Hawthorne and R. P. Martin (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 512-516 (513); S. J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 175-197; and L. Gaston, "Judaism of the Uncircumcised in Ignatius and Related Writers", in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity, Vol 2: Separation and Polemic*, ed. S. G. Wilson (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1981), 33-44 (35-36).

<sup>276</sup> Jewish food and purity proscriptions were widely practised in Paul's time, as is attested by a large number of contemporary sources, including Paul's own letters (Rom 14:1-23; 1 Cor 8:1-13; cf. Mk 7:1-23; Acts 10:10-16; 11:3). Burton, *Galatians*, 104; Betz, *Galatians*, 107-108; and Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 140, all cite numerous Old Testament and intertestamental texts in support. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 137-148; *idem*, *Partings*, 23-31, 130-135, also provides detailed documentation.

<sup>277</sup> Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 126-142. Cf. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 154-156. This view is followed by Matera, *Galatians*, 87-91.

including the proscriptions against the consumption of foodstuffs deemed unclean (Lev 11:1-23; Deut 14:3-21). However the Jerusalem community, under the influence of its Pharisaic and priestly elements, held to a much higher standard based on the Pharisaic *halakoth* of the oral traditions concerning ritual purity. On this reading, the Pillar Apostles had accepted the Antiochene Law-free mission to the Gentiles with only one reserve, that this mission be kept distinct from that of the Jewish mission. In effect this meant that the Jerusalem Council decreed a strict ethnic demarcation within the Christian movement. Peter, who formally demonstrated his solidarity with the Hellenists at Antioch by following their example and sharing a common table with the Gentiles with only the minimum concern for Jewish purity laws, accepted the change in policy. As a consequence, Peter withdrew from the common table, which led Barnabas and the Hellenists to follow his example and separate themselves from the Gentiles they had converted to the movement. Angered by what he saw as duplicity, Paul accused Peter, and by implication Barnabas and all the Jews, of hypocrisy. Paul claimed that their example left the Gentiles in a difficult position, inadvertently compelling them to adopt a more rigorous Jewish lifestyle in order to preserve the unity of the church.<sup>278</sup>

This is an ingenious argument, but it suffers from a number of inherent difficulties. First, it may be true that the apostolic community understood the Jerusalem agreement as a decree separating the Gentile converts from the Jewish converts. But this does not seem to be the understanding of the Antiochene community. If we accept that fact that Peter initially saw no problem with sharing fellowship with Gentiles with any concern for the dietary and purity proscriptions then it seems difficult to claim that such practices were clearly outlawed at Jerusalem. Contrary to the arguments of Hill and Dunn, there is no solid justification for claiming that the Antiochene community continued to observe any of the purity or dietary codes of the Mosaic Law. Indications to the contrary are clear from our foregoing discussion of the Hellenists' dispute with the Hebrews, the martyrdom of Stephen, and the Hellenists' establishment of a distinctly "Christian" community of Jews and Gentiles at Antioch. This is further confirmed here by Paul's rebuke of Peter (Gal

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<sup>278</sup> Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 142.

2:14), which demonstrates that Peter, while in Antioch, joined the other Jews and lived like a Gentile (**uparvcwn ejnikwß**) and not like a Jew (**ojciAoudaikwß**).

Second, it is incredibly difficult to imagine that the issue of table fellowship was not raised previously at the Jerusalem Council.<sup>279</sup> The very fact that at least one uncircumcised Gentile, Titus, was present in the Antiochene delegation would surely have forced the issue. Are we to believe that Titus ate separately from the Jewish members of the delegation? Philip Esler suggests that Titus had been included in the Antiochene delegation precisely to goad the Jerusalem community into accepting a common table with the Gentile converts.<sup>280</sup> Certainly, Luke found it difficult to imagine that table fellowship was not a central issue at Jerusalem; the very terms of the Apostolic Decree, despite the patent unhistorical character of their purported origins, were aimed at avoiding further conflict over the issue.

Third, this line of argument is compromised by the claim that when James' delegation arrived in Antioch they were solely concerned with the laxity of the Antiochene Jewish constituency vis-à-vis ritual purity. This reading can only be achieved by blunting the force of Paul's acerbic rebuke of Peter (2:14), whom he accuses of forcing (**ajagkazw**) the Gentiles to Judaize. Hill argues that Paul perceived the import of James' message and Peter's consequent withdrawal from the Gentiles as only indirectly pressuring the Gentiles to adopt a more Jewish lifestyle.<sup>281</sup> However, Paul's use of the verb **ajagkazw** to describe Peter's actions mirrors that of the false brothers at Jerusalem who would force (**hjagkasqh**) circumcision on Titus (2:3). The clear implication here is that the demands of the two groups, the false brothers at Jerusalem and the men from James at Antioch were identical. Moreover in both cases, the sense of the verb **ajagkazw** is that of active compulsion on the part of the pro-circumcision putsch. They were attempting to actively force the

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<sup>279</sup> Esler, *Galatians*, 136; and Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 132.

<sup>280</sup> Esler, *Galatians*, 130, writes, "By bringing Titus to Jerusalem, Paul was challenging the Jerusalem community... Titus' uncircumcised presence was a grievous insult to all those who thought only members of the House of Israel could belong to the new movement". See also C. K. Barrett, *Freedom and Obligation: A Study of the Epistle to the Galatians* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 10-11, who makes a similar comment.

<sup>281</sup> Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 141-142. Hill is not alone in this interpretation of Paul's comments; see Schmithals, *Paul and James*, 68-69; Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 32; Bruce, *Galatians*, 133-134; Betz, *Galatians*, 112; Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 145; and Lührmann, *Galatians*, 44-45. For a response to this specific aspect of Hill's argument, see Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 97-98, who follows the interpretation offered by Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 54.

Gentile converts to become Jewish proselytes, submit to circumcision, and adopt all the facets of Jewish Law-observance. Accordingly, this description reflects a situation that far exceeds a demand for a simple ethnic demarcation.

One further consideration concerns the nature of the meals at issue in the Antiochene dispute. Many interpreters share the view that the meals were eucharistic.<sup>282</sup> We noted earlier Esler's view that the term *koinwnia*, which Paul employs to describe the Jerusalem agreement (Gal 2:9), may have specifically referred to eucharistic table-fellowship.<sup>283</sup> Following on from that interpretation, it might seem that the dispute in Antioch focused primarily on that issue. It may even be the case that Peter's initial actions at Antioch in sharing a common table with the Gentiles were in line with this policy vis-à-vis eucharistic gatherings that were represented in the terms of the provisional treaty forged at Jerusalem.

With the arrival of the envoys from James a new policy was implemented, which could only have amounted to a separation of the eucharistic community into two distinct gatherings, one for the Jewish members of the community and the other for the Gentiles. However, the actual situation was probably far more complex and was focused on more fundamental issues. Neither in 2:11-14 nor in the rest of the letter does Paul make any allusion to the Eucharist, even though it could undoubtedly have served as a powerful lesson on unity among believers (cf. 1 Cor 10:17; 11:17-34). We might imagine that, from Paul's point of view, it would make no difference whether or not the meals were eucharistic. What really mattered was that the actions of Peter, Barnabas and the others amounted to a severing of the bonds of unity between Jewish and Gentile members of the community. This development alone indicates that no final or lasting agreement in this regard could have been struck at Jerusalem.

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<sup>282</sup> See, for example: Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 112; Bruce, *Galatians*, 129; and Stuhlmacher, *Das paulinische Evangelium*, 1:105. However, see Betz, *Galatians*, 107; Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 138; and Smiles, *The Gospel*, 97-98, all of whom argue that there is insufficient evidence to determine the issue decisively. On the other hand, Oepke, *Galater*, 57, rightly notes that the Eucharist must be included, since at this early stage there was probably no distinction drawn between the "the Lord's Supper" and other communal meals (1 Cor 11:20-22; Acts 2:46; 20:11).

<sup>283</sup> Esler, *Galatians*, 133-134.

### ***2.3.2. The Outcome of the Conflict***

We are now in a position to address our second question – what was the outcome of this conflict. Paul tells us that when the people from James came from Jerusalem to Antioch, they persuaded Peter to withdraw from his practice of sharing a common table with the Gentiles. Paul is shocked by this development, and probably more so by the fact that his erstwhile Jewish co-workers at Antioch, especially Barnabas, were drawn into Peter’s “hypocrisy” and deserted the cause of the Law-free mission and separated themselves from the Gentiles whom they had converted. This raises a further, intriguing question. How do we explain the behaviour of Peter, Barnabas and other Jews at Antioch?

It is at this point that we reach the crux of our present discussion of the Jerusalem Council. If we accept the consensus opinion that an accord was reached at Jerusalem that recognised the legitimacy of the Law-free Gentile mission, it is difficult to explain the subsequent pro-circumcision putsch at Antioch under the auspices of James’ people. Paul is vehement in his condemnation of the message brought by James’ people, and he argues that their position represented a reversal of the decision taken by James at the Council. He implies that the circumcision party had persuaded James to break the terms of the Jerusalem accord, and that Peter too has been caught up in James’ duplicity. Our previous discussion of James’ close, ideological alignment with the circumcision party at Jerusalem, however, renders Paul’s take on the situation unlikely.

James’ vacillation on the issue of Gentile circumcision seems totally out of character. We have already noted several reasons to doubt Paul’s version of the Council, but we encounter further problems here in his record of the Antiochene incident. If Paul is correct in claiming that a final and long-lasting agreement was reached at Jerusalem it is hard to explain the curious behaviour of Barnabas and the other Hellenists who, despite their earlier support of the Law-free mission, promptly recanted their previous practice and supported the pro-circumcision position of Peter and James’ people. If James and his supporters were clearly in breach of the Jerusalem accord, surely Barnabas and the others would have sided with Paul and decried the hypocrisy of James and Peter. Conversely, if there were no such agreement, we are left to wonder why Peter initially joined in table fellowship with the Gentile converts at Antioch.

One way to counter this difficulty is to accept the argument of P. J. Achtemeier, mentioned above, that a second meeting was held at Jerusalem after that described by Paul in Galatians 2:1-10, at which neither Paul and Barnabas nor Peter were present.<sup>284</sup> According to Achtemeier's thesis, this second meeting worked out a new agreement in terms of the Apostolic Decree described in Acts (15:20, 29), which was delivered to Antioch by a delegation from James and accepted by Peter, Barnabas and other Jewish members of the Antiochene community. On this reading, Peter's initial behaviour can be explained as a response to the accord struck at the first meeting, which was later refined at the second conference as a clear statement requiring Gentiles to adhere more strictly to the purity and dietary concerns of Jewish faith-practice. However, the many problems inherent to this line of argument are obvious.

We noted earlier the difficulties in ascribing historical reliability to Luke's version of events, especially with regard to the composition of the Apostolic Decree. It does not seem likely that James would have been happy with the terms of the decree as it stands in Acts; nor is it likely that he would have been the author of such a document that so clearly compromised his own position on the Law. Moreover, Achtemeier makes the same mistake as that of Dunn and Hill in arguing that the issue at stake in the incident at Antioch was not Gentile circumcision, but certain practical considerations concerning Jewish laws governing purity and diet. As argued above, the question of table-fellowship was but one aspect of a far more complicated situation that clearly involved the active compulsion being brought to bear on the Gentiles in order to force them to submit to circumcision and become Jewish proselytes.<sup>285</sup> Even should we ignore these problems, Achtemeier's theory of a second Jerusalem conference might help explain Peter's behaviour, but it fails to explain the behaviour of Barnabas and the other Jews at Antioch. Why would they so readily accept the ruling of a subsequent meeting at Jerusalem, at which they had no say, and at which a decision was taken to overturn a previous agreement to which they were a party?

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<sup>284</sup> Achtemeier, *Quest*, 51-54. A similar scenario is advanced by Catchpole, "Paul, James and the Apostolic Decree", 440-443.

<sup>285</sup> A point made strongly by Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 94-95. A similar response is made in reference to Dunn's hypothesis by Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 88.

A better interpretation of events is that James and the Jerusalem church had not agreed *carte blanche* to allow an independent Law-free mission to operate from Antioch, which in all respects to the Jewish Law stood so at odds to their own understanding of the gospel. We may not now be able to ascertain the precise details of what occurred at Jerusalem, but one thing seems clear. The Jerusalem conference failed to unravel the impasse, and the “fellowship” achieved there was but a temporary armistice in a war that was far from over. When Peter came to Antioch he chose to observe the ground rules at Antioch and share fully in its faith life, mixing freely with the Gentiles.<sup>286</sup> But James, anxious to conclude the issues left unresolved after the Jerusalem Council, sent envoys from his pro-circumcision putsch to force matters at Antioch. Paul does not detail in full what weapons of reason or persuasion James’ people brought to bear on the Antiochene community. We can only infer that they argued that the Gentile converts accept the full requirements expected of Jewish proselytes, including male circumcision; and they contended that the Jewish converts should separate themselves from those Gentiles who refused to do so.<sup>287</sup>

Further, we must infer that, armed with the authority of James and inspired by his determination to resolve the matter decisively, the circumcision party finally won the day. We are told that Peter ~~upostel len kai; afwizen e auton~~ withdrew from the Gentiles (2:12); the sense of Paul’s language is that Peter gradually withdrew (~~upostel~~ w) and separated (~~afwizw~~) himself from the Gentiles under the onslaught of James’ people.<sup>288</sup> Paul attributes Peter’s motivation to “fear of the circumcision party”, which can only mean that the circumcision party must have possessed significant influence. This can only have been the case if they had the support of the formidable figure of James, whose standing in the Christian movement had clearly grown to the point where he could now command authority, not only in Jerusalem but wherever Jewish followers of his brother had established missions. Only that circumstance would explain why Barnabas and the Hellenists at Antioch retracted their

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<sup>286</sup> This view is expressed by Painter, *Just James*, 69-70.

<sup>287</sup> See Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 54-55; Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 87-88; Painter, *Just James*, 70; and Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 95.

<sup>288</sup> Matera, *Galatians*, 90.

previous support of the Law-free mission, and joined Peter in attempting to force the Gentiles to submit to circumcision and adopt Jewish customs.

We must imagine a gradual process, by which James and the family of Jesus gained the leadership in Jerusalem with the backing of the pro-circumcision putsch, and then quickly moved to consolidate their authority over the whole Christian movement. In particular, James and his supporters would have been keen to exert their newfound authority over the dissident Hellenists, whom Peter and the previous administration had failed to control, and who were spreading their Law-free message beyond Antioch, into Cyprus, and throughout the province of Galatia in southern Asia Minor. The arrival in Antioch of those Paul calls “false brothers” was but the first stage of this process, ending in the Jerusalem conference, which failed to fix the problem, at least in James’ view. If Paul is correct in stating that the Pillar Apostles “added nothing” (2:6) to the Antiochene gospel except that they “should remember the poor” (2:10), this would clearly have been a source of frustration to James and the circumcision party. But the fact that Paul chose not to revisit the details of the accord when he came to describe the incident at Antioch suggests that there was more than one way to read the outcome of the Council.<sup>289</sup>

Paul does not directly accuse James or his circumcision party of hypocrisy, only Peter, and by extension the other Antiochene Jewish believers, whose vacillation left them open to such a charge. This implies that James had never wavered from his pro-circumcision position. While he may not have achieved all his aims at the Jerusalem Council, he was able later at Antioch through the embassy of the circumcision party to ultimately persuade Peter, then Barnabas and the Hellenists to recant their previous opposition to James’ position. What James was unable to achieve by negotiation at the Jerusalem Council, he apparently achieved by dogged persistence and the force of his own personal authority.

Such was the total success of James’ intervention at Antioch that we must assume that many of the Gentiles previously converted to the Antiochene church too were swayed

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<sup>289</sup> So Painter, *Just James*, 70, who follows Betz, *Galatians*, 106.



by these events and chose to adopt Law-observance.<sup>290</sup> The foremost missionaries in the outreach to non-Jews had always been ethnic, Greek-speaking Jews from the Diaspora, like the Hellenists (Acts 11:19), Nicolaus of Antioch (Acts 6:5) and Philip (Acts 6:5; 8:4-13, 26-40), the Cypriot Barnabas and Saul of Tarsus (Acts 11:21-26; 13:1; Gal 2:1-14), Simeon Niger and Lucius of Cyrene (Acts 13:1). The Gentiles who owed their Christian faith to the ministry of these Hellenists were now left with a difficult choice. They could accept the new situation and either become Jewish proselytes or adopt some measure of Law-observance, which in effect meant a return to the status of God-fearers and mere associates to the full members of the Christian Jewish community. The only other option open to them was to recant their Christian faith and return to their previous pagan practices. There is the slim possibility that some of the Gentile converts withdrew from the wider Antiochene community and held their own separate services.<sup>291</sup> But this seems unlikely. With the departure of Paul and the defection of Barnabas and the other Hellenists to James' pro-circumcision putsch, any surviving Law-free Gentile remnant would have been under immense pressure to conform to the new Law-observant policy.

It is generally accepted that this series of conflicts between Antioch and Jerusalem marked not only a watershed in the history of the early Church, but also in the career of Paul.<sup>292</sup> Nothing seems clearer than the fact that Paul lost the battle to James at Antioch. While he resolutely champions his defiance of James' people and affirms the legitimacy of his position, Paul admits that his actions left him in the minority, as Barnabas and the whole Jewish constituency at Antioch defected to the pro-circumcision putsch. His account of the conflict ends abruptly with no explicit report of its conclusion. This implies that he was unable to win any of his erstwhile collaborators back to the cause of the Law-free gospel. As a result of this calamity, it appears that Paul immediately departed Antioch and embarked on a mission to Asia Minor and Greece. This is confirmed by Acts (15:36-41), which presents Paul as undertaking this second missionary journey without his former companion Barnabas. Luke says nothing of Paul's clash with Peter and James' people at

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<sup>290</sup> This is certainly the case at Galatia, where Paul is vehemently attempting to halt the defection of his Gentile converts, who seem to have already embraced many aspects of Jewish faith-practice (1:6; 3:1; 4:21; 5:4; 5:7).

<sup>291</sup> Meeks and Wilken, *Jews and Christians*, 18; and Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*, 138.

<sup>292</sup> See, for example, Meeks and Wilken, *Jews and Christians*, 17; Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 56; Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 160-161; Matera, *Galatians*, 91; and Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 100-101.

Antioch. The split between Barnabas and Paul is occasioned by a dispute over the inclusion of John Mark in the missionary team. But the finality of the split is apparent in the fact that from this point onwards in Acts Barnabas fades from the story of Paul. It is likely that Paul never again returned to Antioch, even though Acts (18:22-23) suggests one further visit. Some scholars accept the historicity of this additional visit to Antioch, and they suggest that this must indicate a later rapprochement between Paul and the Antiochene church.<sup>293</sup> However, Paul himself says nothing of this and, in view of the bitterness that pervades Paul's account of the incident at Antioch, it is highly improbable that he would have returned to renew his association with the Antiochene community.

Other scholars have suggested that Paul never completely severed his ties to Jerusalem, even though he may no longer have been based at Antioch.<sup>294</sup> It is even assumed in some circles that, while Paul and the apostolic leadership at Jerusalem had their differences of opinion, especially with regard to matters of missionary strategy, such disagreements were neither fundamental nor irreconcilable.<sup>295</sup> R. E. Brown and J. P. Meier, for example, state that "Peter, Paul, and James dealt with each other, keeping *koinonia* or communion, seemingly even when they disputed".<sup>296</sup> However, such assumptions fail to appreciate the depth of the division that existed between Paul and Jerusalem following the controversies at Jerusalem and Antioch.

It may be true that, in Galatians (2:1-14), Paul attempts to present his relationship with the Jerusalem Apostles as amicable; accusing the false brothers at Jerusalem and the

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<sup>293</sup> Some scholars maintain the historicity of Acts 18:22-23, primarily either on the basis that Paul would have been keen to renew his relations with the community, or on the basis that Paul would have wanted to cement relations between Antioch and the communities he founded in Greece. See Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*, 80-83, 99, 146-152, 204-245; and Haenchen, *Acts*, 548, respectively. A similar view is expressed by Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 150 n. 6. But Hill admits that any such visit would have been temporary, for Antioch ceased to function as his home base in the years that followed.

<sup>294</sup> So, particularly, Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 39-40; and Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 151. See also Painter, *Just James*, 71-72.

<sup>295</sup> A similar comment is made by Hann, "Judaism and Jewish Christianity in Antioch", 341.

<sup>296</sup> Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 214. Similar observations can be found in R. E. Brown, *Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 171-182 and *idem*, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 148. Hill, *Hebrews and Hellenists*, 151 maintains the same perspective, claiming that while "there was genuine, sustained conflict between Paul and many other Jewish Christians, most notably those of the church in Jerusalem...One does not have to believe...that James repudiated Paul and the Pauline mission". A more recent example of this position is presented in L. T. Johnson, "Koinonia: diversity and unity in early Christianity", *TD* 46 (1999), 303-313.

people from James at Antioch as the real cause of the division. But Paul never completely exonerates James and Peter of the charge of having conspired with the pro-circumcision party at Jerusalem and Antioch; and he draws a connection between the apostolic authorities in Jerusalem with the troublemakers at Galatia. He accuses James of acting with duplicity in sending a delegation to Antioch to undo the agreement forged at Jerusalem. He cites Peter's hypocrisy in yielding to James' initiative, despite Peter's previous acceptance of the mixed table fellowship at Antioch. And, as we shall see in the next chapter, he implicitly groups the "Pillars" with the Christian-Jewish missionaries at Galatia, charging them all with seeking to impose circumcision on the Gentiles out of fear of persecution and in the interests of their own self-aggrandisement.

If Paul's polemic against the Jerusalem Apostles does not indicate a serious rift in *koinonia*, it is hard to imagine what else would be necessary before we could speak of such a schism.<sup>297</sup> In any event, it seems obvious that following the Jerusalem Council and the subsequent Antiochene dispute with Peter and the James' party Paul was deprived of the support of Barnabas and sanction of the Antiochene community. Henceforth, he appears to have acted as a freelance missionary with no connection to either Antioch or Jerusalem, returning to Jerusalem only after a decade of independent apostolic activity in Asia Minor and Greece.

## **2.4. Conclusions**

As the dust settled on the final conflict at Antioch, an important chapter in the history of the early Church drew to a close. What had begun as a dispute between two wings of the nascent Jesus movement in Jerusalem, the Hebrews and the Hellenists, had given birth to two, distinctly different forms of faith in Jesus Messiah. The first, led by Peter and the Twelve and centred in Jerusalem, held tenaciously to its Jewish heritage and continued to operate within the ambit of Jewish custom. The second movement drew its initial membership from Diaspora Jews and, eventually basing itself primarily in Syrian Antioch, embarked on a program that sought to convert Gentiles without demanding circumcision or obedience to the Mosaic Law. Despite numerous attempts by the mother church in

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<sup>297</sup> See Esler, *Galatians*, 132-133, who makes the interesting observation that Paul's language throughout chapter two of Galatians is one of conflict and hostility, much of which draws on common military terminology, thereby suggesting that Paul viewed these events in terms of an acrimonious battle between opposing factions.

Jerusalem to rein in its wayward offspring in Antioch, the Gentile mission flourished and spread into Cyprus and throughout the Roman Province of Galatia in Asia Minor. However, the rise of Jesus' brother James to a position of authority at Jerusalem signalled the beginning of a new offensive on the part of the Law-observant faction to gain control of the situation in Antioch. Through a series of envoys James and his circumcision party achieved what Peter and the previous administration at Jerusalem were unable to do. They brought the troublesome Hellenists to the conference table at Jerusalem. What the immediate outcome of this meeting was is unclear. But the one thing that is clear is that neither James nor the Jerusalem church agreed to allow the Antiochene community to continue its independent Gentile mission. Paul's subsequent account of the incident at Antioch indicates that James was ultimately successful in imposing strict Law-observance on the Hellenists' community at Antioch. Only Paul resisted this disturbing development; but he was fighting a losing battle. As a consequence, he found himself marginalised and forced to leave Antioch in search of new missions further afield of the widening reach of James' circumcision putsch.

## *Chapter 3*

### THE CRISIS IN GALATIA:

#### PAUL AND THE JUDAISERS

Having departed Antioch (*c.* 50 C.E.), Paul began what was to become the most productive phase of his mission as the Apostle to the Gentiles. Both Acts and the Pauline correspondence present a picture of Paul travelling extensively around the Aegean Basin, establishing churches amongst the major Gentile communities of Asia Minor and Greece. Paul's letter to the Galatians, however, bears ample testimony to the fact that his departure from Antioch did not mean an escape from controversy and dispute. Throughout the pages of this letter we find Paul vigorously defending his gospel and his right as an apostle to preach this gospel among the Gentiles (1:16; 2:8) against the accusations of adversaries who were promoting "a different gospel" (1:6-10).

In our previous chapter, we examined the autobiographical material found in the opening sections of this letter in order to reconstruct the divisive proceedings that unfolded at the Apostolic Council and the Incident at Antioch. In this chapter, we turn to consider Paul's clash with the adversaries whose arrival and ministry in Galatia had called forth Paul's bitter report of those events. It will be argued here that the content of the letter seems to imply that Paul's opponents at Galatia, like those at Jerusalem and Antioch, were Judaisers who preached a gospel that entailed faithful adherence to the Mosaic Law (3:10), including circumcision (5:2-4; 6:12-13), and the observance of the Sabbath and the Jewish feast days (4:8-11). In proposing such parallels, we are forced to also address significant questions about the origin and the identity of these opponents, as well as the links between their arrival in Galatia and the earlier controversies in Jerusalem and Antioch. But before we can adequately deal with any of these matters we must first focus on the issue of provenance: when, and to whom, did Paul write this letter? It will be demonstrated that

where one stands on these issues bears important consequences for how one determines the precise relationship between the crisis Paul encountered at Galatia and those crises he had previously dealt with at Jerusalem and Antioch.

### 3.1. The Provenance and Date of Galatians

The questions surrounding the provenance of Galatians are surprisingly difficult to answer, and there are two competing theories. In the nineteenth century and throughout most of the twentieth century, the majority of commentators assumed that the letter dated from late in Paul's career and that it was addressed to communities in the geographical region known as Galatia in northern Asia Minor. However, commentaries from more recent decades have tended to date the letter much earlier, primarily on the understanding that the churches in Galatia were located in the political (Roman) province of Galatia. On this latter view, the churches in Galatia are taken to be those established during Paul's and Barnabas' first missionary journey as described in Acts (13:4-14:28).

#### 3.1.1. The Location of the Churches in Galatia

We will begin first by recalling the few significant markers within the text of Galatians that may help us to pin down the provenance of the letter. Firstly, in the opening lines of the letter (1:2), Paul addresses his readership as the constituents of the “churches of Galatia” (εἰς τὰς ἐκκλῆσιας τῆς Γαλιτίας). Secondly, at one point later in the text (3:1), Paul accosts his audience “O foolish Galatians” (ὦ ἀφροντοὶ Γαλιταῖ). Thirdly, Galatians 4:13 may imply two visits to the region on the part of Paul, since Paul speaks of having “formerly” (τοῦ προτέρου) evangelised the addressees.<sup>298</sup> Finally, we might also note that in 1:6, Paul expresses his astonishment at how quickly (ὅσον χρόνον) his addressees have deserted him and his gospel, which may be pertinent to the issue of chronology. But it also indicates that the addressees were converted to the Christian movement by Paul himself. In Galatians 4:13-14, Paul recounts how a “weakness of the flesh” (ἀσθενεῖαν τῆς σαρκὸς) led him to

<sup>298</sup> The expression is neutral and does not necessarily admit an interpretation that explicitly allows for two visits by Paul to Galatia. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 190, describes this expression as a “disclosure formula”, intended to “remind the Galatians of the close relationship that they and Paul enjoyed when Paul was first with them”. Accordingly, it could be interpreted in either of two ways – as a reference to Paul's original and only visit to Galatia, or as the first of two visits. Martyn, *Galatians*, 420, favours the former interpretation over the latter, but admits that the evidence can be read either way. In any event, 4:13 is hardly decisive on its own, and the verse can function as support for either hypothesis, as pointed out by Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 12.

first preach the gospel to the Galatians, and he remembers fondly how they received him without scorn or contempt. What can we make of this evidence?

We begin by noting that the term **Galatia** is tolerant of two distinct meanings. Originally, **Galatia** was a word used to refer to a member of the ethnic Celtic tribes that migrated from Europe in the third century B.C.E. and settled in the central highlands of Anatolia around Ancyra (now Ankara in modern Turkey). These Celtic tribes extended their dominion as far north as Phrygia and established a kingdom with Ancyra as its capital. Around 230 B.C.E., they were defeated by King Attalos of Pergamum who confined their territory to the regions of the Halys, which became known as the Kingdom of Galatia (**Galatia**) and its principal cities were Ancyra, Pessinus, and Tavium. However, the Kingdom of Galatia became a part of the Roman province of Galatia (25 B.C.E.), which included a significant region of southern Asia Minor, Pisidian Isauria, and parts of Lycaonia, Phrygia, Paphlagonia, and Pontus. Paul makes no reference to any particular towns or cities in his letter, and scholars remain divided on the issues of both destination and date of the letter.

On the basis of all the details canvassed above, many commentators have assumed that the letter was addressed to communities in the geographical region known as Galatia in northern Asia Minor, inhabited by a distinct ethnic group of Celts (Lt. *Celtai*, *Galli*, or *Galatae*) after whom the region was named. On that presupposition, it was assumed that Paul must have written this letter in the latter years of his career, probably about the same time as Romans with which Galatians shares a number of common themes.

The classic argument for the traditional assignment of Galatians to towns in northern Asia Minor was first expounded by J. B. Lightfoot in his commentary on Galatians (1865).<sup>299</sup> The key component of Lightfoot's argument is the apparent agreement in terminology used by both Paul in his letter and Luke in Acts. According to Acts (16:6),

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<sup>299</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 2-20. Lightfoot's arguments still remain the central components of the theses in support of the late dating of the letter and the "North Galatia" hypothesis – see, for example, Martyn, *Galatians*, 15-20; Esler, *Galatians*, 32-36; Perkins, *Abraham's Divided Children*, 1-3; and Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 159-162, 191-193. For earlier proponents, see J. B. Polhill, "Galatia Revisited: The Life Setting of the Epistle", *RevExp* 69 (1972), 437-448; J. Moffatt, *An Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1918), 83-107; and W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, rev edn (London: SCM Press, 1975), 296-298. For those who support an earlier dating and the "South Galatia" thesis, see Bligh, *Galatians*, 3-18; Bruce, *Galatians*, 14-18, 41-56; Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxi-lxxxviii; Burton, *Galatians*, xxvii, xxix, xlv; and C. J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in Its Hellenistic Setting* (WUNT 49; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1989), 299-305.

Paul “passed through Phrygia and Galatian territory” (*dihlqon de; thn Frugiān kai; Galatikhn cwvan*) on his second missionary journey. Later, Luke suggests implicitly that Paul revisited the churches he established in the region during his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:14). Luke tells us that, after spending “some time” in Syrian Antioch, Paul set forth again, “passing through (*diercomenoß*) the Galatian territory and Phrygia (*Galatikhn cwvan kai; Frugiān*)” with the aim of “strengthening all the disciples” (18:23).<sup>300</sup> The implication here appears to be that said disciples were converted by Paul during his earlier pass through the region (16:6). This may be confirmed by Galatians 4:13, which might also imply two visits to the region on the part of Paul. On the Lukan usage of the term *Galatia*, Lightfoot noted that both in Acts 18:23 and earlier in 16:6, Luke apparently distinguishes the northern regions of the Galatian territory from both Phrygia and the southern cities of Lycaonia, namely, Derbe, Lystra and Iconium (16:1), which were evangelised during the first missionary journey (14:1-23).<sup>301</sup>

Although Paul provides no further explicit indications of locale, he does characterise his addressees as inconsistent, fickle hearted and superstitious (Gal 1:6; 3:1-5; 4:8-10, 15-16; 5:7, 19-21), a commonly-held, first century view of the Gauls (cf. Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 2:1; 4:5; 6:16; Cicero, *De Divinatione*, 1:5; 2:36-37). To pursue this line of argument further, it would make little sense for Paul, who was attempting to win the allegiance of his audience, to appeal to the Christians of Phrygia and Lycaonia as “Galatians”. Such a description would only be true by virtue of the imposition of Roman rule. Accordingly, Lightfoot argued that the references to “Galatia” and “Galatians” in Paul’s letter (Gal 1:2; 3:1) must be understood in the same way as that of the usage in Acts, in an *ethnic* rather than a *political* sense. After all, the common first century understanding and use of the term “Galatia” was as a designation for the geographical region in the north. This was apparently a result of the fact that this region was inhabited mostly by the Gauls themselves. It would be most natural for both Luke (Acts 16:6; 18:23) and Paul (Gal 1:2) to have used the term in accordance with the convention at the time. Lightfoot argues that taken together these factors indicate that Paul wrote to the churches of Ancyra, Pessinus,

<sup>300</sup> This point is made strongly by Moffatt, *Introduction*, 84. Cf. Betz, *Galatians*, 224; and Esler, *Galatians*, 34.

<sup>301</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 7. Cf. Moffatt, *Introduction*, 93; Polhill, “Galatia”, 438-440; Martyn, *Galatians*, 17; and Esler, *Galatians*, 34.



Tavium, and possibly Juliopolis in Bithynia. Lightfoot summarises the situation thus: “the writers [Paul and Luke] speaking familiarly of the scenes in which they had themselves taken part, [leads to the conclusion that] the term would naturally be used in its popular rather than its formal and official sense”.<sup>302</sup>

Against this position, the exhaustive study of W. M. Ramsay (1899) demonstrated that at the time Paul wrote, the term *Galatiæ* was used of the official Roman province of that name, including the traditional terrain of the Celtic tribespeople and an expanse of territory to the south encompassing the city of Iconium and the towns of Lystra and Derbe.<sup>303</sup> Ramsey argues that Lightfoot is incorrect in his assumption that it was a first century convention to designate locale according to the ethnicity of the inhabitants. The Romanisation of the Mediterranean had established a different set of criteria. Other scholars have developed this point and demonstrated that there are sufficient contemporary references to suggest that the designation “Galatians” was an acceptable title in the first century for the Hellenised and Romanised inhabitants of the province.<sup>304</sup>

Lightfoot argues that Luke’s normal practice is to describe regions by their ethnic or geographical names. However, Lightfoot neglects to point out that Paul normally favours Roman provincial designations (e.g. 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:1). It would, therefore, be more natural to assume that Paul followed both the conventions of the time and his previous practice with regard to describing Roman political boundaries in using the term “Galatians” for those communities that were situated in the southern regions of Asia Minor. Moreover, this understanding of the designation need not be seen as contradicting the specific information found in Acts vis-à-vis Paul’s itinerary during his second and third missionary journeys.

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<sup>302</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 7.

<sup>303</sup> W. M. Ramsay, *A Historical Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 1-234. This is a reprint of the 1899 edition by Hodder. All page references to Ramsay are drawn from the 1997 reprint. See the assessment of Ramsay’s contribution in Bligh, *Galatians*, 8-10.

<sup>304</sup> Hemer, *The Book of Acts*, 304-305; and Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul*, 161. Cf. Burton, *Galatians*, xxix, who makes the point that if the churches addressed by Paul were those ethnically and culturally disparate communities of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, which Paul founded on his first missionary journey, he could not address their members by any single unifying term except “Galatians”.

Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and the nearby Pisidian Antioch are designated by Acts as places evangelised by Paul and Barnabas during their initial missionary forays conducted under the aegis of the church in Antioch (Acts 13:2-14:28). On the one hand, it may be true that Luke distinguishes these areas from Galatia, and Galatia from Phrygia, when he later details Paul's subsequent journeys (16:1-6; 18:23). But, on the other hand, the Greek of Acts 16:6 and 18:23 joins the words *Galatikῆν χώραν* and, *Phrygían* with *kai* placing the article before the first one only. This could be construed as referring to "the Phrygian-Galatian territory" rather than two separate locales, as in "the Phrygian and Galatian territories". On this interpretation of the Greek, Luke's references to "Phrygia and Galatia" in Acts (16:6; 18:23) could be read as referring to the province of Galatia, but delineating the ethnic sub-groupings; therefore, Acts 16:4 and 18:23 would be a recapitulation of Paul's earlier missionary travels through southern Asia Minor. Such a reading makes eminent sense when we consider that there is no indication in Acts that Paul ever conducted missions in the northern regions inhabited by the Celtic tribespeople. Luke tells us that he merely passed through the northern reaches of Asia Minor on his way to Bithynia and Mysia (Acts 16:6-7; cf. 18:23).<sup>305</sup> On balance then, we need not assume that both Luke and Paul used the term "Galatia" in an exclusive manner, limited only to the territory of the Gauls (*Galatae*).<sup>306</sup>

To add further weight to the argument, we noted earlier that both Paul's and Luke's accounts of the Jerusalem Council suggest that a rift occurred between Paul and Barnabas immediately after the conference. In Galatians, Paul says nothing of his subsequent movements, but Acts (15:41-16:4) describes him returning to the areas that he evangelised during his earlier mission with Barnabas, explicitly mentioning the towns of Iconium, Derbe and Lystra. In Galatians (4:13), Paul speaks of having "formerly" preached the gospel to the Galatians, the sense of which could be that this is the first of at least two visits by Paul to the churches of Galatia. However, even if this is not the best reading of Galatians 4:13, there are several reasons to suggest that Acts 15:41-16:4 represents a second Galatian tour.

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<sup>305</sup> See also Burton, *Galatians*, xxx-xli.

<sup>306</sup> D. Guthrie, *Galatians* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 16.

First, on this reading of the data in Acts, it is possible to view Luke (Acts 15:41-16:4) as indicating two visits to the southern towns of the province of Galatia, and we need not ascribe Acts 16:6 and 18:23 as the only instance of Paul making two missionary passes through a particular locale. Second, we find a pattern here with Paul's second missionary journey paralleling that of his first, with each discreetly placed between two visits to Jerusalem (11:27-30; 15:1-36) and initiated by a movement to Syrian Antioch (12:25; 15:35) and then into the missionary fields (13:3; 15:36). Accordingly, Paul's first and second (as also his third) missionary journeys are made to conform to the geo-linear pattern of missionary outreach from Jerusalem predicted by the Lukan Jesus in both the Gospel (Lk 24:47-48) and Acts (1:8). In this scheme, Acts 16:5-6 serves to demarcate the end of the first phase of Paul's missionary career, via a recapitulation of the first journey he undertook to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, from that of his push into Macedonia and Achaia.<sup>307</sup> If we are right in assuming that Luke's use of "Phrygia and Galatia" in 16:6 and 18:23 is to be understood as referring to the province of Galatia, designated as "the Phrygian-Galatian territory", then 16:6 (in combination with 16:5) must be seen as a summary passage for the foregoing description of Paul's second visit to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (15:41-16:4). It is generally accepted that Luke uses summary passages to link single incidents into generalised patterns, with major summaries appearing in the early chapters on Jerusalem (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35; 5:11-16), and numerous minor summaries throughout the rest of his narrative (1:14; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 19:20; 28:30-31), which Luke uses to plot the spread of the gospel from its beginnings in Jerusalem and on "to the ends of the earth" (1:8).<sup>308</sup>

Finally, the reference to a further visit to "the Galatian territory and Phrygia" in Acts 18:23 has its own distinct set of problems. On the face of the surrounding context, 18:23 is clearly another summary passage, which mirrors and recapitulates the text of 16:5-6, using almost identical language with the same intent; that is, to signal the start of Paul's third missionary journey, following his customary visit to Judea. However, in this case there appears to be a greater amount of creative invention on Luke's part. As a component of what appears to be the description of an otherwise unknown trip to Jerusalem and Syrian

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<sup>307</sup> Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 173-177.

<sup>308</sup> This fact was recognised early by Dibelius, *Studies*, 9-10. Cf. Dillon, "Acts", 724-725.

Antioch by Paul (Acts 18:22-23), serious questions can be raised about the historicity of Paul's subsequent visit to "the Galatian territory and Phrygia" (18:23). As we noted at the end of the previous chapter, nowhere in any of his letters does Paul speak of this journey to Jerusalem and Antioch and, in view of the animosity that pervades Paul's account of the Jerusalem Council and the Incident at Antioch in Galatians (2:1-14), it is highly improbable that he would have readily returned to restore his relationship with either the Jerusalem or the Antiochene community in the period prior to his writing of Galatians.<sup>309</sup> Even years later when writing Romans (15:25-32), where Paul does speak of an anticipated (third) visit to Jerusalem, he does so with great trepidation and foreboding (15:31). If the Jerusalem/Antioch visit of 18:22 must be dismissed as a pure Lukan fabrication, then a similar fate must fall upon the Galatia/Phrygia tour of 18:23.<sup>310</sup> This seriously undermines the North Galatia theory, and lends added weight to the counter theory that Acts 15:41-16:4 must be seen as Paul's second visit to Galatia.

Proponents of the North Galatia theory might object that the data in Acts and Galatians vis-à-vis the South Galatia theory cannot be quite so easily harmonised.<sup>311</sup> The Acts' account of the first missionary journey makes no mention of the illness that led Paul to stop over in Galatia (Gal 4:13) and establish churches there. Nor in Acts is there any reference to Paul's struggle with the Christian Jewish adversaries whose presence in Galatia appears to have occasioned Paul's letter. Furthermore in Galatians, Paul omits any reference to Barnabas' role in the mission to the region. Similarly, Galatians 1:21 speaks of Paul's missionary activities in Syria and Cilicia, but it makes no reference to Galatia, which

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<sup>309</sup> See the discussion of this important issue in Jewett, *Dating*, 63-104; Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxxiii-lxxxiii; and J. C. Hurd, "Pauline Chronology and Pauline Theology", in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, R. R. Niebuhr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 225-248.

<sup>310</sup> Some proponents of the North Galatia theory see Acts 18:23 as a possible reference to the Council visit. This position is most forcefully argued by Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 206-207; *idem*, *Paul*, 13-16, 71-75, 149-152. But see also Hurd, "Pauline Chronology", 246-248; and C. H. Buck and G. Taylor, *Saint Paul: A Study in the Development of His Thought* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1969), 7-9.

<sup>311</sup> Haenchen, *Acts*, 84-86; Betz, *Galatians*, 10-11; and P. Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975), 70-81, 108, 388-390.

we might expect in a passage that is intended to demonstrate Paul's distance from Jerusalem.<sup>312</sup> However, none of these objections need present a serious problem.

The South Galatia theory does raise questions about the accuracy of some of the information provided by Luke in Acts, especially Acts 18:22-23. However, as we discussed in chapters one and two, while the narrative in Acts is notoriously tendentious, this need not mean that all the information Luke supplies is purely artificial. The situation is far too complex to allow us to completely shelve Acts as a totally inaccurate and untrustworthy source. A close examination of the parallels in Acts and the letters of Paul suggests that Luke may have been in possession of some reliable, fragmentary data concerning where Paul went and with whom, but little or nothing of what happened in those places visited by Paul and his companions. Luke seems to have known neither the precise circumstances that led Paul to target particular towns for evangelisation nor, we might speculate, when Paul's health or physical condition may have warranted unplanned diversions. In addition, we have already seen that Luke is prepared to alter his source material in order to cover over all evidence of conflict and division within the ranks of the earliest Church.

Putting aside that caveat, it is remarkable that Acts 15:1 does record dispute and debate in Syrian Antioch triggered by Christian Jewish troublemakers from Jerusalem. We argued in the previous chapter that these troublemakers were most likely acting on the direct authority of James, and that their interference at Antioch must be seen as a further incursion into the territory of the Hellenists, which followed even earlier attempts by Jerusalem to rein in the Law-free mission. If we assume for the moment what will be argued later, that the Judaisers are to be identified with James' party at Antioch, I would suggest that a similar situation must have arisen in churches founded by missionaries from Antioch, which from a purely speculative point of view makes perfect sense. D. Guthrie has conjectured that the fact that Luke does know of Judaisers in Antioch favours a southern destination for the subsequent letter.<sup>313</sup> It seems more plausible (assuming an early date for the letter) that the initial judaising activists would have followed Paul first

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<sup>312</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 184, makes the point that "nothing would have offered the Galatians stronger proof of that distance than for Paul to have said: 'Then, I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia, far removed from Jerusalem, coming even to the cities of Galatia, as you yourselves will remember'". See also Kümmel, *Introduction*, 193.

<sup>313</sup> D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (London: Tyndale, 1970), 42. A similar view is expressed by G. Ogg, *The Chronology of Paul* (London: Epworth, 1968), 58-71.

through the communities in the southern region (established under the auspices of the Antiochene church), rather than to argue that only after a significant time-lapse the Judaisers would have later tracked Paul down in the isolated districts to the north.

Next, the absence of Barnabas from Paul's references to the initial mission in Galatia does not present an insurmountable obstacle. On the contrary, the prominent part Barnabas plays in the early chapters of Galatians implies that the addressees of the letter were familiar with Barnabas and his previous relationship with Paul.<sup>314</sup> Such would not be the case if the letter were addressed to communities in the north, where there is no evidence that Barnabas had ever accompanied Paul (even if Paul did conduct missions there, a notion that finds no support in either Acts or the Pauline correspondence).<sup>315</sup> Proponents of the North Galatia thesis would suggest that this argument is one of silence. Paul mentions Barnabas in other instances where he might not have been known to the readers (cf. 1 Cor. 9:6).<sup>316</sup> However, as Longenecker and Guthrie both point out, it is not just the mention of Barnabas that is significant, it is the manner in which Paul speaks of him, especially in his account of the Incident at Antioch.<sup>317</sup> Guthrie observes, "When Paul says that 'even Barnabas' (2:13) was carried away by the insincerity of Peter and other Jews, he seems to imply that this was unexpected in view of what was known of Barnabas' character".<sup>318</sup> Such is the ominous tone of Paul's note on Barnabas that it clearly assumes that his Galatian audience would have been as shocked as he was at Barnabas's duplicity, given what they both knew of the man from personal experience.

Similarly, the omission of the territory of Galatia from Paul's statement about his missionary activities prior to the Council in Galatians 1:21 could also be explained in terms

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<sup>314</sup> Matera, *Galatians*, 26.

<sup>315</sup> So, Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 10, who observes that it is "only really in conjunction with the period before, during, and immediately after Paul's first missionary journey that Barnabas and Paul are mentioned together as being in the same place at the same time". So also R. Bauckham, "Barnabas in Galatians", *JSNT* 2 (1979), 61-71, who sees no reason to doubt the basic historical accuracy of the references to Barnabas in Acts, which must mean that he was involved in the mission to Galatia; yet, it is significant that he is not named as either a co-author of Galatians or a missionary companion at the time.

<sup>316</sup> Moffatt, *Introduction*, 96.

<sup>317</sup> Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxxi; and Guthrie, *Introduction*, 469-470. Similar comments are made by Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 16-17; and J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 33, who both note that Paul's bitterness over events in Antioch is sufficiently strong enough to suggest that these episodes are both recent and traumatic.

<sup>318</sup> Guthrie, *Introduction*, 470.

of Paul's situation at the time he wrote the letter. Having broken with his erstwhile missionary companions at Antioch, Paul would be unwilling to credit them with any role in the mission to the Galatian towns. The city of Antioch is also absent from Paul's list; although the mention of Syria must be taken as inclusive of Paul's previous residence. However, in his subsequent record of the Jerusalem Council (2:1-10), Paul neither mentions any connection between the Council and events in Antioch nor admits that he and Barnabas went to Jerusalem as accredited ambassadors of the Antiochene community. The purpose of the passage in 1:21 may be to stress Paul's distance from Jerusalem, but it is also clear from the whole thrust of Paul's biographical statements in Galatians 1 and 2 that Paul is similarly keen to stress his independence of Antioch.

Antioch only makes an explicit appearance in the report of Paul's final rift with Peter, Barnabas and the James party (2:11), even though it has clearly been an implicit factor throughout the preceding episodes detailing Paul's missionary endeavours in Syria and Cilicia (1:21), as well as the events leading to the Jerusalem Council (2:1-10). Remarkably, we would know nothing of Paul's decade or more alliance with the Antiochene church in general, or his close association with Barnabas specifically, if it were not for Acts. This is a remarkable omission on Paul's part, and it can only be explained by Paul's conscious effort to distance himself from Antioch as well as Jerusalem. If we are correct in arguing that the Galatian churches were evangelised during the period covered by Luke's first missionary journey, then these churches were founded under the auspices of the Antiochene community. Consequently, Paul would have been loath to openly admit that fact, since it would work against him in his struggle with the Galatian troublemakers.<sup>319</sup> To do otherwise would have left him open to the charge that, since his defection from Antioch, he no longer had any authority over these communities founded and formally administered by the Antiochene congregation.

This leads us to one further biographical indication that bears mentioning. In his letter to Galatia, Paul tells his readers that the primary reason for his attendance at the

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<sup>319</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 194-199, suggests that this reticence may indicate that the agitators originated in Antioch and that they were acting under the authority of the Antiochene church. In that case, they could legitimately challenge Paul's claims to be an "apostle" (i.e. one who is "sent" by an accredited authority) and his rights over the Galatian foundations, which were the daughter communities of Antioch.

Jerusalem Council was to set before the Pillar Apostles the gospel he preached among the nations for fear that all his previous missionary efforts might be in vain (Gal 2:2). This statement could be read as a general overview of the situation, but it is more likely to have been of specific relevance to the recipients of the letter. We shall argue presently that the agitators at Galatia were claiming that their “gospel” represented more fully the position of James, Peter, John and the church at Jerusalem. Accordingly a significant aspect of their message must have been the record of the events surrounding the Council at Jerusalem. This fact suggests that the letter was penned sometime after the Council and, as we argued in chapter two, that the decision of the Antiochene church to widen the reach of its Law-free mission into the southern regions of Asia Minor was one of the major factors contributing to the calling of the Council.

Paul draws the clear connection between the situation at Galatia and the issues raised at the Council when he says, regarding the demand of the false brothers that Titus submit to circumcision, that he and Barnabas “did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain (~~diameinh~~) with you” (2:5).<sup>320</sup> Titus was not simply an isolated case, but proved on the Council floor to be a test case for the whole Gentile mission previously undertaken in the southern reaches of the province of Galatia. In addition, we posit that Paul’s claimed shock that the Galatians would desert him “so quickly” (1:6) might confirm that the letter was penned soon after Paul’s second visit to the churches in Galatia, which according to our exegesis of Acts 15:41-16:4 must signal the location of those churches in the cities and towns (Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe) of the southern regions of the Roman province of that name.

### 3.1.2. *The Date of Galatians*

While it is not crucial for our purposes to pin down precisely Galatians’ date of composition, some brief comments on the issue of chronology may be appropriate. Back in the nineteenth century, F. C. Baur argued that Galatians was probably the first of the *Hauptbriefe* to be penned by Paul. The traditional sequence of Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans, evidenced as early as Marcion’s *Apostolicon*, could only be

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<sup>320</sup> Burton, *Galatians*, 85, argues that ~~diameinh~~/should be translated “continue”, thus giving the impression that the Galatians had heard the gospel prior to the Council, which might also suggest that the Galatians’ “continued” adherence to the teachings of the gospel was the main concern for Paul at the Council.



explicable if that order represented the original chronological order of composition.<sup>321</sup> While J. B. Lightfoot recognised Baur's view, he argued that since the controversy over the Law dominates the pages of Galatians the letter should be grouped together with Romans, which also deals with the Law and is probably the last of Paul's letters. Lightfoot argued that 2 Corinthians and Galatians shared an affinity, "not so much in words and arguments, but in tone and feeling".<sup>322</sup> Accordingly, he placed Galatians after 2 Corinthians and just before Romans, suggesting that it was written either in Macedonia or Achaia during the years 57-58 C.E.

For the most part, Lightfoot's late dating (and that of those scholars who follow him), is founded on the fundamental assumption of the North Galatia hypothesis that Paul wrote his letter to the communities that Paul visited as he passed through "Phrygia and Galatia" on his second (Acts 16:6) and third (Acts 18:23) missionary journeys. However, if we are correct in our reconstruction of the identity of the Galatian readership above, then this assumption, and the concomitant argument for a late dating of the letter, must be seriously questioned. It will be suggested here that Paul wrote Galatians soon after his split with Antioch, probably from either Corinth or Ephesus during the years 50-51 C.E.<sup>323</sup>

In the preceding chapter we argued that the best reading of the evidence suggested that Galatians 2:1-10 must be equated with Acts 15:1-35. Similarly, both Paul (Gal 2:11-14) and Luke (Acts 15:36-41) indicate that Paul parted company with Barnabas at some stage after the Council. This coincidence of details, however, probably suggests that the Galatian crisis flared up at sometime after the events of the Jerusalem Council (c. 48 C.E.) and the Incident at Antioch (c. 49 C.E.), as they are described in those passages. According to Acts and the autobiographical material in Paul's letters it seems that, having left Antioch (c. 49/50 C.E.) following those divisive crises, Paul travelled first to revisit the churches in Galatia (Acts 15:41-16:5). We have noted that Galatians 4:13 may imply that this was

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<sup>321</sup> Baur, *Paul*, 247-248.

<sup>322</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 44.

<sup>323</sup> See the discussion in Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 10-11, who follows T. H. Campbell, "Paul's 'Missionary Journeys' as Reflected in his Letters", *JBL* 74 (1955), 80-87. Both of these scholars argue that in terms of dating Galatians, it is important to remember that Paul's letters are always topical and tend to refer to events in the recent past. Along with Campbell, which he cites as "an often overlooked but important article", Witherington notes how Galatians is the only place in the Pauline corpus where we find "any sort of detailed discussion of Paul's pre-Christian years and conversion and the events that immediately followed that conversion" (10).

Paul's second visit to the region, which may be corroborated by Luke in Acts 16:6. Luke relates that in the following months Paul went on to evangelise Philippi (Acts 16:11-40; cf. 1 Thess 2:2), Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9), Athens (Acts 17:16-34; cf. 1 Thess 3:1), and Corinth (Acts 18:1-17; 1 Thess 1:1).<sup>324</sup> Acts (18:11) suggests, and there seems no justifiable reason to doubt, that Paul's missionary activity in and around Corinth lasted about eighteen months.

Probably around the year 51, Paul left Corinth and went to Ephesus (Acts 19:1; cf. 1 Cor 16:8). Acts (18:18-23; 19:1) takes him there via a return trip to Jerusalem and Antioch. However, as we noted at the end of the previous chapter, a return to Judea and Syria following the divisive Jerusalem Council meeting and Paul's clash with Peter and James' party at Antioch seems unlikely. Despite this fabrication, Luke is probably correct in placing Paul in Ephesus for a long period of time, perhaps some two and half years (Acts 19:8, 10). In what may be a significant comment, Paul tells us that his Ephesian sojourn was marked out not only by great opportunity for effective missionary work, but also by a great deal of opposition to that work (1 Cor 16:8-9). So it is entirely possible that Paul wrote Galatians either during his eighteen month sojourn at Corinth, or early in his Ephesian ministry. Should that assumption be correct, it might indicate that Galatians was amongst the first of the letters Paul wrote. F. F. Bruce, an avid advocate of the South Galatia thesis, has even suggested that Galatians may be the very first of all Paul's extant letters.<sup>325</sup>

More recently P. F. Esler has offered a similar line of reasoning, placing only 1 Thessalonians before Galatians on the strength that the Pauline theme of justification by faith, which so pervades the letter to the Galatians, is absent from 1 Thessalonians.<sup>326</sup> But Esler concedes that this omission may be explained by the fact that the church in Thessalonica was composed entirely of Gentile converts who were as yet untroubled by the

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<sup>324</sup> On Paul's itinerary as it is summarised here, it seems that Acts and the letters of Paul mostly concur in broad outline, if not in precise detail – so, Ogg, *Chronology*, 112-126; Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2:106-112; P. E. Davies, "The Macedonian Scene of Paul's Journeys", *BA* 26 (1963), 91-106; L. C. A. Alexander, "Chronology of Paul", in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G. F. Hawthorne and R. P. Martin, 115-123 (122-123); and D. G. Horrell, *An Introduction to the Study of Paul* (CBSS; London & New York: Continuum, 2000), 29-37.

<sup>325</sup> Bruce, *Galatians*, 41-56. See also Campbell, "Paul's 'Missionary Journeys'", 86-87; Vielhauer, *Geschichte*, 110-111; Betz, *Galatians*, 11-12; Painter, *Just James*, 58-59; and Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 10-11.

<sup>326</sup> Esler, *Galatians*, 36. Similarly, Martyn, *Galatians*, 19-20.

Christian Jewish circumcision putsch. Bruce, too, reminds us that attempting to plot the dating of Paul's letters on the basis of a supposed development in Pauline thought ignores the very nature of the genre. All of the authentic letters are occasional in character – in each case Paul is addressing a specific community with specific problems. Attempting to assign priority based on these differing themes fails to account for the disparate purposes of Paul's correspondence.

Much has been made of the singular eschatological tone of the Thessalonian correspondence as opposed to the more developed, less apocalyptic tenor of the theology in Galatians, which stands closer to Romans in terms of the issues addressed and the arguments employed by Paul.<sup>327</sup> However, Bruce correctly observes that the apocalyptic tone in 1 Thessalonians signals that Paul wrote primarily to counter the excessive eschatological expectations at Thessalonica, just as the focus on the Law in Galatians signals Paul's chief concern with the problems raised by the infiltration of the Christian Jewish circumcision party at Galatia.<sup>328</sup>

The only significant piece of direct evidence from Paul that may help us date Galatians concerns the reference to the Galatian communities in 1 Corinthians (16:1). In that passage, Paul informs his Corinthian congregation that with regard to the collection they should follow the same instruction he gave to the Galatians. There is probably an allusion to the original motivation behind the first request for such a collection in Galatians 2:10, but neither direct appeal nor detailed directions are given about the matter in this letter. This suggests that at the time of writing Paul had yet to initiate the collection in Galatia and, therefore, Galatians must predate 1 Corinthians. As F. Watson points out: "Since so much of the letter is concerned to prove [Paul's] independence of the church in Jerusalem, he would have had to refer to the collection if he had already initiated it in Galatia, in order to explain why the collection did not imply subordination to Jerusalem or

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<sup>327</sup> Although, Martyn, *Galatians*, 97-105, has rightly argued that Galatians is as strongly informed by Paul's apocalyptic vision as is 1 Thessalonians.

<sup>328</sup> Bruce, *Galatians*, 53-55. Although Bruce equates Galatians 2:1-10 with the famine visit of Acts 11:30, we can still agree with his comments about the difficulties involved in attempting to date the letters on the basis of their thematic content. Similar comments about the "dubious" method of dating the letters based on "theological indices" are made by Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxxxiv; and Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 180-182.

any compromise with its desire to ‘compel the Gentiles to Judaize’ (2:14)”.<sup>329</sup> We must assume that Paul delivered the instructions for the collection during his second visit to Galatia and prior to his arrival in Corinth.

In addition to these arguments, B. Witherington adds a further consideration that is often overlooked by commentators – the absence of social networks or local authority structures in the Galatian churches.<sup>330</sup> Contrary to his usual practice, Paul sends no personal greetings to any individuals within the churches at Galatia. Moreover, he makes no appeal for the leaders of the communities to intervene in the crisis, as he does in other letters aimed at solving internal problems and disputes (1 Thess 5:12-13; 1 Co 16:15-16; Phil 4:2-3). Paul clearly perceives the crisis to be sufficiently severe enough to warrant intervention. But his failure to enlist local assistance suggests a situation early in the life of the Galatian communities prior to the development of a local leadership and a network of Pauline co-workers. At this stage of their development the communities appear to still be dependent upon the direct guidance of agents of the mother church in Antioch.

Finally, Acts indicates that Paul’s second stay in Galatia must have been brief, and Galatians implies that Paul did not encounter any problems with Judaizers during his time in Galatia. On the contrary, Paul emphasises that the Law-observant gospel was previously unknown to his converts. Hence he stresses that the manifestations of the Spirit that the Galatians experienced were not the result of observing the Law (3:2). He pointedly asks his audience, “Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles amongst you because you observe the Law, or because you believe what you heard?” (3:5). When Paul wrote Galatians, however, the Judaizers were well established and were enjoying some success (1:6; 3:1; 4:21; 5:4, 7). Indeed, many of Paul’s Gentile converts were apparently adopting some aspects of Law-observance (4:10-11), and Paul expresses astonishment at the rapidity with which the Galatians had deserted the gospel he preached (1:6). This implies that the Judaizers at Galatia were late on the scene and their immediate achievements were the primary reason for Paul’s writing to the Galatians. It is likely, therefore, that it was during

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<sup>329</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 59. See also, Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 11.

<sup>330</sup> Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 10.

his time in either Corinth or Ephesus that Paul received word of the problems in Galatia that led to the writing of his letter to the Galatians, probably around the years 50-51 C.E.<sup>331</sup>

### **3.2. The Judaisers from Jerusalem**

We noted in the Introduction that with few exceptions the majority of scholars agree that the crisis that developed among the Christian communities in the province of Galatia was not the result of inherent tensions within those communities.<sup>332</sup> Accordingly, the majority position holds that the Galatian crisis was caused by outsiders who attempted to persuade Paul's Gentile converts to adopt a vision of Christianity that was radically different from the one preached by Paul. However, there is significant divergence of opinion amongst commentators on the question of origins. Were the troublemakers agents of the Jerusalem church acting under the authority of the apostolic leadership? Few scholars are prepared to answer that question in the affirmative, preferring to see the Judaisers as an eccentric group of Christian Jews who acted without the explicit sanction of Jerusalem. By contrast, one might argue that the rapid success of the Judaisers at Galatia can only be explained if they were representatives of Jerusalem who after the Council and the Antiochene dispute travelled to the churches of Galatia close on Paul's heels with the intention of undermining his mission. This view would also allow us to speculate that the Judaisers were intent on completing the program initiated by James to bring all the Christian communities under the authority of Jerusalem. To make such an argument, of course, we would have to find clear confirmation from within the letter itself, and any argument would have to be founded on the whole letter and not on isolated fragments of Paul's rhetoric.

Throughout the body of the letter Paul neither explicitly identifies these agitators, nor does he systematically detail the content of the gospel message they

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<sup>331</sup> Neither Bruce nor Esler is prepared to put a precise date on Galatians. However, the years 50-51 C.E. are identified as the best the evidence allows according to Dunn, *Galatians*, 19; and Martyn, *Galatians*, 19-20. Cf. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 8-13, who argues that Galatians must be dated no earlier than 49 C.E. (after the Antiochene dispute) and no later than 53-54 C.E. (his preferred dating of 1 Corinthians).

<sup>332</sup> E.g., Bligh, *Galatians*, 31; Betz, *Galatians*, 7; Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 36-74; Russell, "Paul's Opponents", 345-350; Longenecker, *Galatians*, xcv; Matera, *Galatians*, 7-11; Dunn, *Theology of Paul's Letter*, 8; Martyn, *Galatians*, 120; Sumney, "Servants of Satan", 137; and Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 17-48.

preached.<sup>333</sup> Moreover, as we observed in the Introduction, we have access only to Paul's side of the debate, and even then his arguments have been framed as a reaction to second-hand reports. We are forced, therefore, to "mirror-read" Paul's comments in order to reconstruct both the identity of his opponents and the content of their gospel.<sup>334</sup> Still, while the original situation cannot be reclaimed definitively, it is certainly clear what Paul knew of the situation and those troublemakers who had caused it. We have no reason to assume that Paul was not well informed of the situation at Galatia. So, while it may be true that Paul does not explicitly address his opponents directly, the content of their teachings is implicit in the issues Paul does tackle in the course of his response to the report of their activities that he has received.<sup>335</sup>

We must also observe that Paul's letter to the Galatians appears to be a single and self-contained correspondence. Unlike some other letters in the Pauline corpus, such as 2 Corinthians and Philippians, this letter does not appear to be an amalgam of various letter fragments. Similarly, Galatians clearly addresses a single issue with a complex structured argument. It is the product of a highly skilled communicator who has utilised the conventions of ancient rhetoric to construct a consistent attack on the issues raised by his opponents.<sup>336</sup> We do not find in Galatians the shifts in topic that are characteristic of 1 Corinthians where Paul is addressing a number of unrelated issues raised by the Corinthians in his absence. Thus, Galatians seems to be a unitary whole containing Paul's focused response to the issues raised by the agitators' troublemaking at Galatia.<sup>337</sup> Therefore, a careful and judicious use of mirror-reading with due attention to Paul's

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<sup>333</sup> As noted in the Introduction, such is the nature of our evidence that we can only deduce and infer the problems the Judaizers are causing for Paul and his communities at Galatia; and, even then, our picture of both the crisis and the protagonists involved are artificial constructions built on Paul's perception of the situation as it was reported to him. C. Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit*, 87, reminds us that we are dealing, not with the "historical Galatians", but the "epistolary Galatians". See the similar comments in Matera, *Galatians*, 6; and Smiles, *The Gospel*, 6.

<sup>334</sup> We have already noted the dangers inherent in the use of mirror-reading, and observed the various precautions necessary to avoid misinterpreting Paul's remarks about his opponents. See Barclay, "Mirror-Reading", 84-86; Matera, *Galatians*, 6-7; Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents*, 77-86; and Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 21-23.

<sup>335</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 5. See also Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxxxix.

<sup>336</sup> Thuren, *Derhetorizing Paul*, 67.

<sup>337</sup> This point is made by T. D. Gordon, "The Problem at Galatia", *Int* 41 (1987), 32-43 (33-34), who is followed by Russell, "Paul's Opponents", 338.

rhetorical strategy will help us to reconstruct both the gospel and the identity of Paul's opponents at Galatia.

By way of an overview we should note at the outset that the clearest indications we get from the letter concerning Paul's opponents are the opening statements in 1:6-9 and the *postscript* of 6:11-18. In the first of these passages we learn that the troublemakers were preaching "another gospel" (~~et~~ *eron euaggelion*), which in Paul's opinion was "really no gospel at all" (1:6). In the verse immediately following, he recounts the gist of the report he has received: "Evidently, some (~~tine~~) people are troubling (*tarassonteß*) you and wishing to pervert the gospel of Christ" (1:7). R. N. Longenecker observes that Paul's allusion to "an angel from heaven" here suggests that Paul's opponents came with impressive qualifications and that in support of their "gospel" they were appealing to a higher authority than Paul.<sup>338</sup> In the closing passages of the letter Paul warns his readers about the motivations of the troublemakers. Paul says, "It is those who want to make a showing in the flesh, these people compel (*ajagkazousin*) you to be circumcised" (6:12). In addition to this motive they, according to Paul, only want to avoid "being persecuted for the cross of Christ" (6:12). While it may be true that this statement is a highly polemical assertion that probably provides little concrete data about the agitators' motivations, it does reveal a great deal about what Paul knew of his opponents' religious affiliations.<sup>339</sup> Consequently, in attempting to uncover the origins of the Galatian Judaisers these two sets of passages must be paramount to our investigations. However, we are not restricted to these few meagre allusions.

Various other inferences may be drawn from both the structure and content of Paul's argument in Galatians. In particular, the claims and accusations that his opponents have made against him are probably evident even within the context of the letter's distinctive salutation or *prescript* (1:1-5). Paul begins here with a characteristic identification of himself as the author and the Galatians as the recipients of his letter (1:1-2) to whom he sends greetings (1:3). To this conventional opening, however, Paul adds

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<sup>338</sup> Longenecker, *Galatians*, xcv.

<sup>339</sup> Sumney, "Servants of Satan", 136; Koester, *Introduction*, 2:119; and Lührmann, *Galatians*, 123. Jewett, "Agitators", 205-207, who is followed by Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxxxviii-xcvi, depends heavily on this passage to place the Galatian crisis within the context of heightened Jewish nationalism during the decades leading up to the Jewish War.

several unconventional features, which seem to be intended as an introduction to the three dominant themes of his argument against his opponents.<sup>340</sup> First, Paul inserts a vigorous defence of his apostleship as the product of a divine revelation (1:1), which will be further explored in 1:11-2:21. Second, Paul draws on early Christian formulae that speak of the fatherhood of God and the salvific effect of Christ's sacrifice (1:4-5), which is most likely meant to both recall the original thrust of his gospel and prepare the way for his rebuttal of his opponents' gospel in 3:1-4:31. Finally, Paul makes reference to Christ's death as the means of deliverance from the "present evil age", which might suggest that his opponents were offering a different avenue for salvation that compromised what Paul calls the "truth of the gospel" (2:5, 14) – an issue that Paul will develop in 5:1-6:10. H. D. Betz has called these three points the "hermeneutical keys" for unlocking Paul's concerns about his opponents' ministry in Galatia.<sup>341</sup> Accordingly, we may use these three themes as a way in to our discussion of the Judaisers and their gospel.

### **3.2.1. *Membership in the Family of God***

We will begin with our second "hermeneutical key", that is Paul's emphasis on the fatherhood of God, which appears in the *prescript* of Galatians. Among the salutations of the Pauline corpus this emphasis is unique in that God the Father is mentioned three times in the opening passages of Galatians (1:1, 3, 4). In the salutations of 11 of the other epistles God's fatherhood is mentioned only once, and 2 Thessalonians has two occurrences (1:1-2). So Galatians is unusual with its threefold repetition within the opening verses. Apparently the underscoring of God's fatherhood over the Galatian "brothers" (v. 2) weighed heavily in Paul's thoughts as he began his epistle. If the Judaisers questioned Paul's apostolic status and his gospel, as we have argued above, then they probably also argued that Paul's gospel could not bring Gentiles into the family of God.

As Christian Jews, Paul's opponents must have noted that for males, admission to the family of God must involve circumcision as an initiatory step. After all, the

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<sup>340</sup> This view is universally accepted, see Russell, "Paul's Opponents", 338-341; Betz, *Galatians*, 38-40; Longnecker, *Galatians*, 10; Dunn, *Theology of Paul's Letter*, 20-21; and Smiles, *The Gospel*, 31-32.

<sup>341</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 39. Cf. Russell, "Paul's Opponents", 338-339; and *idem*, "Rhetorical Analysis of the Book of Galatians, Part 2", *BSac* 150 (1993), 416-439 (417-421).



strongest and most consistent element of Paul's attack on the troublemakers concerns the issue of circumcision. This fact suggests that the demand for circumcision was a central plank in his opponents' platform. The clearest evidence for this is in Paul's closing remarks (Gal 6:12-13), where he directly accuses his opponents of seeking to circumcise the Galatians in order to make a good showing in the flesh, avoid persecution, and boast of their achievements.<sup>342</sup> Scholars who focus on Paul's rhetorical strategy unanimously agree that these comments represent part of Paul's *conclusio* – an epilogue that restates and recapitulates the central arguments addressed in the body of the letter. On that basis, it would seem that circumcision is one of the central issues in Paul's dispute with his opponents at Galatia.

Earlier in 5:2-6, Paul alluded to his opponents' pro-circumcision message by rehearsing "a litany of dire consequences" that must follow if his Gentile converts submitted to circumcision.<sup>343</sup> Paul's purpose is clearly to dissuade his readers from such a disastrous course of action. He warns them in no uncertain terms that allowing themselves to be circumcised will render Christ's salvific sacrifice impotent, thereby obliging them to embrace the whole Law. Paul observes that in adopting Law-observance the Galatians would alienate themselves from both Christ and grace (5:2-4). Paul closes this attack with a catchcry that he will again echo in the closing lines of the letter: "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (5:6; cf. 6:15).

Elaborating further on the theme of circumcision, Paul characterises the pro-circumcision putsch in Galatia as a "disturbing" influence (1:7). His aim here is to demonstrate to the Galatians that adopting the practice of circumcision can only have a negative impact (5:10) on their progress, and that such action constitutes a complete reversal of the faith-practice first enjoined upon them by Paul.<sup>344</sup> In the next verse (5:11), Paul asks rhetorically, "Why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching

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<sup>342</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 313; Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 151; Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography*, 168; and Hall, "Rhetorical Outline", 286. Sumney, "Servants of Satan", 135-136, rates this passage as one of "the most direct statements about the other teachers in Galatia".

<sup>343</sup> Longenecker, *Galatians*, 228.

<sup>344</sup> Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 37-38; and Sumney, "Servants of Satan", 139-140.

circumcision?“. Leaving aside for the moment the issue of what Paul means by this question, we should note that its placement here serves to draw parallels between his ministry and that of his opponents. Paul no longer preaches circumcision and consequently suffers persecution, while (by implication) his opponents preach circumcision and thereby avoid persecution.

In support of their pro-circumcision position, Paul’s opponents appear to have appealed to the story of Abraham (3:6-29; 4:21-31), in which the institution of circumcision was imposed on God’s chosen people (Gen 17:1-27). In Galatians 4:22-5:1 Paul presents an extended allegory focusing on two important women, Sarah and Hagar, from the Torah. At this point, Paul is returning to a scriptural argument that he has already visited in his earlier discussion of Abraham (3:6-18). In both these passages Paul draws extensively on material in Genesis 16-21, which forms the heart of the Abraham cycle in the patriarchal stories. Paul introduces the allegory of Hagar and Sarah as a contrast between a prior covenant and the new covenant. According to Paul’s exegesis, the allegory serves to support his claim for the subordination of the old regime to a new agreement which God wrought by the death and resurrection of Christ. In so doing, Paul overturns the whole thrust of the Abraham cycle that Israel is descended from Isaac, the son of Abraham’s wife Sarah, and equates the nation of Israel with the descendents of Ishmael, the son of the slave woman Hagar. This curious reversal of the accepted tradition must suggest that Paul is addressing arguments first raised by the troublemakers.<sup>345</sup>

J. Sumney denies this conclusion, arguing that Paul, and not his opponents, introduced Abraham into the argument as “evidence” against the opponents’ claims regarding the necessity of circumcision.<sup>346</sup> However, Paul’s innovative (even arbitrary) reinterpretation of the Abraham narrative indicates that he is responding directly to the arguments of his opponents, for it seems unlikely that Paul would have used such an argument against circumcision, since the issue of circumcision and the covenant are

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<sup>345</sup> So Longenecker, *Galatians*, 200, who notes that the polemical character of the Hagar-Sarah story suggests a direct response to usage of the same story by the Judaizers in similar “*ad hominem* fashion”. See also, Dunn, *Galatians*, 243-244.

<sup>346</sup> Sumney, “*Servants of Satan*”, 144-145; and C. B. Cousar, *Galatians* (Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 73, whom Sumney follows. Similarly, Dunn, *Galatians*, 16, expresses some concerns over the connection between the opponents and the Abraham argument.

intimately related to the Abraham story (Gen 17:1-27).<sup>347</sup> As J. L. Martyn points out, nowhere else can we find any evidence to suggest that descent from Abraham formed a central tenet of Paul's gospel.<sup>348</sup> Paul's gospel did not include either circumcision or adherence to the dietary or purity codes of Judaism.<sup>349</sup> Therefore, it seems an incredible stretch of the imagination to speculate that Paul would have used such a convoluted exegesis of a quintessential Jewish story to win over Gentile converts to his gospel. An argument founded on Abrahamic descent makes more sense in the context of that "different gospel" preached by the Galatian agitators who appear to have reasoned that Gentile believers in Jesus Messiah must embrace full covenant membership by accepting (male) circumcision (cf. Deut 27:26; Lev 18:5).<sup>350</sup>

Another significant aspect of Paul's use of Abraham is his introduction of adoption language to describe the status of the Gentile Christians.<sup>351</sup> Paul takes the Abrahamic tradition of circumcision and spiritualises it in such a way as to make the uncircumcised, rather than the circumcised, heirs of the promise, making the cross of Christ the divine instrument of the Gentiles' inclusion in the people of God (3:13-14). Accordingly, Paul can reiterate the baptismal formula that must have been current during his time as a missionary under the auspices of Antioch, which serves to remind the Galatians of their incorporation "in Christ...where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, man nor woman" (3:27-28). Accordingly, Paul is able to twist the Abraham narrative in such a way as to outline the process by which the Gentiles are adopted into the family of God, thus becoming heirs who are able to join with other Christians in addressing

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<sup>347</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 448. Similarly, Betz, *Galatians*, 237, suggests that at this point Paul seeks to win back the Galatians by directly addressing the Judaizers, attempting to refute their claims with an appeal to the same scripture that formed a central aspect of their gospel. But see also, Perkins, *Abraham's Divided Children*, 88, who notes that Paul's misuse of scripture here results in a "shocking denial of Jewish claims to be descended from Isaac".

<sup>348</sup> Martyn, "Law-Observant Mission", 319.

<sup>349</sup> T. W. Martin, "The Covenant of Circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14) and the Situational Antithesis in Galatians 3:28", *JBL* 122 (2003), 111-125, demonstrates the controversial nature of Paul's exegesis of Genesis 17 and how this indicates Paul's position on circumcision.

<sup>350</sup> Argued strongly by Martyn, *Galatians*, 447-457. Similarly, Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 62; Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 196-198; and Matera, *Galatians*, 9.

<sup>351</sup> P. F. Esler, "Paul's Contestation of Israel's (Ethnic) Memory of Abraham in Galatians 3", *BTB* 36 (2006), 23-34 (25-27).

God as “*Abba!* Father!” (4:1-7).<sup>352</sup> While some scholars have noticed Paul’s use of kinship language both here in Galatians and elsewhere, they seldom see the polemical nature of Paul’s kinship metaphors in this specific context.<sup>353</sup>

It is only at this point in Paul’s argument that he introduces adoption language. Prior to his appeal to the story of Abraham to support his proclamation of Gentile righteousness wrought by faith (3:6-29), Paul made only scant use of inclusive categories.<sup>354</sup> He had addressed the Galatians as “brothers” on only one occasion in his opening salvo against the rival gospel (1:11). However, once Paul introduces Abraham into his argument he resorts constantly to fraternal metaphors that are intended to mark the inclusion of Gentiles. Eight times in the space of the next four chapters (3:15; 4:12, 28, 31; 5:11, 13; 6:1, 18), Paul addresses his auditors as “brothers”. A similar pattern can be detected in Paul’s use of family metaphors. On only three occasions in the salutation of the letter (1:1, 3, 4) does Paul refer to the fatherhood of God. However, beginning with 3:26 Paul makes extensive use of familial language, recognising his Gentile converts as “children of God” (3:26; 4:6-7), “children of Abraham” (3:7) “children of the promise” and “children of freedom” (3:7). By bringing together the Abraham story and the Law-free theology in this manner Paul effectively radicalises the familial metaphors so deeply embedded in the Jewish tradition to embrace the Gentiles, who were never formerly considered family members.<sup>355</sup> A status that was considered the sole preserve of the circumcised elect of Israel was, according to Paul’s reading of the Abraham story, granted to uncircumcised Gentiles.

Paul’s tactic was to separate what his opponents’ gospel no doubt held together, Abraham’s faith (Gen 15:6) and his Law-observance (Gen 17:10-11). Arguing that God’s promises were to Abraham’s seed (cf. Gen 12:7; 13:15; 17:7; 24:7), a singular form that he interpreted as referring to Christ (Gal 3:16), Paul could assert that it was through faith in

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<sup>352</sup> J. L. White, “God’s Paternity as Root Metaphor in Paul’s Conception of Community”, *Forum* 8 (1992), 271-295, explores the use and origins of kinship language in Paul’s letters and the Synoptic tradition.

<sup>353</sup> One exception here is Roetzel, *Paul*, 122-123, who argues that “the claim and counter-claim of kin against kin” that Paul brings to bear on the dispute in Galatia played a seminal role in “the development of Paul’s adoption metaphor”.

<sup>354</sup> See the discussion of Paul’s use of adoption language within the context of the Abraham story in Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 281-292.

<sup>355</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 186; and Roetzel, *Paul*, 122.

the seed of Abraham, not through Law-observance expressed via circumcision, that Gentiles were made the children of Abraham. Not only was this a highly innovative interpretation, it must also have been read as offensive and polemical to the Law-observant. As H. D. Betz has noted, in a manner not unlike the rhetoric of the Qumran Covenanters, Paul's blatantly sectarian language served to exclude other Law-observant Jews from the family of God by asserting that only the Law-free Christian community constituted the true Israel of God (6:16).<sup>356</sup>

Paul's appeal to the story of Abraham, a story that doubtless his critics and rivals had used against him, was ingenious. However, his creative and unprecedented co-opting of that story into his defence of Gentile inclusion was susceptible to criticism. His critics would agree that Abraham was a man justified by faith, but they could easily argue that scripture also testifies to the divine requirement of circumcision (Gen 17:5) as a ratification of one's place among the elect (Gen 17:10-11). In addition to Genesis, other scriptural passages and traditions (e.g., Sir 44:19-21; Jub 23:10; 24:11) could be cited in corroboration of the claim that circumcision was the indispensable, divinely-ordained sign and seal of full membership in the covenant relationship with God. Again, it seems unlikely that Paul would have embarked on this line of argument if it were not fundamental to his opponents' case.

It would seem, therefore, that the key aspect of the agitators' gospel was the demand for circumcision. But we must ask, was this their only concern? Were they motivated by this single issue, or was circumcision only one element in a broader set of demands?<sup>357</sup> Paul also accuses his opponents of failing to keep the whole Law (6:13), which might indicate that the Judaisers were syncretists who mixed nomistic theology with antinomistic lifestyles. As we saw in the Introduction, this line of argument is fundamental to theories that postulate a Gnostic element to the Galatian opponents or those that argue for a local pagan influence. But Paul never says that his opponents lacked a desire for

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<sup>356</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 323.

<sup>357</sup> Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, 19, argues that the opponents preached a gospel of circumcision rather than full Law-observance. Munck, *Paul*, 132; Harvey, "Opposition", 319-332; and Gaston, *Paul and Torah*, 29-30, 81-82, offer similar views. See also Elliott, *Cutting Too Close*, 13, who, while arguing that circumcision remains the central issue in Galatians, postulates that Paul's concern over the issue "does not originate from an antipathy towards the Law, but from an antipathy toward the [Celtic] cult of the Mother of the Gods and an abhorrence of self castration".

obedience to all the Law. In fact he says just the opposite. Paul's opponents apparently held forth the ideal of a whole life under the protection of the Law, in that the Galatians could be described as wanting to be under Law (4:21).

In an event, the fact that Abraham figured strongly in the gospel of the Judaisers suggests that circumcision was not the sole aspect of the Law at stake in Galatia. R. N. Longenecker remarks that Jewish traditions frequently considered Abraham to have observed the Law despite the fact that the Law was given to Moses generations later (Jub 16:28; Sir 44:20; 2 Bar 57:2; Philo, *Abr.*, 5-6, 60-61, 275; *b. Yom.*, 286; *m. Kid.*, 4:14; cf. Gen 25:6).<sup>358</sup> Moreover, we know of no ardent Jews in the Second Temple period who upheld Abraham as a central figure in Jewish self-definition while at the same time suggesting that his significance was limited to observance of only some of the Law. Accordingly, we must assume that the troublemakers at Galatia were demanding that the Gentiles adopt complete observance of the Mosaic Law. This much is suggested by 5:2-3, where Paul warns the Galatians in the most strident terms that if any man allows himself to “be circumcised, he is obliged to obey the whole Law”.

We might get the impression from this passage that this is the first time that the Galatians were made aware of what we might call the “fine print” on the circumcision deal. Here again we are confronted with the possibility that Paul's rivals had only sought to impose circumcision on the Galatians, but had either not told them about the concomitant obligations or were themselves unconcerned about these obligations. Such might be the case if we were to take literally Paul's later comment that those seeking to impose circumcision do not keep the Law themselves (6:13). But this can hardly be what Paul intends by these comments. Despite the variety of sectarian movements that constituted Second-Temple Judaism, there is no indication that in the first century there existed any Jewish sect that, while maintaining circumcision as a requirement for true covenant relationship, did not demand any of the other legal requirements of the Mosaic Law.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> R. N. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham's God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 31-32. Cf. Betz, *Galatians*, 158.

<sup>359</sup> Longenecker, *Triumph*, 32. Cf. Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 64-65; and Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 62.

Circumcision alone did not constitute being a Jew and circumcision as an initiatory rite for male proselytes was the end result of a long process of conversion and study.<sup>360</sup> Furthermore, in most forms of Judaism during this period, the Law was perceived to be an indivisible whole. This is indicated by the Mishnah, which stresses that one must heed the light as well as the heavy commandments (*m. 'Abot.*, 2:1; 4:2). Closer to Paul's own time, the author of 4 Maccabees (5:20-21) proclaims that transgressions of the Law in either small or large things is equally indictable, since both demonstrate that the transgressor despises the Law. Finally, we might quote Sirach (7:3) who suggests that any sin renders one guilty of violating the Law, not just a law. Apparently, therefore, a person or community was not at liberty to pick and choose their practices, or discriminate about which legal regulations were binding – a sentiment shared by some Christians as well. Thus, we find that the author of the letter of James (2:10) decrees that “whoever keeps the whole Law, yet stumbles at one point is guilty of breaking all of it” (cf. Matt 5:18-19).

Paul's reminder that the whole Law is binding was probably not a negative statement within first-century Judaism, and it certainly would not be a surprise to his opponents.<sup>361</sup> Paul makes it clear that his opponents advocated the efficacy of complete observance of the whole Law by addressing them as “you who are under the Law” (4:21). Paul makes a similar statement in 2:15-17, including himself alongside the Judaizers as “Jews”.<sup>362</sup> More specifically, Paul explicitly states that the troublemakers are also concerned with the observance of “days, months, seasons and years” (4:10), which can only be seen as a clear reference to Jewish observance of the Sabbath, holy days and liturgical seasons. The overall context of Paul's attack on the pro-circumcision sensibilities of his opponents makes it clear that Paul is referring to the cultic festivals of

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<sup>360</sup> Dunn, *Galatians*, 265-266; and Perkins, *Abraham's Divided Children*, 9-12.

<sup>361</sup> Russell, “Paul's Opponents”, 343.

<sup>362</sup> Although W. O. Walker, “Does the ‘We’ in Gal 2:15-17 Include Paul's Opponents?”, *NTS* 49 (2003), 560-565, suggests that Paul is addressing Cephas, Barnabas, and “all the Jews” at Antioch. However, this does not necessarily exclude his opponents who clearly shared a great deal in terms of identity and activity.

the Jewish calendar, especially the important new moon festival, which seem to be implied in Paul's description of the "observation of months" (4:10).<sup>363</sup>

It must be admitted, that in referring to these Jewish cultic practices being advocated by his opponents (4:8-10), Paul does not employ specific Jewish terminology. D. Lührmann has tried to draw parallels between Paul's reference to the "elements" (στοιχεῖν) mentioned here (4:9) and a similar reference in 4:3, suggesting that Paul is decrying a form of pantheistic practice.<sup>364</sup> However, the reference to the "elements" in 4:3 is clearly within the context of the Galatians' former pagan faith-practice and, therefore, the allusion to the "elements" in 4:9 should not be seen as part of the teachings of Paul's opponents.<sup>365</sup> The mention of the "elements" in 4:9 could be an attempt on Paul's part to discredit his opponents by making an erroneous accusation about their teachings. One might compare the use of similar terminology in Colossians (2:8, 20) where στοιχεῖν is used as a polemical accusation against judaizing opponents.<sup>366</sup> J. D. G. Dunn speculates that Paul's tactic in Galatians 4:9 is to associate the careful reckoning of dates for the Jewish calendar with recourse to the "elements".<sup>367</sup> But J. Sumney is probably correct in his assertion that "the point is more simple and polemical: Paul is making the keeping of these [Jewish] feasts by Gentiles equivalent to keeping pagan observances".<sup>368</sup>

The manner in which Paul attempts to parody his opponents' message by drawing comparisons between the festivals and the veneration of the elements implies that, in addition to circumcision, his opponents placed significant value on the holy days

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<sup>363</sup> See T. C. G. Thornton, "Jewish New Moon Festivals, Galatians 4:3-11 and Colossians 2:16", *JTS* 40 (1989), 97-100; and Sumney, "Servants of Satan", 142-143, who follows Thornton. Cf. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 181-183, who provides a brief but thorough analysis.

<sup>364</sup> Lührmann, *Galatians*, 84-85, 126. Similar views are expressed by Nanos, *Irony*, 267-269; and T. Martin, "Apostasy to Paganism: The Rhetorical Stasis of the Galatian Controversy", *JBL* 114 (1995), 437-461, both of whom suggest that Paul is referring to the Galatians as backsliding into their old observance of the Imperial cult. On the other hand, Betz, *Galatians*, 217-218, suggests a reference to syncretistic practices that involve both Jewish and pagan elements.

<sup>365</sup> Barclay, "Mirror-Reading", 82, makes the point that attributing a belief in the "elements" to the troublemakers at this point can only be sustained by recourse to unsupported mirror-reading. One would need to find some corroborating indication elsewhere in Galatians to substantiate this claim.

<sup>366</sup> So Betz, *Galatians*, 216-217. Cf. C. Forbes, "Paul's Principalities and Powers: Demythologizing Apocalyptic?", *JSNT* 82 (2001), 61-88 (81-83).

<sup>367</sup> Dunn, *Galatians*, 228-229.

<sup>368</sup> Sumney, "Servants of Satan", 143 n. 52.



of the Jewish liturgical calendar. This would intimate that the troublemakers were causing disquiet amongst the Galatians by advocating full Law-observance. Furthermore, Paul suggests that his opponents wished to compel the Gentile Christians to be circumcised for fear of being persecuted for “the cross of Christ” (6:13), which implies that they are Christian Jews. It seems unlikely that the troublemakers at Galatia were non-Christian Jews or Gentile converts to Judaism who wanted to force Paul’s Gentile converts to become Jewish proselytes so as to avoid persecution from the civil authorities.<sup>369</sup> Rather 6:13 indicates that Paul is dealing with Christian Jews who wanted to force circumcision and Law-observance on his Gentile converts. Moreover, Paul’s claim that the Galatian Judaisers were motivated by the fear of being persecuted for Christ (6:12) substantiates the view that his opponents were fellow believers in Jesus. Paul must have understood that his opponents shared his and his readers’ common belief in Christ, or else the insult – that they wished to avoid persecution on account of Christ – would make no sense whatsoever.<sup>370</sup> Where his gospel differed from theirs was in their demand for full adherence to the Law.

This brings us to another significant point. J. L. Martyn argues correctly that Paul must have used the term “gospel” to describe the preaching of his opponents deliberately since it is a key concept in his understanding of the Christian *kerygma*.<sup>371</sup> In the Pauline correspondence, “gospel” has almost achieved the status of technical terminology and, therefore, Paul would not have used it here unless his opponents were also using the same terminology. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that Paul would have employed this term for a message that did not include a proclamation of Jesus Messiah. It stands to reason that his opponents preached a “gospel” that, in addition to the proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah, entailed a demand for circumcision (5:2-4; 6:12-

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<sup>369</sup> As argued by Nanos, *Irony*, 264-267, who suggests that the troublemakers were Jews who tried to encourage the Gentile Christians to become Jewish proselytes so as to avoid being persecuted because of their association with the Christian community. By contrast, Harvey, “Opposition”, 324, argues that the opponents were Gentiles, newly converted to Judaism, seeking to offer circumcision to Paul’s converts as a means of avoiding persecution. Harvey contends that these proselytes were pressuring fellow Christians to avoid persecution from the synagogue by adopting Jewish practices, but not Jewish theology.

<sup>370</sup> With few exceptions, most commentators accept this reading of the passage. See, for example, Blich, *Galatians*, 30-35; Jewett, “Agitators”, 205; Longenecker, *Galatians*, xciv-xcv, 290-291; Matera, *Galatians*, 230-231; Martyn, *Galatians*, 560-563; Das, *Paul*, 18-19; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 222-223; and Bruce, *Galatians*, 268-269.

<sup>371</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 109.

13); or, put more accurately, they apparently preached the necessity of circumcision and Law-observance as the only means of entry into the family of God.

Identifying the Judaisers as Christian Jews helps us to explain why Paul claimed that his opponents did not obey the Law. It was not from lack of desire to obey, but rather from an inherent inability to obey. As we shall see in the final section of this chapter, Paul argues that Law-observance compromises the truth of the Gospel precisely because it negates the efficacy of Christ's salvific death on the cross. No one can obey the Law by his or her own efforts. Hence, the failure of the Judaisers is not that they do not desire to obey the whole Law, but that they have identified themselves with a path to redemption that was not aided by God's Spirit (3:1-5).<sup>372</sup> Therefore, they were unable to meet the demands of the Law.

In 3:19–4:11 Paul attributed this inability to an earlier preparatory and immature stage in God's redemptive plan in which enslavement to sin and failure were the norm (3:23; 4:3, 8-11). Paul is wont to demonstrate to his Galatian audience the bankruptcy of his opponent's gospel. In effect, Paul argues that their gospel demands that the Christian revert in an anachronistic fashion to a bygone era dominated by both the Law and the concomitant inability to keep the Law. Paul equates this position as a temporary custodial phase (3:23), characterized by a childish and slavish state (4:1-3) and an enslavement to the elemental things of the world (4:8-10; cf. 4:3). Those Galatians who were tempted to "judaize" by receiving circumcision (5:2) needed to realise that they were subjecting themselves again to a yoke of slavery (5:1) by putting themselves under obligation to adhere to the whole Law (5:3) and thereby, they would sever themselves from Christ. Paul wished to stress that Christ was the only one who could set them free from the Law and failure (2:15-21; cf. Rom. 8:1-4). Clearly what we are dealing with here is a clash between two radically different understandings of the Christian message.

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<sup>372</sup> Das, *Paul and the Jews*, 33, describes the situation succinctly, "Even as the Galatians have been justified apart from works of the Law through faith in Christ...the subsequent Christian life in the Spirit is based on faith in Christ and not on the Mosaic Law". See also the discussion in M. Winger, "The Law of Christ", *NTS* 46 (2000), 537-546.

### 3.2.2. *Paul's Apostleship*

We are now in a position to address the key issue of Paul's apostolic status, which seems to have played a significant role in the Judaisers' arguments. The obvious inference that must be drawn from Paul's opening parenthesis (1:1) is that he believed that his status as an apostle was under attack from his opponents at Galatia. It is not entirely clear how his opponents had made this challenge or in what context the attack on Paul's credentials was made. However, the Judaisers seem to have undermined Paul's authority by directly referring to his past dealings with the apostolic authorities at Jerusalem. In particular, they appear to have cast doubts on the bases of Paul's apostolic status with reference to his commission, or lack thereof, from the appropriate authorities at Jerusalem. Several factors support these assumptions.

First, we should note by way of an initial overview that in Paul's letters there are a mere ten explicit references to Jerusalem, half of which occur in Galatians (1:17, 18; 2:1-2; 4:25, 26; cf. Rom 15:19, 21, 26, 31; 1 Cor 16:3).<sup>373</sup> The names of the pre-eminent leaders of the Jerusalem church – Cephas (Gal 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14; cf. 1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5) or alternatively Peter (Gal 2:7, 8), Jesus' brother James (Gal 1:19; 2:9, 12; cf. 1 Cor 15:7), "brothers of the Lord" (1 Cor 9:5), and John (Gal 2:9) – appear more often in Galatians than any of the other Pauline texts. Similarly, we find Barnabas (2:1, 9, 13; cf. 1 Cor 9:6; Col 4:10), an erstwhile member of the earliest Jerusalem community (Acts 4:36; 9:27), figuring prominently with the aforementioned Jerusalem triumvirate in Paul's opening autobiographical narrative (Gal 1:12-2:14 2:1, 9, 13). Later Jerusalem reappears as a figure of derision "for she and her children are in slavery" to the covenant from Mount Sinai (4:25). This claim echoes Paul's earlier attack on the false brothers at Jerusalem (2:4), whose attempt to "make us slaves" by imposing circumcision on the Gentiles is later extended to the James party, and then to Peter, Barnabas and the rest at Antioch (2:13), who were attempting to "compel the Gentiles to live like Jews" (2:14).<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> Romans (9:33; 11:26) contains two further references to "Zion", both of which are Scriptural quotes dealing with messianic themes drawn directly from Isaiah (28:16; 59:20-21). Another relevant, alternative term is "Judea", which occurs infrequently in the Pauline corpus; but, here again, Galatians (1:22) is represented along with 1 Thessalonians (2:14) and 2 Corinthians (1:16).

<sup>374</sup> We shall examine the connections between these verses in chapter four. See also Esler, *Galatians*, 138; and more fully in his earlier work, Esler, *The First Christians*, 57-62. Similarly Martyn, *Galatians*, 462-466.

This repeated focus on the apostolic community suggests that the spectre of the Jerusalem church and its leadership haunts the pages of this letter like no other in the Pauline corpus.

Second, from the very outset of the letter Paul appears on the defensive with regard to his apostolic authority vis-à-vis the original apostolic circle at Jerusalem. The emphatic initial negatives in 1:1 – “neither from human authorities...nor through human commission” – represent more than a mere, rhetorical, opening gambit. As G. Ebeling rightly observes, “At the beginning of a letter so highly charged in style and content, in an antithetical explication of his own apostolic authority clearly placed so emphatically at the start, Paul can hardly be employing purely stylistic variation”.<sup>375</sup> The negative and emphatic tenor of the remark suggests that the rhetoric present here must reflect the polemical situation of the letter. This appears more probable when we note the similar denials of verses 11-12, which exactly parallel those of 1:1 – “the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it”. These denials in turn anticipate the postponed, but emphatic, main clause of verses 16-17 – “I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood...nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already Apostles before me”.<sup>376</sup> Such emphatic and repeated denials must reflect the fact that Paul’s apostolate has been portrayed by the opponents in Galatia as derivative from former apostolic authorities – perhaps, specifically from either Cephas and James in Jerusalem, or from Barnabas in Antioch, since all of these play a role in the stories related by Paul.<sup>377</sup> Moreover, the Judaisers must also have been claiming that Paul had wilfully neglected to proclaim that gospel accurately, adulterating the Law-observant import of message that he had received at Jerusalem.

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<sup>375</sup> Ebeling, *The Truth of the Gospel*, 12-13. By contrast, Betz, *Galatians*, 39 cautions against attempts to determine the content of the charge against Paul on the basis of the prescript alone.

<sup>376</sup> There may even be here an intended chiasmic structure with the dual denials (“not by human authority; not through human commission” – 1:1, 11) being balanced by affirmations (“but through Jesus Christ” – 1:1, 12). So Ebeling, *The Truth of the Gospel*, 13; who is followed by Smiles, *The Gospel*, 32.

<sup>377</sup> The argument that 1:1 was composed as a direct response to accusations that Paul’s apostolate was derivative, either of Jerusalem or Antioch, is widely accepted. See, for example, Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 27-28; Schlier, *Galater*, 21; Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 12; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 4; Dunn, *Galatians*, 25; Martyn, *Galatians*, 92-95; Esler, *Galatians*, 118-120; and Perkins, *Abraham’s Divided Children*, 36-37.

G. Lyons, however, has argued that we should not read so much into Paul's rehearsal of his previous relationship with Jerusalem. We dealt with Lyons' views in the Introduction; however, it may be worth revisiting and expanding on that discussion here. Drawing on studies in Greco-Roman rhetoric and epistolography, Lyons argues that Paul's letter to Galatia is "deliberative" rather than "forensic" or "apologetic" in nature.<sup>378</sup> Accordingly, Paul revisits past events only in as far as it helps establish his character and ethos; hence, his apparently defensive assertions "are often, if not always, examples of pleonastic tautology used in the interest of clarity".<sup>379</sup> As we proposed in the Introduction, Lyons may be correct in suggesting that the letter was primarily "deliberative", but this does not mean that it is devoid of any apologetic statements. Deliberative speech could and often did contain statements that directly addressed false accusations against the speaker and, in that case, would have included elements of both apologetic argument and forensic analysis of past or current events that had a direct bearing on the present discussion.<sup>380</sup>

A *narratio* of the kind found in Galatians 1:13-2:14, while uncommon in deliberative speeches, could be included when such would serve to correct mistaken impressions about the speaker and, thereby, improve his standing and encourage his audience to be sympathetic to the arguments that were to follow.<sup>381</sup> The ancient rhetorician, Quintilian (*Inst. Or.*, 3:8:10-11), advised rhetors that statements about external matters that are nonetheless immediately relevant to the matters at hand could be introduced via a *narratio* when making a deliberative speech (cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.*, 40:8-19; 41:1-6). Such a *narratio*, even in a deliberative speech, had two functions.<sup>382</sup> First, the purpose of a *narratio* was not simply to inform or remind the auditors of past events, but to recall those past events as lessons for the future. In this way the rhetor could persuade his auditors by

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<sup>378</sup> Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography*, 25-27, 112-119. Cf. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 23-25; Hall, "Rhetorical Outline", 277-287; and Nanos, *Irony*, 32-61. For others who see the letter as primarily apologetic, see Betz, *Galatians*, 14; *idem*, "Literary Composition", 353-379; Brinsmead, *Galatians*, 42-55; Lüdemann, *Paul*, 46-48; and Hester, "The Use and Influence of Rhetoric", 386-408.

<sup>379</sup> Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography*, 110.

<sup>380</sup> Esler, *Galatians*, 65. Cf. Aune, *Literary Environment*, 203, 207; Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 23-25; Longenecker, *Galatians*, cxix; Smiles, *The Gospel*, 13; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 95-97; and Perkins, *Abraham's Divided Children*, 20-24.

<sup>381</sup> Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 95.

<sup>382</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 61-62; Esler, *Galatians*, 64-65; and Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 97.

placing the facts of his case in a certain context and presenting them in the manner most conducive to his point of view. Quintilian (*Inst. Or.*, 4:2:87) observes that it was the correct and accepted convention in a *narratio* to chronicle the relevant events surrounding an issue in chronological order so as to provide the proper context.

Second, a *narratio* afforded the rhetor the opportunity to either attack the character of an opponent or eulogise an ally. Lyons agrees with the first, arguing that the *narratio* in Galatians has to do with Paul's concern to establish "his divinely determined ethos, not defending his personal or official credentials".<sup>383</sup> Put otherwise, Paul's opponents need not have made any accusations against Paul for Paul to want to stress his authority and offer himself as an example to the Galatians of one who formerly stood against similar onslaughts from Judaising opponents. However, Lyons seems unaware of the second option, that Paul must have recalled his earlier dealings with Jerusalem in order to attack the character of his opponents because they were directly linked with the Jerusalem church.

In a *narratio* the rhetor could resort to pejorative language in order to dispose his auditors to his point of view and against that of his opponents. Throughout the *narratio*, Paul responds directly to his opponents' views on the Law from the perspective of their shared Christian traditions (1:7, 13-14; 2:15). Nevertheless he casts his fellow Christians in the role of adversaries and credits them with duplicitous motives. Hence, they are seen as "false brothers" who were "secretly brought in to spy on our freedom" by "those reputed pillars". In the subsequent incident at Antioch, Peter and Barnabas are accused of "hypocrisy" and cowardice in the face of the interference of the factional and divisive "men from James". Similarly, Paul's present opponents at Galatia are cast as "troublemakers" and "agitators" who are motivated by fear of persecution. Such pejorative and emotional language could not be accidental. It must have been intended to raise animus against the viewpoint of those whom Paul perceived to be his adversaries.<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography*, 133. See also Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit*, 133; and Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 71-73, both of whom agree with Lyons on this point.

<sup>384</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 61.

To pursue these points further, it should be noted that Paul explicitly signals his readers' familiarity with some version of events in his past, and he implicitly signals that this knowledge could only be derived from his opponents. In support of this view, we might cite Paul's rhetorical question "why am I still persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision?" (5:11), which many scholars read as an indication that Paul's opponents must have told the Galatians that Paul still taught circumcision.<sup>385</sup> However, this seems a rather difficult claim to defend. Surely the Galatians, who had been the recipients of Paul's gospel, would be well aware of Paul's position vis-à-vis circumcision. A far better understanding of 5:11 is that Paul's opponents had accused him of being inconsistent in having preached circumcision at other times and places, despite the fact that he was now preaching a circumcision-free gospel.<sup>386</sup> P. Perkins points out that Paul's defence is couched within "the context of an intra-Christian conflict" and, therefore, we might assume that the Judaisers are making claims about "some element in his earlier activity as a Christian missionary".<sup>387</sup> Elsewhere Paul admits to a level of flexibility in the course of his apostolic career (1 Cor 9:20; cf. Rom 15:1). According to missionary expediency, Paul appears to have adopted differing but appropriate lifestyles according to the community to whom he ministered. It may be possible that Paul's opponents could cite actual examples of Paul's willingness to accommodate his faith-practice to his audience. However, there is no significant evidence to suggest that following his conversion Paul ever returned to the practice of Law-observance and, in view of his early association with the Hellenists, it is unlikely that he ever did.<sup>388</sup>

In the light of this discussion, it would seem that the reference to Paul preaching circumcision, if genuine, could only have been to Paul's pre-Christian period.<sup>389</sup> On that

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<sup>385</sup> Tyson, "Paul's Opponents", 248-249; Jewett, "Agitators", 208; Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 12; Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 55; Bruce, *Galatians*, 236; and Betz, *Galatians*, 268.

<sup>386</sup> So Marxsen, *Introduction*, 54; Mussner, *Galaterbrief*, 54; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 373; and Perkins, *Abraham's Divided Children*, 99-100. More recently, C. Johnston Hodge, "Apostle to the Gentiles: Constrictions of Paul's Identity", *BibInt* 13 (2005), 270-288, has revived the theory that Paul understood his role as a Judean teacher of Gentiles to warrant a good deal of flexibility vis-à-vis his identity as a "Jew".

<sup>387</sup> Perkins, *Abraham's Divided Children*, 100. Cf. Schlier, *Galater*, 238; and Betz, *Galatians*, 269, who suggest that Paul's indifference towards circumcision evident even in Galatians (3:28; 5:6; 6:15) could be read as either critical or supportive of circumcision.

<sup>388</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 269; and Dunn, *Galatians*, 278-280.

<sup>389</sup> Matera, *Galatians*, 182.

basis, we might imagine that the Judaisers had attempted to discredit Paul by telling his Gentile converts of his former persecution of the Hellenists. It is significant that Paul introduces the account of his past with the formula, “You will have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism...” (1:13), which must signal that the Galatians had been informed of his career as a zealous Jew. But Paul’s narration of his early career does not simply stop at his pre-Christian phase, but goes on in precise detail to describe events that followed his conversion.

Paul’s statement in 5:11 does imply that Paul feels that he must respond to a distorted version of events from his past. If we were to ask what events these might be, the only answer possible would be those events surrounding his conversion and his early commerce with the Law-observant Jerusalem church, which are the subject of the early chapters of the letter.<sup>390</sup> Given the links Paul draws, we might assume that just as Paul’s disagreements with the gospel and the ministry of his Galatian opponents leads to *ad hominem* attacks on their character, so they too must have been equally critical of Paul, attacking both the content of his gospel and his right as an apostle to preach it. If these were not at issue, why would Paul make them so? It seems highly unlikely that Paul would have raised both the subject of his own authority and the spectre of his past controversies at Jerusalem and Antioch if these were not already central to the debate. Here again, we might refer to Quintilian (*Inst. Or.*, 4:2:43) who counsels the rhetor that one “should never say more than the case demands”.

This practice of providing only the most relevant details also explains why Paul’s description of these earlier events in Jerusalem and Antioch is brief and to the point. Paul is not providing his entire *curriculum vite* or attempting to compose his autobiography. He is arguing a specific case, which requires historical contextualisation. Moreover, it is likely that he is responding to direct accusations about his gospel and his apostolic status that require a relevant reply. Again, this approach is nothing less than would be expected of one following the conventions of ancient rhetoric, which required a *narratio* to be clear, brief, plausible, and devoid of all material that was not absolutely

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<sup>390</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 476–477.



germane.<sup>391</sup> The fact that Paul finds it necessary to detail his relationship with the apostolic authorities at Jerusalem implies that these Christian Judaisers were asserting a direct commission from the Jerusalem church as a counter to Paul's own claims to apostolic authority.

Previously, we argued that Galatians may be one of the earliest if not *the* earliest of Paul's letters. Addressed to communities established under the auspices of the Antiochene community, the Galatian churches were probably the one of the central foci at the Jerusalem Council. The subsequent dispute at Antioch, which facilitated a significant change in the leadership, would have brought the issue of the oversight of the Galatian churches back into contention. Paul, by virtue of his status as the apostolic founder, claimed them as his own. But the leadership at Jerusalem must have felt that these churches fell under their purview when Antioch was annexed and the Law-free mission curtailed via the initiative of James.

By way of substantiation of this line of speculation, we note that a significant aspect of the Judaisers' message must have been the record of the events surrounding Paul's early association with the Jerusalem Apostles, Peter, James and John, including the Council at Jerusalem. Why else would Paul report the performances of both the false brothers and Peter in supporting James' pro-circumcision putsch at Antioch if their duplicity were not directly related to the current behaviour of the Judaisers at Galatia?<sup>392</sup> There would seem to be here a clear allusion to possible claims by Paul's opponents at Galatia that Paul, like they, had similarly received the gospel by way of Jerusalem. There is probably also here a further implied charge that Paul had failed to preach that gospel correctly, abridging and adulterating the import of the message that he had received at Jerusalem. F. F. Bruce in an insightful piece of creative speculation has encapsulated in few short passages the essence of the Judaisers' attack on Paul's authority, as best that can be inferred from a mirror reading of Paul's defence on this matter.

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<sup>391</sup> See the discussion of this important point in R. G. Hall, "Historical Inference and Rhetorical Effect", in *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy*, ed. D. F. Watson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 308-320. Cf. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 96.

<sup>392</sup> Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 111, attempts to avoid this problem by suggesting that the problem in Galatia was not identical to that in Antioch. But this begs the question as stated above, why then did Paul include this detail if it were not relevant to his concerns in Galatia? This point is also made by Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 98. Cf. Dunn, *Galatians*, 72-78; and Bruce, *Galatians*, 101-102.

“The Jerusalem leaders are the only persons with authority to say what the true gospel is, and this authority they received direct from Christ. Paul has no comparable authority: any commission he exercises was derived by him from the Jerusalem leaders, and if he differs from them on the content or implications of the gospel, he is acting and teaching quite arbitrarily. In fact”, they may have added, “Paul went up to Jerusalem shortly after his conversion and spent some time with the apostles there. They instructed him in the first principles of the gospel and, seeing that he was a man of common intellect, magnanimously wiped out from their minds his record as a persecutor and authorised him to preach to others the gospel which he had learned from them. But when he left Jerusalem for Syria and Cilicia he began to adapt the gospel to make it palatable to Gentiles. The Jerusalem leaders practiced circumcision and observed the law and the customs, but Paul struck on a line of his own, omitting circumcision and other ancient observances from the message he preached, and thus he betrayed his ancestral heritage. This law-free gospel has no authority but its own; he certainly did not receive it from the apostles, who disapprove of his course of action. Their disapproval was publicly shown on one occasion at Antioch, when there was a direct confrontation between Peter and him on the necessity of maintaining the Jewish food-laws”.<sup>393</sup>

Against such claims, Paul asserts that he first went to Jerusalem in order to get “acquainted” with Peter (1:18), not to be “taught” or “receive” the content of the gospel he preached (1:12) or the “call” to preach it (1:15-16).<sup>394</sup> Both his gospel and his apostolic commission (1:15) are the products of the revelation (1:12) he received three years prior to his initial meeting with Cephas and James (1:15-17) and fourteen years before the Council meeting that recognised the legitimacy of his Apostleship among the Gentiles (2:1-10).<sup>395</sup> Paul is determined to set the record straight by explaining what kind of relationship existed between himself and the Jerusalem triumvirate, James, Cephas,

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<sup>393</sup> Bruce, *Galatians*, 26. Cf. Longenecker, *Galatians*, xcvi-xcvii.

<sup>394</sup> Matera, *Galatians*, 68-69; and Martyn, *Galatians*, 171-172.

<sup>395</sup> Similarly, Gaventa, “Galatians 1 and 2”, 313; Schütz, *Paul*, 128-158; and Hubbard, *New Creation*, 191-199.

and John. He is resolute in his willingness to demonstrate that no rift exists between him and them and, thus, that the gospel he preaches was not at variance with apostolic teaching. Paul seeks to establish that at the Jerusalem Council his gospel was recognised by the “Pillars” as divinely authorised (2:7-9).

Paul asserts that he went to Jerusalem to “present” (*ajheqemhn*) his gospel to the Jerusalem Apostles, not to seek their approval. The verb *ajhatesqai* is best understood as communication of information with the added notion of seeking an opinion.<sup>396</sup> Clearly, he is attempting to argue that he did not go to Jerusalem to seek apostolic sanction for his gospel, in the sense of an inferior seeking the blessing of a superior, but merely to present the details of his gospel message, which was to provide the subject for a conversation amongst equals.<sup>397</sup> As we saw in our exegesis of the accounts of the Council in Galatians and Acts, however, it seems that Paul’s version of events is far from accurate, and that both his gospel and his mission among the Gentiles were subject to the scrutiny of the apostolic authorities at Jerusalem. There was more than one way to read the outcome of the Council, and subsequent events at Antioch demonstrated that no lasting solution to the schism between Jerusalem and Antioch was achieved at the time of Council. With the victory of James’ subsequent pro-circumcision putsch, Antioch came under the authority of Jerusalem, and Paul was marginalised and forced to depart Antioch.

Given this situation, we can only conclude that Paul’s peculiar emphasis on apostolic authority implies that he is trying to avoid a trap laid by his Galatian opponents, which would allow it to be said that, as a result of the meeting with the Pillars and the change in leadership at Antioch, Jerusalem has jurisdiction over Paul’s gospel and his apostolate.<sup>398</sup> It seems clear enough that Paul cannot ignore the connections between the

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<sup>396</sup> An excellent study of this and other vocabulary of the passage is provided by Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 108-128, who explains that there can be no question of *ajhatesqai* denoting “the relative competence or status of the parties involved” (113).

<sup>397</sup> Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 23, attempts to argue otherwise, but no ancient texts support this rendering of *ajhatesqai*, as Dunn’s analysis makes clear (see preceding note). Stuhlmacher, *Das paulinische Evangelium*, 1:87, contrasts Antioch’s acceptance of Jerusalem’s judicial authority at the time of the Council with Paul’s view at the time of writing Galatians. Paul’s recognition of Jerusalem’s authority may at the time have been comparable, but after the events described have transpired, Paul is no longer willing to recognise Jerusalem’s right to rule on matters of contention (87-88).

<sup>398</sup> Schlier, *Galater*, 68, sees Paul here as recognising the decisive authority of the “earlier apostolate” at Jerusalem and demonstrating how he was willing to validate the genuineness of his mission by their acknowledgement. However, against this view, Stuhlmacher, *Das paulinische Evangelium*, 1:88, observes that one misconstrues the intent of Paul’s

Galatian troublemakers and his erstwhile opponents at Jerusalem and Antioch who had similarly challenged the content of his Law-free gospel and his right as an apostle to preach that gospel among the Gentiles. And despite his attempt to drive a wedge between his opponents and the apostolic triumvirate at Jerusalem, Paul implies wittingly or unwittingly that they all sought to undermine his apostolate by forcing his Gentile converts to accept circumcision and adhere to the Law.<sup>399</sup>

### **3.2.3. *The Truth of the Gospel***

We might ask, then, why did Paul react so violently to the message of the Judaisers at Galatia? Elsewhere, we find Paul ready to counsel tolerance in the face of conflicting interpretations of the Christian message (cf. 1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:14-33; Rom 14:1-15:13). The crisis that confronts Paul at Galatia is severe. According to Paul, the Galatians are in danger of “falling from grace” (Gal 5:4) as a result of the Judaisers who have “bewitched” (3:1) and “unsettled” (1:7; 5:12; cf. 6:12-13) the communities. Such is the severity of the crisis that it is not enough for Paul to simply reassure the Galatians, he must also confront the situation head on, demonstrating the “truth of the gospel” and relating how he has consistently fought for that truth, formerly in Jerusalem and Antioch, and presently in Galatia. The Jerusalem Council and the Antiochene incident set the stage for Paul’s response to the Galatian Judaisers because they demonstrate, on the one hand, how the contingencies of the present situation impinge on his language and, on the other, how the central issue, the gospel’s relation to the Law, has been a constant issue of contention between himself and Jerusalem. The entire crisis is for Paul a question of the supreme power of the gospel, which cannot be compromised in the name of even the most revered authorities, be they the Jerusalem Apostles, or even Moses, whose Law they follow.

As we saw in the previous chapter, in both his earlier conflicts with James and the pro-circumcision putsch at Jerusalem (2:1-10) and Antioch (2:11-14) the issues of

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report if Paul in Jerusalem is seen as seeking the confirmation of his mission and message from the binding authorities of the “earlier gospel” and the “earlier apostolate”. The better interpretation of Paul’s intention is to distinguish clearly between his mission as “apostle to the Gentiles” and that of the Jerusalem apostles’ original mission among the Jews.

<sup>399</sup> So Esler, *Galatians*, 138; *idem*, *The First Christians*, 57-62; and Martyn, *Galatians*, 462-466; Sumney, “*Servants of Satan*”, 137; and Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 448-449.

circumcision and Law-observance were closely tied to the difficulties of Christian Jews sharing table fellowship with uncircumcised Gentile Christians. Jewish purity and dietary sensibilities would have made it difficult for Jewish converts to the movement to share fully in the eucharistic fellowship of a mixed congregation. Nevertheless, neither in 2:11-14 nor in the rest of the letter does Paul make any allusion to the Eucharist, even though it could undoubtedly have served as a powerful lesson on the issue of unity among believers (cf. 1 Cor 10:17; 11:17-34). The reason for this was that in the Galatian situation the issue was far more fundamental than eucharistic fellowship as such. The latter, after all, presupposes that which Paul considered the gospel creates and is impossible without; namely, the unity of all in Christ regardless of their status with respect to the Law (Gal 3:28). Paul argues that the “separatism” espoused by the Judaisers at Antioch, and by implication those at Galatia, made the Law and its definition of righteousness constitutive of the Christian community, so that Gentiles were at a disadvantage over against those who belonged “by nature” to the covenant of Abraham (Gal 2:15-21; 3:6-7).<sup>400</sup> Moreover, this “separatism” effectively detached the Galatians from Paul whose Law-free mission had first brought them the gospel (4:17; cf. 1:6).<sup>401</sup>

We can see that it was the gospel at its most fundamental that was being undermined by the interference the Judaisers at Galatia.<sup>402</sup> Demanding that the Gentiles be circumcised and adhere to the Law amounted to an active denial of full membership of the community for the Gentile converts, which for Paul would have been more basic than a fracturing of eucharistic fellowship. In Paul’s view, denying Gentiles full incorporation into the Christian community amounted to a denial that Christ’s death is sufficient to “justify” all humans equally before God so that believers can indeed be “one in Christ” (Gal 3:8, 28; cf. Rom 3:30). The pro-circumcision putsch at Galatia did not merely destroy eucharistic fellowship, its proponents resurrected that which Paul claimed the gospel had destroyed – all the boundaries that separated Jewish converts from their

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<sup>400</sup> This point is made strongly by Smiles, *The Gospel*, 94-95, 100. Cf. Dunn, *Galatians*, 238.

<sup>401</sup> Bruce, *Galatians*, 211-212; Duncan, *Galatians*, 140-141; and Betz, *Galatians*, 230-231.

<sup>402</sup> For an excellent recent discussion of Paul’s unique appreciation of the Jesus’ story in Galatians, see D. Brondos, “The Cross and the Curse: Galatians 3:13 and Paul’s Doctrine of Redemption”, *JSNT* 81 (2001), 3-32.

Gentile co-religionists, not only within the Christian movement, but in the eyes of God (Gal 3:28; cf. Rom 1:16; 10:12).

Paul is emphatic that Law-observance can only mean a diminution of the “liberty” (e)euqeria wrought by Christ (5:1, 13). He equates circumcision and Law-observance, for which circumcision stands as the quintessential mark, with “a yoke of slavery” (5:1b; cf. Rom 7:25). This reference may be intended as a pun on the phrase the “yoke of the Law” common in some Jewish traditions preserved in the Mishnah. R. N. Longenecker makes the point that the term *zugor* (yoke) was a common “honourable” metaphor in later Jewish literature for Torah study (*m. ‘Abot.*, 3:5; *m. Ber.*, 2:2).<sup>403</sup> In the Hebrew Scriptures, Jeremiah 5:5 presents apostasy as a “breaking of the yoke”. Even in Christianity the Matthean Evangelist has Jesus refer to his program as a “yoke” that constitutes an “easy burden” (Matt 11:29-30). However, contrary to the tone of these other references, Paul’s use of the term appears to be negative, drawing parallels between the adoption of circumcision, Law-observance and the selling of oneself into servitude.

This tenor of compulsion and coercion is further emphasised by Paul’s charge that the troublemakers were attempting to “compel” (*ajagkazousin*) the Galatian Gentile converts to submit to circumcision (6:12). Paul was clearly familiar with these people. He had encountered others from this pro-circumcision putsch elsewhere, as he testifies in his opening biographical comments. He relates how the “false brothers” at Jerusalem had tried to “compel” (*ajagkazw*) the Gentile Titus to be circumcised (2:3). Their aim too had been to both “spy on the liberty (e)euqeria we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves (*hhaß katadoulsousin*)” (2:4). Similarly in Antioch some time later, Peter, out of fear of this “circumcision party”, backed a new policy intended to “compel (*ajagkazw*) the Gentiles to live like Jews” (2:14). We observe that Paul’s use of the verb *ajagkazw* to describe Peter’s actions mirrors both that of the false brothers at Jerusalem and the troublemakers at Galatia. The clear implication here is that the demands of the three groups, the false brothers at Jerusalem, the circumcision group at Antioch and the missionaries at Galatia, were identical.

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<sup>403</sup> Longenecker, *Galatians*, 224-225.

Attempts have been made to counter any association between the Galatian missionaries and James' people at Antioch by linking them rather with the "false brothers", who are taken to be a maverick minority within the Jerusalem church.<sup>404</sup> But this theory is based on a questionable assumption, in that it overlooks the probability mentioned in the previous chapter that these "false brothers" too must be seen as the agents of James. Other scholars are prepared to accept the Judean origins of the missionaries without drawing any direct connection to Jerusalem.<sup>405</sup> D. Lührmann suggests that these Christian Jewish missionaries may have been free agents who operated independently of either Jerusalem or Antioch.<sup>406</sup> Similarly, J. Sumney concludes that we have insufficient evidence to draw any clear link between the two groups and, moreover, the troublemakers at Galatia probably did not even perceive themselves as opponents of Paul.<sup>407</sup>

The discussion thus far seems to indicate that, as to the basis of their warrant for preaching circumcision, the Judaisers at Galatia appear to have appealed to Scripture, particularly the story of the covenant with Abraham, at which the institution of circumcision was imposed on God's chosen people (Gen 17:1-27). The argument in support of circumcision had no doubt been fought out at Jerusalem and Antioch along similar lines, as Paul implies with his statement in 4:24-25 concerning Jerusalem and its children as presently serving as a slave to the covenant from Mount Sinai. This claim echoes Paul's earlier attack on the false brothers at Jerusalem (2:4), whose attempt to "make us slaves" by imposing circumcision on the Gentiles is later extended to the James party, and then to Peter, Barnabas and the rest at Antioch (2:13).<sup>408</sup> These obvious parallels must indicate an association between the troublemakers at Galatia and James' circumcision party at Jerusalem. Thus it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that Paul presents Jerusalem's Law-observant program as both a form of slavery and as the immediate cause

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<sup>404</sup> Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 49; Betz, *Galatians*, 5-7, 92, 100-101; Longenecker, *Galatians*, xcvi; and Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*, 170-176.

<sup>405</sup> Bruce, *Galatians*, 31-32.

<sup>406</sup> Lührmann, *Galatians*, 126. Cf. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 193.

<sup>407</sup> Sumney, "Servants of Satan", 158-159.

<sup>408</sup> Esler, *The First Christians*, 57-62; and Martyn, *Galatians*, 462-466.

of the present attempts to enslave the Galatians.<sup>409</sup> Accordingly, the Judaisers at Galatia must have argued their case for circumcision and Law-observance by citing the precedent of the Jerusalem church, where circumcision was a *sine qua non* for all males entering the Apostolic community.

One further point in support of this conclusion concerns the singular character of the Judaisers' demands. Paul describes both Peter and the agitators at Galatia as attempting to "force" or "compel" the Gentile converts to adopt Jewish customs, which is linked to the even earlier attempt by the false brothers at Jerusalem to "compel" Titus to be circumcised. This description of their behaviour is striking, not only because of the parallels Paul draws between the three episodes, but also because it seems to run counter to the overwhelming scholarly consensus that Jews did not actively proselytise Gentiles. Those Gentiles who did become Jewish proselytes tended to have sought out conversion proactively, usually on the basis of close, personal or familial ties with local Jewish communities.<sup>410</sup> M. Goodman notes that it was in the interest of Diaspora Jewish communities to encourage Gentile sympathisers whose links with the local synagogues could only lend support to Jews who were often marginalised because of their distinctive customs and ethnicity.<sup>411</sup> However, there is no evidence to suggest that such sympathisers were ever "compelled" to become proselytes or adopt the full gamut of Jewish ritual and custom.

Jewish synagogues welcomed Gentile God-fearers without demanding circumcision as a condition for attending assembly. God-fearers were embraced by the synagogue, surrendering their worship of idols, giving their children Jewish names, receiving instruction in Torah, observing Jewish Sabbath and Holy days, and even serving as generous patrons without converting and receiving circumcision.<sup>412</sup> If a male God-fearer wanted to become a Jewish convert then circumcision would be required, but

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<sup>409</sup> Esler, *Galatians*, 74.

<sup>410</sup> M. Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytising in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 84-88; Cohen, *Beginnings*, 179-181; Perkins, *Abraham's Divided Children*, 13; and Nanos, *Irony*, 117.

<sup>411</sup> Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*, 87-88.

<sup>412</sup> See the discussion in Cohen, *Beginnings*, 150-162, 219-221. Cf. P. Friedriksen, "Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2", *JTS* 42 (1991), 532-564.



if a Gentile Christian wanted to attend synagogue there was no such requirement and no likelihood that they would be coerced into doing so. At Galatia, however, Paul's rivals appear to have demanded that Gentile converts to the Jesus movement accept the practice of circumcision and complete Law-observance as a requirement for inclusion in the Christian community. We must assume that what we appear to be dealing with here is not a Jewish phenomenon *per se*, but a Christian Jewish one, which can find no other precedent than those cited by Paul himself and laid at the feet of the apostolic authorities at Jerusalem. In a recent commentary on Galatians, P. Perkins makes the astute observation that all the "divisive rhetoric that dominates Galatians was provoked by Gentile converts seeking to come under the Law (Gal 3:1-5; 4:21); that is, they wanted in some context to be considered part of the *politeia* that had its centre in Jerusalem".<sup>413</sup>

At this point, we need to remind ourselves of one of the basic premises of this study, that primitive Christianity was not a single united movement. In the preceding chapters we traced the development of the communities in Jerusalem and Antioch, which were characterised by a growing schism between Law-observant Christian Judaism and Law-free Christianity. The division between these two movements was not simply an ethnic distinction, but an ideological divide that saw both camps composed of members who were ethnically Jewish and those who were drawn from various non-Jewish backgrounds. On the one hand the Christian Jews, both Jews and their Gentile converts, sought to "live like Jews" by uniformly maintaining or adopting Jewish customs and faith-practices. On the other hand the Law-free Christians, both Jews and their Gentile converts, sought to "live like Gentiles" by relaxing or ignoring Jewish customs and faith-practices. And it was this unbridgeable divide that had consistently bedeviled Paul's relationship with Jerusalem.

P. F. Esler has criticised commentators on Galatians for failing to fully appreciate both the general competitiveness of ancient Mediterranean society and the specific level of animosity that existed between Paul and Jerusalem.<sup>414</sup> Esler argues that Paul clearly wants to draw explicit connections between all of his opponents and this

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<sup>413</sup> Perkins, *Abraham's Divided Children*, 12.

<sup>414</sup> Esler, *Galatians*, 74.

must lead us to conclude that the Judaisers at Galatia are to be directly identified with the “false brothers” and the “men from James”. Esler places emphasis on the numerous occasions when the Jerusalem church and its apostolic leadership are specifically implicated in attempts to “enslave” Gentiles and hinder Paul’s mission by the imposition of circumcision and Law-observance on the Gentile converts. Accordingly, the leadership of the Jerusalem church alone emerges as the primary focus of Paul’s attempts to fight off efforts to enslave both him and his converts by imposing circumcision on the Gentiles. It may be true that Paul lays most of the blame at the feet of “false bothers” or people associated with a James’ faction; however, as we saw in our discussion of the Jerusalem Council and the Antiochene dispute, the Apostles are not completely exonerated from complicity in these events.

With specific reference to the Galatian crisis, we might detect echoes of the earlier events in Jerusalem and Antioch in Paul’s bitter attacks on his opponents at Galatia.<sup>415</sup> When Paul claims that the members of the pro-circumcision putsch are only acting in the interests of self-aggrandisement (4:17), he may be consciously reiterating the motives he earlier attributed to James, Peter and John who thought themselves important and reputed pillars of the Church (2:6, 9).<sup>416</sup> When Paul suggests that not even those who are circumcised keep the Law (6:13), he may also have in mind the hypocrisy of Peter, Barnabas and the Antiochene Jews who defected to the circumcision party under the onslaught of James’ people from Jerusalem. And when he accuses his opponents of preaching circumcision for fear of persecution, he may be alluding to the cowardice of Peter who abstained from sharing table fellowship with the Gentiles for fear of the circumcision party (2:12).

Whatever the strength of these observations, one thing seems clear. Paul wants to tar them all with the same brush. His opponents at Galatia and his adversaries at Jerusalem

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<sup>415</sup> Esler, *Galatians*, 138.

<sup>416</sup> Paul refers to James, Peter and John as “the ones reputed to be important” (2:6; cf. 2:2) and “reputed pillars” (2:9), to which he adds the comment, “whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearances” (2:6). Later (6:3), Paul counsels the Galatians that “if anyone who is nothing thinks himself something, he is deceiving himself”. This implies that in his earlier statements about James, Peter and John, Paul is sarcastically inferring that the triumvirate *thought of themselves* as important and, in the pursuit of self-aggrandisement, styled themselves as the pillars upon which the Christian movement stood. See C. K. Barrett, “Paul: Controversies and Councils”, in *Conflicts and Challenges in Early Christianity*, ed. D. A. Hagner (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 42-74 (43-44).

and Antioch, along with James, Peter, Barnabas and the Antiochene Jews, are all of one mind and all have in Paul's opinion conspired to undermine the truth of the gospel that he preaches. The only possible conclusion that one can draw is that Paul is fighting, on several fronts, a war against a single group of adversaries whose origins must be attributed to the circumcision party around James at Jerusalem.<sup>417</sup>

### 3.3. Conclusions

In this chapter we have examined the Galatian crisis from the perspective of Paul's letter to Galatia. What we discovered was evidence of a series of interrelated conflicts with a single group of adversaries who were clearly advocating a Law-observant gospel, for which they claimed the authority of the Jerusalem church. In Paul's autobiographical *narratio* in Galatians 1:11-2:14 the Jerusalem Apostles are the primary focus, suggesting that the issue of circumcision and Law-observance, which had proved a divisive element in his previous dealings with Jerusalem, was also central to the problems at Galatia. Accordingly, Paul's literary strategy in this case would seem to indicate that he intended to promote a link between the Judaisers at Galatia and both the false brothers at Jerusalem along with the James party at Antioch.

On this understanding, we must imagine that following their success at Antioch, the proponents of the pro-circumcision putsch moved on to the churches in Galatia with a view to bringing these communities under the authority of Jerusalem. We suggested earlier that one of the causes of the Jerusalem Council was the Antiochene initiative to widen the scope of the Law-free mission into Cyprus and Galatia. We argued in the early part of this chapter that the churches of Galatia were located in the southern regions of the Roman province of that name and, therefore they represented communities established under the auspices of the Antiochene church. It would seem reasonable to assume that James would have been keen, not only to reclaim the Antiochene community for the Law-observant mission, but also to gain control of the communities beyond Antioch, which had been established and continued to operate under the authority of the Antiochene mission. Paul had previously warned the Galatians of a possible incursion by rival missionaries preaching a different gospel (Gal 1:9). And the close parallels he draws between the situations at

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<sup>417</sup> So correctly, Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 61; and earlier, Bligh, *Galatians*, 233.

Antioch and Galatia leads us to the view that the content of that rival gospel included the Law-observant position of James' circumcision party at Jerusalem. Thus, if these conclusions are correct, then the conflict in Galatia must be seen as a continuation of the conflict that led to the Jerusalem Council and culminated in Paul's bitter split with Peter, Barnabas and James' people at Antioch.

We observed in the conclusions to the previous chapter that the incident at Antioch proved a significant turning point in the history of the early Church, as well as in the career of Paul. This conclusion is born out afresh in our exegesis of Paul's material on his opponents at Galatia. Paul relates the story of events in Jerusalem and Antioch most likely because his opponents have been circulating a very different version of the same episodes. For his opponents, this story underpins both their attack on Paul's apostolate and the Law-free gospel he sponsors. Paul is forced to provide another perspective that neatly avoids the inference that his apostleship and his gospel are derivative of either Jerusalem or Antioch. Moreover, Paul turns the story to good purpose by demonstrating how the central issue at Jerusalem and Antioch is the same as that which occasioned the Galatian crisis – the long-running conflict between the two competing forms of the Christian message that grew up in Jerusalem and Antioch prior to more recent developments. At the heart of this conflict is the question of the continuing validity of the Law.

For Paul, the gospel was neither dependent upon nor inclusive of the Law as determinative of belonging to the family of God. However, it emerges from his narrative on events in Jerusalem and Antioch that the Jerusalem community, its apostolic leadership, and their agents at Antioch and Galatia adhered to a strict Christian Judaism that held circumcision and Law-observance to be the condition for entry into the inheritance of Abraham. Paul saw this as nothing less than a diminution of the efficacy of the cross and a negation of the "truth of the gospel", which he had defended for more than decade in partnership with the Hellenists at Antioch. With the defection of the Hellenists to James' party, Paul alone was left to hold the line against the further incursions of the pro-circumcision putsch. His first battle was fought in Galatia but, as we shall see in the next chapter, further skirmishes would break out elsewhere in the wake of Paul's mission throughout the Aegean, leaving Paul with few options but to seek a rapprochement with Jerusalem in the years prior to his plans to visit Rome and evangelise Spain.

## *Chapter 4*

### THE AFTERMATH OF THE CRISIS:

#### PAUL'S CONTINUING CONFLICT WITH JERUSALEM

As modern readers we desire to find or create closure in a narrative, which influences our reading of ancient texts like Paul's letter to Galatia. Having examined the crisis in Galatia, we are curious as to events that occurred in its aftermath. Did Paul carry the day? Was his response to the crisis successful in stopping the incursions of the Judaisers? Or did the agents of Jerusalem continue to dog Paul's tracks across Asia Minor and into Greece? It is questions such as these that will be the focus of this chapter. In the following pages, we shall explore the Corinthian correspondence and Philippians for possible echoes of an ongoing rift between Paul and the Judaisers. There is little doubt that Paul continued to experience problems with opponents at Corinth, on account of which he also warns the Philippians. But our interest will be in attempting to determine if such problems were a direct result of the earlier conflict at Galatia. In addition to our examination of these three letters, we shall also consider the data Paul supplies in Romans concerning his fears about his third visit to Jerusalem. Noting the way in which Paul responds to all these threats, we will argue that his opponents were drawn from the same group of opponents who had initiated the crisis in Galatia. The aim here is to draw the final contours of the political and religious landscape that Paul had to navigate in the working out the practical implications of his call to be the Apostle to the Gentiles.

#### **4.1. The Corinthian Correspondence**

As we observed in the Introduction to this study, since the seminal work of F. C. Baur, Paul's references to factional conflict that recur throughout the Corinthian correspondence have been taken as indicative of the presence of rival missionaries at Corinth. However, the problem that confronts us here is that while all commentators agree that at Corinth Paul

faced significant opposition to his mission there is no consensus regarding the number or nature of those opponents.<sup>418</sup> This issue is further complicated by the fact that while Paul's letters to Corinth represent the longest extant correspondence to any single community in the Pauline corpus, there are important gaps in the available information.

Paul appears to have written more than what has been preserved (cf. 1 Cor 5:9, 11; 2 Cor 2:3, 4, 9; 7:12), and many scholars still hold that 2 Corinthians is probably an amalgam of several letter fragments.<sup>419</sup> However, most commentators accept that all of the Corinthian letters were written within the short space of two or three years (c. 53-55 C.E.), with 1 Corinthians assigned to 53/54 C.E. and the various, hypothetical, constituent parts of 2 Corinthians to 54/55 C.E. This suggests that in examining these texts, and especially the hypothetical letter fragments contained in 2 Corinthians, we are dealing with the same complex of materials.<sup>420</sup> Such is the strength of this suggestion that a recent trend in New Testament studies has been to view 2 Corinthians as a single monograph addressing a single purpose, and not a combination of several letter fragments written on disparate occasions.<sup>421</sup>

Fortunately, we need not be overly concerned with the issue of the integrity of the letters. Our present purpose is not to provide a complete reconstruction of the various stages of Paul's ongoing commerce with his Corinthian converts, but merely to determine whether or not the instigators of the conflicts that caused the earlier crises at Antioch and Galatia were responsible for the later problems evident at Corinth. Accordingly, the following discussion of the identity and the nature of Paul's opponents at Corinth will focus only on those sections of the two letters that unambiguously refer to problems caused by outside influence.

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<sup>418</sup> The diverse opinions on the identity of Paul's opponents at Corinth are summarised by Gunther, *Opponents*, 1-5. Cf. Georgi, *Opponents*, 1-9.

<sup>419</sup> R. Bieringer has conveniently outlined and analysed the various theories concerning the integrity of 2 Corinthians in a series of articles, which have been reprinted in R. Bieringer and J. Lambrecht, *Studies on 2 Corinthians* (BETL 112; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), 67-179.

<sup>420</sup> A point made strongly by Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 80-81; and also Schmithals, *Gnosticism*, 113-114, who is followed by Georgi, *Opponents*, 14-18.

<sup>421</sup> See, for example, Goulder, *Paul and the Competing Mission*, 240-248; and J. D. H. Amador, "Revisiting 2 Corinthians: Rhetoric and the Case for Unity", *NTS* 46 (2000), 92-111.

At this point, it may be relevant to revisit briefly some of the cautionary notes on methodology discussed in the Introduction. As noted above, we are only concerned in this chapter with utilising the Corinthian correspondence, Philippians and Romans to fill out our picture of the Galatian crisis. Still, it is important for us to avoid reading the material in these later letters through the lens of Galatians without first allowing these texts to speak to us on their own terms. Paul's letters are occasional in nature. While we will be arguing for connections between the opponents in Galatia and references to opposition in the letters to Corinth, Philippi and Rome, we must remain open to the possibility that there were other divisive pressures unique to the various situations described in these letters.

Once again, we will be using the mirror-reading technique to identify the concerns raised by, and the possible origins of, the interlopers who are the targets of Paul's polemic in his letters to Corinth and, later in this chapter, his correspondence with Philippi and Rome. Following the guidelines laid down in the Introduction, specific consideration will be focused on those subjects and metaphors that are frequently accentuated throughout the letters, and which are clearly crucial to Paul's defence. Apologetic denials that are emphasised by repetition and polemical assertions rehearsed consistently in different places offer significant windows on the situation Paul is confronting.

Even more revealing are those sections in these letters that explicitly associate the anti-Pauline opposition with Jerusalem and its apostolic leadership. In the discussion that follows, such explicit references will be given precedence. We will begin by focusing on Paul's treatment of the Cephas party at Corinth (1 Cor 1:12-13), and conclude by examining Paul's concerns, expressed in Romans (15:25-33), about opponents at Jerusalem on the eve of his final visit to the Apostolic Community. By way of a common thread, one contentious issue for Paul that looms large in the Corinthian letters (1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8:1-9:15) and Romans (Rom 15:25-26, 28) is that of the collection. If we are correct in assuming that this is the same collection as that initiated at the Jerusalem Council (Gal 2:10), then it may indicate a clear link between events described in Galatians and Paul's difficulties at Corinth, as well as those anticipated for his journey to Jerusalem.

Paul's anxieties about the collection in both the Corinthian letters is explicitly linked to the more fundamental dispute over the legitimacy of Paul's apostleship (1 Cor

9:1-27; 2 Cor 2:17; 9:5), possibly echoing earlier debates at Antioch, Jerusalem and Galatia. At one point in 1 Corinthians (9:1-27), Paul speaks of his apostolic rights with explicit reference to Barnabas, Cephas, the apostles and the “brothers of the Lord”, which would seem to remind us of the various protagonists evident at the Jerusalem Council as described in Galatians (2:1-10).

At the denouement of this stage of Paul’s commerce with Jerusalem, his final visit to the Holy City, anticipated in Romans, is recorded in Acts (20:1-4, 16; 24:17), which provides a further, albeit secondary, source of information about Paul’s ongoing difficulties with the Apostolic Community. This section of Acts is not without its own exegetical problems; there is, for example, no explicit reference to the collection that figures so strongly in the letters to Corinth and Rome. Nevertheless, according to the methodology adopted here, a critical assessment of the report in Acts can help flesh out and augment our reconstruction of Paul’s later encounters with James, the Jerusalem church and their agents. Similarly, Luke’s account of Paul’s missionary activities during the period after his split with Antioch does supply significant data, which is indispensable for situating and dating Paul’s letters to Corinth, Philippi and Rome.

Having made these cautionary observations, we may now proceed to apply our critical eye to those references, both explicit and implicit, appearing in the Corinthian letters, which seem to speak of an anti-Pauline opposition instigated by outsiders with apparent links to Jerusalem.

#### ***4.1.1. The Cephas Party***

First Corinthians presupposes some period of time between Paul’s initial missionary activity in Corinth (c. 50-51 C.E.) and its composition (c. 53/54 C.E.).<sup>422</sup> During this period, there seems to have been a frequent interchange between the Corinthian community and Paul, who was probably at this stage based in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8-9; cf. Acts 19:8, 10). In 1 Corinthians 5:9, Paul refers to an earlier letter he wrote to Corinth, which now appears to be lost to us. Similarly, we find frequent references in 1 Corinthians to regular visits by Timothy to Corinth (4:17), and by others from Corinth to Ephesus, such as Apollos (16:12), Chloe’s people (1:11), and another delegation led by Stephanus (16:17)

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<sup>422</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, *1 Corinthians* (NTG; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 14.



who probably carried a letter from the Corinthian congregation (7:1). It was in response to the report made by Chloe's people (1:10-6:20) and the queries raised by Stephanus' letter (7:1-15:58) that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians.

For the most part, 1 Corinthians deals with local and internal problems that arose as a result of some misunderstanding of Paul's teachings.<sup>423</sup> In 1 Corinthians 1-6, Paul is dealing with struggles within the Corinthian community, reported by Chloe's people, where members were divided over issues such as wisdom, particularly as exhibited by their leaders. Ironically, the Corinthians' concept of wisdom allows immorality and frivolous lawsuits to penetrate their ranks (1 Cor 5-6). Paul is at pains to show how God's wisdom, revealed by the Spirit, is paradoxically opposed to the Corinthians' conception of wisdom and leadership (1 Cor 1:26-2:13).<sup>424</sup> From chapter 7 onwards, Paul turns to a number of other, disparate issues, about which the Corinthians had probably written in the letter carried by Stephanus – marriage and virginity (7:1-40), idol foods (8:1-11:1), women's head covering (11:2-16), communal meals and the Lord's supper (11:17-34), the proper manifestations of spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40), and the resurrection (15:1-58). Buried amidst this catalogue of pastoral concerns, however, we can find several important passages (1:12-13; 3:5-6; 9:1-27; 15:7-9) that imply the presence in Corinth of a significant body of opposition to Paul.<sup>425</sup> In these passages we find Paul struggling with factional conflict within the Corinthian community (1:12-13), which appears to have been incited by certain unnamed others (9:3) who have questioned Paul's missionary practices (9:1-27) and cast doubts on his apostolic authority (9:3-18; 15:5-9).

The origin of this conflict is probably found in the report brought by Chloe's people to Paul, which suggests that since Paul's departure the whole church had become divided into factions, with various people aligning themselves under four different slogans. F. C. Baur saw the enumeration of factional groups in 1 Corinthians as indicative of two

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<sup>423</sup> See, for example, the recent commentary by Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 18-21, 90-108; and also D. G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* (SNTW; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 126-198.

<sup>424</sup> For a good discussion of the issues, see A. Clark, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1-6* (AGJU; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), 41-57; and *idem*, *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians as Leaders and Ministers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 174-185.

<sup>425</sup> Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 65-66.

rival missions at Corinth, one of which declared its allegiance to Cephas and Christ against the partisans of Paul and Apollos (1:12-13; 3:5-6). The Christ Party and the Cephas party formed one faction that stood in opposition to the Pauline Party represented by a similar conflation of the dual allegiances to Paul and his co-worker Apollos.<sup>426</sup> On this understanding, Baur argued that the Christ Party represented the interests of Christian Jewish missionaries who claimed their relationship to Christ and their apostolic authority derived from Peter, who enjoyed primacy among the first Jewish Apostles of Jesus.<sup>427</sup>

Baur's thesis has come under constant criticism throughout the last two centuries, and various competing interpretations of the Corinthian factions have been offered. Still, many commentators agree with Baur's basic premise that the slogans that appear in 1 Corinthians 1:10-16 are not to be taken as a reference to four distinct factions at Corinth, but rather two parties – Petrine and Pauline.<sup>428</sup> Other Pauline scholars are reluctant to accept Baur's view that the Corinthians community is divided along such a strict demarcation, or that the cause of this dispute derives from outside influence.

Some commentators have argued for accepting Paul's claims at face value as representative of four separate parties, which are to be identified with the four party slogans.<sup>429</sup> While these parties are internal and their adherents Corinthians, they seem to be caught up in what might be called a "cult of celebrities", which lays stress on the power and wisdom of one leader over the other. G. D. Fee, for example, argues that the Corinthians have become decidedly anti-Pauline due to the influence of local pneumatics who proffer competing leaders and their charismatic wisdom as replacements for Paul and his gospel.<sup>430</sup> Others have similarly focused on Paul's extended discussion of wisdom in 1 Corinthians (2:6-4:5) as indicative of a Hellenistic, sapiential Judaism or, even, an early form of

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<sup>426</sup> Baur, "Die Christuspartei", 76-78.

<sup>427</sup> Baur, "Die Christuspartei", 84. For a positive evaluation of Baur's argument, see Goulder, *Paul and the Competing Mission*, 16-32.

<sup>428</sup> See, for example, the discussion in Dunn, *Galatians*, 27-45; Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 75-78; Goulder, *Paul and the Competing Mission*, 1-15, 17-19; and Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 40-49.

<sup>429</sup> G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 58.

<sup>430</sup> These theories are discussed in Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 6-15.

Gnosticism.<sup>431</sup> Still, most of these views have tried to identify the main body of opposition to Paul with one of the parties mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:12. Recent scholarship, however, has tended to dismiss these party slogans as insignificant for specifically identifying Paul's opponents.

Most scholars doubt that there is a "Christ Party", arguing that its existence would contradict what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:13 and at the conclusion of chapter three, where Paul reverts simply to the three named leaders, himself, Apollos and Cephas.<sup>432</sup> Following his initial reference to the slogan "I am for Christ" (1 Cor 1:12), Paul subsequently ignores this motto in his ensuing discussion, focusing instead upon the three other allegiances. Following this line of argument, one might rightly assume that any claim to be of the Christ faction over against Paul, Apollos or Cephas would have drawn the strongest criticism from Paul, rather than simply being ignored by him. It seems more likely, therefore, that Paul has added the fourth slogan "I am for Christ" to demonstrate the absurdity of factionalism *per se*.<sup>433</sup>

A similar problem accompanies the various theories surrounding the party gathered under an adherence to Apollos.<sup>434</sup> Elsewhere in 1 Corinthians (3:5-23; 4:6), Apollos is presented as a co-worker with Paul in the missionary field.<sup>435</sup> We shall discuss this issue further; but, for the moment, we need only observe that in 1 Corinthians 4:6 Apollos' example of co-operation is specifically cited as a contrary example to those who would foster factionalism. Nowhere in either of the Corinthian letters is Apollos cited as anything other than a fellow worker with Paul. This fact alone seriously undermines any theory purporting to read a plethora of Pauline opponents into the party slogans of chapter one.

It would seem, then, that in broad terms Baur was probably correct in suggesting that Paul is exaggerating the situation by inflating the number and identities of those who

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<sup>431</sup> Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, 18-25; Bultmann, *Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 132-141; and R. A. Horsley, "Gnosis in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 8:1-6", *NTS* 27 (1979), 32-51.

<sup>432</sup> A. Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 42. Compare Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 75, who simply ignores the Christ Party altogether.

<sup>433</sup> W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther (1 Kor 1:1-6:11)* (EKKNT 7.3; Zurich: Benziger Verlag, 1991), 134.

<sup>434</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 81-84.

<sup>435</sup> Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 42-49; and Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 75-78.

opposed him. In more specific terms, we can say that the parties of Christ and Apollos may not be explicitly representative, but rather attempts by Paul to parody and diminish his opponents. Beyond that, E. Schüssler-Fiorenza may well be correct when she argues that neither Paul nor the Corinthians saw the “debates, discussions, or competing claims” as representative of actual parties.<sup>436</sup>

C. K. Barrett points out that Paul addresses the Corinthian community as a whole and, as such, demonstrates that no formal schism has occurred; Paul is dealing with discord, rather than outright division.<sup>437</sup> Even more critical of any direct identification of the party slogans with actual factions is M. M. Mitchell, who contends that no such slogans were in use at Corinth.<sup>438</sup> Paul merely wants to caricature and ridicule the behaviour of the Corinthians as childish and slavish. Paul’s use of these slogans, Mitchell argues, is intended to draw tacit comparisons between the squabbling at Corinth and political discord; thereby, casting the behaviour of the Corinthians in an unfavourable light. While we might be inclined to accept this more conservative reading of Paul’s description of factionalism at Corinth, we should not be tempted to dismiss the inherent divisiveness of the situation. As J. L. Sumney admits, the one thing that is clear from the slogans in 1 Corinthians 1:11-12 is that there is an opposition to Paul, albeit unorganised and *ad hoc*.<sup>439</sup>

To return to Baur’s analysis, we could argue that a connection between the anti-Pauline opposition at Corinth and the name of Cephas suggests some link between Paul’s opponents and Peter, even if, again, it is only indirect. As we shall see presently, we have no reason to assume that Peter himself led the opposition at Corinth.

To pursue these suspicions further, we must first note that the presence of a Paul party in the roster of supposed factions must indicate some competition or opposition to Paul, since it is necessary for others to declare their allegiance to Paul. Secondly, the same must equally be said of Cephas. Unlike Christ or Apollos, it seems difficult to maintain

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<sup>436</sup> E. Schüssler-Fiorenza, “Rhetorical Situation and Historical Reconstruction in 1 Corinthians”, *NTS* 33 (1987), 386-403 (396).

<sup>437</sup> Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 42-43. The point is similarly made by Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 54 and accepted by Sumney, *Servants of Satan*, 36-37.

<sup>438</sup> M. M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (HUT 28; J. C. B. Mohr, 1991), 83.

<sup>439</sup> Sumney, *Servants of Satan*, 36-37, who follows Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 55-56.

that Paul would have chosen Peter as the focus of an anti-Pauline party slogan unless Peter was already a figure of some contention. It is logical to assume any opposition against Paul would not have centred on an allegiance to Peter unless it derived from outside influence. How else would the Corinthians have learnt anything of significance about Peter, aside from his role in the earliest Jesus movement?

It seems highly unlikely that Peter would have figured either prominently or positively in the preaching of Paul, especially if we are correct in arguing that Corinth was evangelised immediately after Paul's bitter split with Peter at Antioch. It is even more incredible to argue that any opposition to Paul would have aligned itself with Peter unless it knew something of Paul's past problems with Peter – a subject that Paul is unlikely to have brought to their attention. Surely, the Corinthians could have only learned of Peter's role in denigrating the authority of Paul from others outside the Pauline camp. It is difficult to argue why Paul would have brought up the issue in the context of a party aligned to Peter unless someone else who knew of his past difficulties with Peter had brought the record of Paul's past to the attention of the Corinthians. So, while it seems unlikely that Corinth was divided into four distinct factions, there does appear to be a circumstantial case for assuming that there was anti-Pauline opposition that was inclined to compare Paul unfavourably with Peter and possibly others amongst the original apostolic circle. Moreover, this opposition must have derived, in part from outside influence. There is a good deal of evidence in 1 Corinthians to support this proposition.

The first, significant piece of evidence we have occurs in 1 Corinthians 9:1-27. In this passage, we find Paul vehemently defending his status as an apostle against the contrary judgement (9:3) of certain unnamed people at Corinth. There is little doubt that these people came from outside the Corinthian community. Paul draws a clear distinction between his Corinthian converts and these "others" who did not consider him an apostle (9:2), who were openly critical of his apostolic practice (9:3-18), and who were responsible for inciting divisions within the ranks of the community. They apparently even questioned the authenticity of Paul's vision of the risen Jesus (9:1) which, for Paul, constituted the basis of his apostolic call (cf. Gal 1:1, 11-12, 15-16). In 9:13 Paul implies that these others (unlike Paul himself) were drawing on Corinthian donations for their support, claiming for

them the apostolic authority that they denied to Paul.<sup>440</sup> In this they seemed to have alleged that their apostleship represented more closely the practice of Peter and the brothers of the Lord, who were the original, “authentic” Apostles.<sup>441</sup> Specifically, they claimed that Paul could not have been an apostle since, unlike Peter and the brothers of the Lord, he had not made use of all his apostolic rights – in particular, the right to his congregation’s financial support (9:4, 15-18) for both himself and “a believing wife” (9:5).

In both the extant letters to Corinth (1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8:1-9:15), Paul is anxious that the collection for Jerusalem, which was initiated at the Jerusalem Council, should go forward. This suggests that the collection was a point of contention between Paul and his opponents, and there is some evidence pointing to the possibility that the collection had actually ceased as a result of the conflict (16:1-4). The opponents had charged Paul and his co-workers with devious behaviour, refusing direct support from the Corinthians while taking a collection for Jerusalem, which they fraudulently used to line their own pockets (2 Cor 12:16-18). Paul responds to this accusation by the counter-claim that his opponents were falsely professing apostolic rank so as to demand remuneration for their ministry (1 Cor 9:1-27; 2 Cor 2:17; 9:5).<sup>442</sup>

Both G. Lüdemann and M. Goulder have convincingly argued that Paul’s response to these “others” in 1 Corinthians 9:1-27 echoes the confrontations evident at the Jerusalem Council as described in Galatians 2:1-10.<sup>443</sup> In that regard, the appearance of Barnabas in conjunction with Paul aligned against Cephas, the other Apostles, the brothers of the Lord and certain unnamed “others” is significant (1 Cor 9:3-6). It is highly unlikely that Barnabas played any role in Paul’s Corinthian mission. Their split had occurred some years previously following the Jerusalem conference and the incident at Antioch. Paul’s reference to Barnabas at this point suggests that he is consciously echoing an earlier

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<sup>440</sup> Goulder, *Paul and the Competing Mission*, 30.

<sup>441</sup> Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 204; Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 71; and B. Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 207.

<sup>442</sup> See Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 82-83, 89-90; M. E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, vol 1, I-VII*. (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 67-69; and J. Gnllka, “Die Kollekte der paulinischen Gemeinden für Jerusalem als Ausdruck ekklesialer Gemeinschaft”, in *Ekklesiologie des Neuen Testaments für Karl Kertelge*, ed. R. Kampling and T. Söding (Freiburg: Herder, 1996), 304-305.

<sup>443</sup> Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 68-72; and Goulder, *Paul and the Competing Mission*, 29-30.

situation where a similar conflict over the demarcation of the mission fields occurred; specifically, at the Jerusalem Council where Paul and Barnabas were forced to defend their apostolic endeavours before the Jerusalem Apostles and their supporters. It may even be possible that the interlopers at Corinth made reference to the Council as part of their attack on Paul, arguing that Paul was a renegade acting in contravention to the limited commission granted to him and Barnabas by Peter, James and the apostolic authorities at the Council. We have already seen how the details of the Council's deliberations figured prominently at Galatia. This issue was drawn into sharper focus by Paul's bitter split with Peter, Barnabas and the James party at Antioch, which rendered Paul's status as an apostle even more tenuous. If this issue were also raised at Corinth, then this would explain why Paul's response includes both a declaration of his freedom and a defence of his status as an apostle with regard to Peter, James, and the other Apostles (1 Cor 9:1-27; 15:3-11).

This matter of Paul's apostolic standing reappears in chapter 15, where Paul describes his credentials as an apostle by a correlation with the Christophanies granted to Peter and the Twelve, James, and "all the Apostles" (15:5-7), appending his name to this traditional list of "Apostles" and witnesses to the resurrection. Paul is obviously on the defensive here. The peculiar tone of his self-designation as "one untimely born" (*ektrwmati*) and "the least of the Apostles" (15:8-9) suggests that he is taking up the jibes of his adversaries, who probably dismissed Paul's apostolic call as illegitimate and his claim to apostolic status as a usurpation of a title that belonged only to the original witnesses to Jesus' life, death and resurrection.<sup>444</sup>

Against such claims Paul admits his lowly status but augments this by protesting that by the grace of God he has worked harder than any of the official apostolic authorities so named in the foregoing list (15:9-10). This line of argument echoes his earlier statement in chapter 9 where he reminds the Corinthians that even if these "others" do not consider him an apostle, the Corinthian community itself is the "seal" (*sfragið*) of his apostleship (9:2). Moreover, he revisits this argument again in 2 Corinthians (6:3-13; 11:23-33) where he catalogues the trials and tribulations he had experienced for the sake of his "children" (6:13). While he may not have called on the Corinthians to give him his due reward (2 Cor

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<sup>444</sup> Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 344.

2:17-18) by offering the gospel free of charge, he remains an apostle to them by virtue of his work amongst them. Accordingly, Paul charges his opponents as “false apostles” (*yeudapostoloi* – 11:13) who have invaded his missionary territory (2 Cor 10:13-17) and who are merely, in his opinion, “peddling the word of God for profit” (2 Cor 2:17; cf. 11:7-12, 20). In effect, Paul is saying that the only usurper of the title apostle here is not he who planted this community but these others, because they have come attempting to share in the harvest (1 Cor 9:11-12).

At this point it may be helpful to summarise our findings. First, it is noteworthy that while the foremost issues in all the passages reviewed above are slightly different in each case, Paul perceives himself as responding to people who have challenged his authority as an apostle, primarily on the basis of a negative association with Peter and the original circle of Jesus’ followers. Second, the thrust of Paul’s argument is identical in all instances. He initially appeals to his numinous experience of the risen Jesus (9:1; 15:8) as the legitimization of his apostleship, and then he demonstrates this legitimacy by reference to his apostolic endeavours, especially amongst the Corinthians themselves (9:2, 8-27; 15:10).

Finally, Paul is faced with opponents who were clearly informed of his past, problematic relationship with other facets of the Christian movement (1 Cor 9:3-6; 15:9-11). These notable coincidences suggest that Paul is responding to a single group of opponents who saw themselves as acting under the authority of Peter, James and the original tradents of the Christian message in Jerusalem.<sup>445</sup> Moreover, if this conclusion is correct, then the passages reviewed above provide a *prima facie* case for arguing that the factional divisions reported by Chloe’s people must be seen as a clash between two competing groups at Corinth. One of these groups could be rightly called the Cephas party, and must be understood as arising as the result of the intervention of anti-Pauline interlopers, who had travelled to Corinth with the express purpose of undermining Paul’s mission. The other remained loyal to Paul and his co-workers and, thus, can be identified as those who rallied under the slogans “I am for Paul!” and “I am for Apollos!” To explore this case further, we need to consider further the evidence of 2 Corinthians.

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<sup>445</sup> Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 74; and Goulder, *Paul and the Competing Mission*, 29-32. See also the detailed analysis of the rhetorical strategy Paul employs here in Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 203-216, 300-303.



#### 4.1.2. *The False Apostles*

Over a year lapsed between the writing of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, during which time Paul seems to have made a “painful visit” in difficult circumstances (2 Cor 2:1). In response to this “painful” situation, he wrote a letter “with many tears” in which he called for the punishment of an offender who was probably a member of the Corinthian community and who had caused him personal grief (2 Cor 2:4; 7:8). On another front, however, 2 Corinthians bears testimony to an escalation in anti-Pauline opposition at Corinth during the intervening period between the writing of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. Unlike his response to the troublemakers in 1 Corinthians, in 2 Corinthians Paul is particularly scathing in his comments about his opponents. He calls them “false apostles” (*yeudapostoloi*), “deceitful workers” (*ejgatai dolioi*), who disguise themselves as “apostles of Christ” (*apostolouß Cristou*) (11:13). They seem to have presented themselves as superior to Paul, and they appear to have attacked Paul personally. In particular, they apparently charged Paul with a number of improprieties: unseemly conduct (1:12); unworthy leadership (1:14; 5:12); erratic behaviour (1:17); possibly harshness or restrictiveness (2:1-4; 6:3, 12; 7:3; 7:8); insincerity and underhandedness (2:17; 4:2; 7:2); and self-commendation (3:1-6; 4:5; 5:12; 6:4). It was in response to these personal attacks that Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, attempting to defend his apostolic status and thereby reclaiming the allegiance of his Corinthian converts.

A cursory reading of this letter suggests that the issues at stake in the ongoing dispute at Corinth had changed little in the year between the writing of the two extant letters to Corinth. The primary problem remained the issue of Paul’s “competency” (*ikanothß*) as an apostle (2 Cor 3:5-6; 5:11-13; 10:1-13:10). In that regard, three matters appear to have been paramount. The first of these matters focused on the origins of Paul’s apostolic “call”. As noted above this issue came to the fore previously in 1 Corinthians (9:1; 15:5-7), where Paul was forced to defend the authenticity of his vision of the risen Christ. Similarly in 2 Corinthians 5:11-21, we find Paul attempting to demonstrate again that his claim to apostolic status was not simply a case of commending himself (5:12), but rather it was the result of a direct commission from God (5:19-20; cf. 3:4-6).

S. Kim has noted the many linguistic and thematic parallels between this passage and Galatians 1:12-16.<sup>446</sup> In 2 Cor 5:16-20, Paul in alluding to his conversion experience uses language that is both similar to but less direct than that of Galatians 1:11-17. He claims that while he once knew Christ in the flesh (*kata;sarika* – 2 Cor 5:16), he does so no longer. As a result of his conversion, he has been made into a new creation (5:17) by virtue of the intervention of God. Moreover, he has been entrusted with a divinely inspired message of reconciliation (5:18-20; cf. Gal 1:15-16).<sup>447</sup> In this, Paul appears to be responding to allegations that he was either “out of his mind” (2 Cor 5:13) or simply dishonest in trying to persuade people (2 Cor 11-12; cf. Gal 1:10-12) that he had received a direct revelation from God via a vision of the risen Jesus (cf. Gal 1:11-12). It is probably also true that Paul’s opponents made much of the fact that Paul himself had once actively persecuted the followers of Jesus. Paul had been forced to concede this point earlier when responding to similar criticisms regarding the legitimacy of his vision and his apostolic commission (1 Cor 15:9; cf. Phil 3:6; Gal 1:13). This suggests that, despite writing 1 Corinthians and making a disastrous visit to Corinth (2:1), resulting in a further “sorrowful letter” (2 Cor 2:3; 7:8), Paul is still faced with a notable clique of opponents who questioned both the legitimacy of his call and his competency to be an apostle.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul makes no mention of a connection between his opponents and the apostolic authorities at Jerusalem. However, a second key component of the attack on Paul’s competency concerned the letters of recommendation carried by Paul’s opponents (3:1-6). M. Goulder plausibly argues that these commendatory letters are better understood as “letters of authorisation”, since the discussion of these documents occurs within the context of a discussion of Paul’s and his opponents’ authority and competence as ministers of Christ (2:16b-17; 3:4-4:18; 5:11-6:13).<sup>448</sup> It seems that Paul’s opponents challenged Paul’s apostolic competency on the basis of the fact that, unlike they, Paul could

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<sup>446</sup> S. Kim, “God Reconciled His Enemy to Himself: The Origin of Paul’s Concept of Reconciliation”, in *The Road to Damascus: The Impact of Paul’s Conversion on His Life, Thought, and Ministry*, ed. R. N. Longenecker (MNTS; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 102-124 (110-113, 115-16).

<sup>447</sup> See Kim, “God Reconciled”, 111, who points out that while 2 Cor 5:17 “is formulated gnominically (i.e., in general terms), the context indicates that Paul is speaking mainly of himself by way of an apostolic defense, and so the verse must be taken to refer to Paul’s own experience”.

<sup>448</sup> Goulder, *Paul and the Competing Mission*, 33-35; and also the exhaustive commentary on the relevant passages provided by V. P. Furnish, *II Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 32A; New York: Doubleday, 1984), 190-201.

not present any proper documentation authorising his apostolic ministry amongst the Corinthians. Accordingly, they appear to have denigrated Paul, citing his lack of documentation as one more proof that he was a self-appointed apostle who engaged in self-commendation (3:1-6; 4:5; 5:12; 6:4). What was the source of these letters? Paul does not explicitly say. But we do know that Peter, James and the other Apostles figured prominently in the attacks made on Paul by his opponents referred to in 1 Corinthians 9 and 15. Thus, it is likely that any letters of authorisation carried by these opponents must have come from Jerusalem and/or congregations, such as Antioch, that were in communion with the Jerusalem Apostles.

Numerous scholars have been impressed by the manner in which Paul's comments about his opponents at Corinth echo his earlier description of his opponents at Jerusalem, Antioch and Galatia.<sup>449</sup> We have already seen that, in both Galatians and 1 Corinthians, Paul appears to be responding to opponents who questioned the authenticity of both the contents of his gospel message and his apostolic commission to preach it to the Gentiles. To this, we must also add the observation that Paul's opponents were outsiders who according to Paul came preaching "another Jesus" and a "different gospel" (11:4), which mirrors his opening lines in Galatians (1:6) where he accuses his rivals at Galatia of a similar charge. Thirdly, Paul explicitly calls them *yeudapostoloi* who disguised themselves as "servants" (*diakonoi*) of Christ (2 Cor 11:13, 23). This depiction reminds us of the *yeudateloioi* at Jerusalem whom Paul describes in similar martial language as having "infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves" (Gal 2:4). Finally, in 2 Corinthians (11:20), Paul admonishes his audience for tolerating the false apostles who would "enslave" (*katadoulouoi*) them. This statement echoes not only Galatians 2:4, but also Galatians 4:24-25 where Paul speaks of Jerusalem and its children as presently serving as a slave (*douleuoi*) to the Mosaic covenant. This remarkable coincidence in terminology presents clear evidence for viewing the invasion of the false apostles at Corinth as an extension of the Christian Jewish counter-mission that

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<sup>449</sup> See Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 80-97; Goulder, *Paul and the Competing Mission*, 33-46; and Barrett, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 30-32, 278. Similarly, but more cautious in drawing a direct parallel between the two groups is Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 6-7.

had previously been launched by James' people at Antioch and the troublemakers at Galatia.

There is, however, one apparent problem with this conclusion. Various scholars, most recently C. C. Hill, have argued that Paul's opponents at Corinth, unlike the Jewish Christian missionaries attacked in Galatians, "do not appear to have required the Corinthian Gentiles to Judaize".<sup>450</sup> Nowhere in the Corinthian letters are there any explicit references to circumcision, the Gentile mission, or the works-faith debate. This has led to a number of alternative theories regarding the identity of the false apostles at Corinth. One such theory, advanced by W. Lütgert, R. Bultmann, and W. Schmithals, proposes that Paul's opponents at Corinth were liberal, Diaspora Jews strongly influenced by Gnostic and pneumatic tendencies.<sup>451</sup> On this view, Paul's opponents came professing superior knowledge supported by their adeptness at miraculous and visionary signs, which led them to minimise the humanity of Jesus (cf. 2 Cor 6:14-7:1) and criticise Paul for his inferior knowledge (2 Cor 11:16) and self-professed weaknesses (2 Cor 10:10).

An important feature of this argument is its analysis of Paul's extended discussion of wisdom in the early chapters of 1 Corinthians, where Paul juxtaposes the cross and human wisdom. The issue of wisdom does not seem to have played any role in other sections of the Corinthian correspondence where Paul appears to be on the offensive (e.g., 1 Cor 4:1-5; 9:4-6). This would suggest that wisdom *per se* was not central to the argument. The connections between Paul's gospel and the issue of wisdom as they appear in Paul's opening salvo against his opponents are hard to deny.<sup>452</sup> It would seem improbable, however, to suggest that this focus on wisdom is to be understood as a critique of Jewish opponents animated by a Gnostic vision.

There is no doubt that these interlopers were of a Jewish background; but it is also equally clear that they were Christian missionaries with some connection to the Jerusalem church. Accordingly, if we were to accept this hypothesis, we are forced to imagine the nature of Paul's opposition at Corinth as a strange hybrid of Jewish, Christian and Gnostic

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<sup>450</sup> Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 163.

<sup>451</sup> Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, 18-25; and Bultmann, *Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 132-141.

<sup>452</sup> Sumney, *Servants of Satan*, 56.

tendencies. This proposition in itself is a difficult one to defend. Moreover, recent scholarship has tended to interpret Paul's treatment of wisdom in 1 Corinthians as related to the art of rhetoric rather than Gnostic beliefs.<sup>453</sup> On this understanding, the dispute between Paulo and his opponents has little to do with superior *gnosis*, and far more to do with rhetorical *dynamis*.

Significant to this fresh approach is P. Marshall, who makes the point that Paul's references to "superior wisdom" (2:1) and "persuasive wise words" (2:4) implies a talent for eloquence (cf. 1:17), which is "the substance of rhetorical *dynamis*".<sup>454</sup> Paul's opponents are critical of his character as demonstrated by his ability to communicate effectively. Even in 2 Corinthians (10:1-12:10), we find Paul forced into defending his character against the claims of his opponents, who judge by "human standards" (2 Cor 10:2-4). In particular, Paul must fend off the accusation that "his letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Cor 10:10). In the Hellenistic world, wisdom, character and oratorical ability were closely associated.<sup>455</sup> Paul is forced to "boast" of his Jewish ancestry, his apostolic endeavours and his revelatory experiences, prefacing such boasting with the warning to his detractors, "Let these people understand that what we say by letter when absent, we will also do when present" (2 Cor 10:11).

Similarly, S. M. Pogoloff observes that Paul's distinction in 1 Corinthians (2:4-5) between persuasive speech and demonstration reflects discussions of types of arguments in Aristotle and the succeeding tradition.<sup>456</sup> With that in mind, it seems more likely that Paul, in juxtaposing human wisdom with the foolishness of the cross, is eschewing widely-accepted social expectations rather than some esoteric knowledge (1 Cor 1:18-31; cf. 2:14; 3:19). In 2 Corinthians (11:1), Paul's resort to boasting about his credentials is described as

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<sup>453</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 89; S. M. Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians* (SBLDS 134; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 137-138; and P. Marshall, "Invective: Paul and his Enemies in Corinth", *Perspective on Language and Text*, ed. E. W. Conrad and E. G. Newing (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 359-373 (365-366).

<sup>454</sup> Marshall, "Invective", 365; and, similarly, Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia*, 137-138.

<sup>455</sup> Sumney, *Servants of Satan*, 56.

<sup>456</sup> Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia*, 138.

“foolishness”. Eloquence established one’s social standing. Paul rejects this and, like all good rhetors, presents himself as an “anti-rhetor”.

Understanding Paul’s treatment of wisdom as indicative of a dispute about character and oratorical ability has the advantage of fitting most easily into the cultural milieu of Corinth and, more directly connected to our present discussion, helps make sense of the competitiveness current amongst the factions at Corinth. It seems, therefore, that wisdom in the context of 1 Corinthians must be understood as a reference to rhetorical skill and eloquence, which established one’s status as a person with superior “social and cultural qualities”.<sup>457</sup> Paul prefers the “foolishness of the cross” (1 Cor 1:18-25) which, as a demonstration of the “power of God” (2:5), was far superior to mere “human wisdom” (2:5).

Given the foregoing analysis, there is simply no evidence to support the notion that Paul’s discussion of wisdom could only be sensible if Paul was confronting an opposition that was predisposed to Gnosticism. One further difficulty makes this erroneous conclusion even less sure. It is not entirely clear as to what extent first century Judaism and first century Christianity (and especially the Jerusalem church) had been infected by Gnostic ideas. The parallel examples often cited to support this theory are derived from texts much later than the Pauline letters and, therefore, it seems that Gnosticism was far from being a clearly defined phenomenon in Paul’s time.<sup>458</sup>

Another theory concerning the identity of Paul’s opponents at Corinth follows the analysis of D. Georgi who maintained that Christology rather than Gnosticism lay at the heart of Paul’s dispute with the false apostles. Georgi argued that Paul’s opponents at Corinth were Hellenised Jews whose appropriation of the Hellenistic Jewish concept of the *Qeibi andreß* led them to present themselves as superior to Paul in that they stood in succession to Moses and Jesus as charismatic, wonder-working, semi-divine figures who could boast of their inherent “sufficiency” or “authority” (*ikanoß*).<sup>459</sup> This is a possible explanation, and Georgi’s analysis has proven influential. However like the previous

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<sup>457</sup> Marshall, “Invective”, 366.

<sup>458</sup> See further, Käsemann, “Legitimität”, 33-71. Cf. Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 86; and Georgi, *Opponents*, 41-60.

<sup>459</sup> Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 162, n. 42. See further and more fully Georgi, *Opponents*, 229-313.

proposal, Georgi's hypothesis requires special pleading. The notion of "divine men" is even less clearly defined than Gnosticism and, similarly, relies heavily on later evidence.<sup>460</sup>

G. Friedrich offers a significant third theory, which is a variation of Georgi's argument.<sup>461</sup> Friedrich contends that the origins of the false apostles must be traced back to the miracle-working leaders of the Hellenists, Stephen and Philip. According to Friedrich, the followers of Stephen and Philip came to Corinth boasting of their miraculous powers and professing Jesus as a victorious new Moses as opposed to the suffering and crucified Lord preached by Paul. This hypothesis may be better, in that it looks to contemporary Christian models, but our foregoing discussion of Paul's relationship with the Hellenists makes it clear that the antinomian stance of Stephen and Philip both anticipated and influenced Paul's own position vis-à-vis the Law-free Gentile mission. Moreover, the primary problem with all three theories is that they seriously undervalue the obvious Christian Jewish character of Paul's opponents, whose theology focused primarily on the Mosaic covenant and, therefore, also the Mosaic Law.<sup>462</sup> Furthermore, it can be argued that the distinctive Pauline view of justification as a free gift from God wrought by the central event of Christ's death is fundamental to Paul's critique of the theology of the false apostles. And this brings us to the third issue pertinent to the Corinthian conflict over Paul's apostolic competency.

We know that Paul's opponents boasted of their Jewish heritage (11:21) and that this was an important facet of their self-promotion as authoritative witnesses to the Christian message. Paul counters this by boasting of his own Jewish pedigree, but augments this argument by detailing the many sufferings and trials he has endured that demonstrate in practical terms his superior authority as a "servant of Christ" (11:23-33; cf. 4:7-5:10; 6:3-13). We know also that the version of the Christian message the false apostles preached was radically different from that of Paul's gospel. In 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, Paul expresses his amazement at how the Corinthians have been led astray from "sincere and

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<sup>460</sup> See further, B. Blackburn, "Miracle Working THEIOI ANDRES in Hellenism (and Hellenistic Judaism)", in *Gospel Perspectives 6: The Miracles of Jesus*, ed. D. Wenham and C. Blomberg (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986), 185-218.

<sup>461</sup> G. Friedrich, "Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief", in *Abraham unser Vater: Juden und Christen im Gespräch über die Bibel (Festschrift für O. Michel)*, ed. O. Betz, M. Hengel, and P. Schmidt (AGJU 5; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963), 181-215.

<sup>462</sup> Käsemann, "Legitimität", 35-54.

pure devotion to Christ” by accepting readily a “different gospel” from the one he proclaimed (11:3-4). The content of this “different gospel” is made clear in 3:4-18, and fits well with false apostles’ proud boasts to having a superior Jewish lineage. In this earlier section of the letter, Paul compares his and his co-workers’ God-given competency (*ikanoiy*) as ministers of the new covenant (3:5-6; cf. 2:16-17; 3:3) with that of his opponents who are involved in the ministry that brings death (3:8). Paul further elaborates on this theme (3:7-18), linking the ministry of death with the old covenant (3:14) of the Mosaic Law, “which was engraved on letters of stone” (3:7) and has now been “set aside in Christ” (3:17; cf. 3:11). Paul is clearly attempting to delineate the essential differences between his ministry of the new covenant and that of his opponents’ service of the old covenant. He argues that his opponents’ ministry derives its authority or competency from the letter that kills (3:6), that is, the letter of the Mosaic Law, which brings only death (3:6) and condemnation (3:9). By contrast, Paul and his co-workers rely for their authority on the Spirit that “gives life” (3:6), and brings “righteousness” (3:9) and “freedom” (3:17).<sup>463</sup> It seems, therefore, that fidelity to the Mosaic Law was central to his opponents’ proclamation of the gospel, and remained the key point of difference between their message and that of Paul.

We can say more. Paul returns to the theme of the two ministries in 5:11-21, presenting his ministry as that of one who preaches the reconciliation (5:18-20) and righteousness (5:21; cf. 6:7) that is wrought by Christ’s death, which bought atonement for sin and justification in the eyes of God (5:14-15, 21). Implied in this statement, particularly when read against the background of Paul’s earlier statements in 3:4-18, is the notion that his opponents proclaimed a gospel that denigrated the salvific character of Christ’s death. Paul explicitly states that his opponents viewed Christ in merely “fleshly” terms (*kata; sarka* – 5:16) and, later, that they used “fleshly” or “worldly” (*sarkika*; – 10:4) weapons and arguments in order to destroy what he, through divine authority, knowledge, and power, had sought to construct (10:3-8; cf. 13:10). Paul responds that while we once knew Christ in the flesh (*kata; sarka*), we do so no longer (2 Cor 5:16) – “therefore, if anyone is

<sup>463</sup> Paul is on familiar territory here. He used similar language in Galatians (4:21-3:1), when he spoke of the two wives of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar (Gal 4:21-31), with the latter representing a covenant of slavery to the Law (4:24-25), and the former representing the covenant of freedom from the Law (4:26-28). See the discussion in Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 228-229.



in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (5:17). This explains why Paul later argues that while his opponents called themselves “apostles of Christ” and “servants of righteousness” (11:13-15), they were in reality deceiving the Corinthians (11:15). For, as servants of the “old covenant” (3:14) his opponents proclaimed another Jesus and a different gospel (11:4), which saw “righteousness” or “reconciliation” as imputed by God via the agency of the “written code” of the Mosaic Law (3:6-11; 5:16, 19), rather than through the cross of Christ (5:14-19).<sup>464</sup>

In the light of these comments, we can conclude that not only was Law-observance a key component of the opponents’ gospel, but that these opponents were also “Judaisers” whose message directly challenged the basic tenets of Paul’s own gospel of justification by faith. Paul may not directly say that his opponents demanded that the Gentile converts be circumcised and observe the Law, but the above reconstruction of their gospel message certainly implies that this must have been the case. At this point, we have arrived at the whole crux of our discussion – the question of the identity and the origin of Paul’s opponents at Corinth.

#### ***4.1.3. The Identity of Paul’s Opponents at Corinth***

So who were these troublemakers who came to Corinth, representing themselves as agents of the Jerusalem church and preaching a gospel of Law-observance? We know that in the interim between Paul’s departure and the composition of 1 Corinthians Apollos, a Jewish convert to Christianity from Alexandria, had arrived in Corinth and conducted a substantial ministry amongst Paul’s congregation (Acts 18:24; 1 Cor 3:4-6; 16:12). Apollos appears to have had a reputation for eloquence, and in 2 Corinthians (10:10; 11:16) Paul admits his own inadequacies as a speaker (2 Cor 10:10; 11:6). Thus it might be easy to speculate that some amongst the Corinthians, who apparently held the gift of tongues in high regard (1 Cor 1:5; 12:8, 28; 14:26), would have declared allegiance with the more articulate Apollos over Paul.

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<sup>464</sup> This point is made strongly on the basis of the same evidence outlined above in P. W. Barnett, “Opponents of Paul”, in *Dictionary of Paul*, ed. G. F. Hawthorne and R. P. Martin, 645-653 (646); and more fully in his earlier work “Opposition in Corinth”, *JSNT* 22 (1984), 3-17. See also Kim, “God Reconciled”, 113-122.

Earlier in 1 Corinthians (1:12-13; 3:5-6), Paul explicitly tells us that Chloe's people reported to him that since his departure the whole church had become divided into factions, which were aligned to Paul, Apollos, and Cephas. We might, therefore, be inclined to attribute the origins of the pro-Petrine, anti-Pauline opponents to Apollos' following.<sup>465</sup> Such speculation, however, is baseless. Nowhere in 1 Corinthians does Paul accuse Apollos of working against him.<sup>466</sup> Nor, for that matter, is there any suggestion that Apollos had connections to the Jerusalem church and the apostolic authorities with whom Paul had previously clashed. On the contrary, Apollos is presented alongside Paul as an example of a faithful servant of the gospel (1 Cor 3:5-23), who is compared unfavourably with those at Corinth who "are full of their own importance, taking sides for one against another" (1 Cor 4:6).

Given that these comments occur after a long discussion of the partisans of Cephas, Paul, Apollos and Christ reported by Chloe's people, we can safely say that Paul is not suggesting an alliance between the supporters of Apollos and the supporters of Cephas. On the contrary, the fact that later we find that the Corinthians were asking Paul when Apollos might return to Corinth (1 Cor 16:12) indicates a close working relationship between Paul and Apollos.<sup>467</sup> Accordingly, there seems no justification for viewing Apollos or his followers as the source of the anti-Pauline opposition at Corinth.

The same cannot be said of the members of the Cephas party. Following his reference to the Cephas party in 1:12, Paul again explicitly mentions Cephas a second time in 3:23-24, linking Cephas with him and Apollos as servants of Christ. Yet, unlike his earlier treatment of Apollos, Paul never implies mutual agreement between Cephas and himself. On the contrary, it is entirely possible that Paul had Cephas, the "rock", in mind when he speaks of the impossibility of laying any "foundation" other than Jesus Christ (3:11).<sup>468</sup> He clearly wants to draw a comparison between him and Apollos as the architect and builder, respectively, of the Corinthian community (3:3-10) on the one hand, and, on

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<sup>465</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 81-84.

<sup>466</sup> Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 42-49; and Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 75-78.

<sup>467</sup> Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 76.

<sup>468</sup> So P. Vielhauer, "Paulus und die Kephaspartei in Korinth", *NTS* 21 (1975), 342-352 (343); and, earlier, H. D. Lietzmann, *An die Korinther I, II*, rev. W. G. Kümmel, 5th edn (HNT 9; Tübingen: Mohr, 1969), 16. Their arguments are followed by Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 77-78.

the other, “this man” (**touton**) who would destroy the community, analogically referred to as “God’s Temple” (3:12-17). Paul obviously has a specific person in mind, and he concludes his attack on this person by expressly grouping Cephas together with him and Apollos as the men about whom the factional contenders were boasting (3:21-2).

With this in mind, it is entirely possible that Peter himself led the opponents of Paul at Corinth. This proposition has been defended strongly by C. K. Barrett.<sup>469</sup> However, the evidence Barrett presents is far from convincing and, as M. Goulder observes, “if Peter had been there in person, we might have expected a less kid-gloves response from Paul, as in Gal 2”.<sup>470</sup> Elsewhere, Barrett has suggested a possible allusion to Peter and the Jerusalem Apostles in 2 Corinthians 11:5 and 12:11, where Paul speaks of the super apostles (**uperlian apostolwn**), which might plausibly echo Paul’s disparaging comments in Galatians (2:6, 9) about the “pillars”. Barrett argues that Paul’s comments on the super apostles seem less brutal than his expressed opinions of those he calls **yeudapostoloi**, and this too parallels Galatians where Paul’s treatment of pillars is somewhat ambiguous and even at times almost respectful.<sup>471</sup> The problem with this view, however, is that the reference to the false apostles is sandwiched between the two references to the super apostles. This gives the impression that Paul is using the adjective “super” (**uperlian**) ironically as a further qualification of the **yeudapostoloi**, who apparently claimed that their apostolic ministry was superior (**uper**) to Paul’s in various ways. Moreover, Paul uses words with the prefix **uper** to accuse the false apostles of going beyond (**uperekteinw**) their missionary territory (2 Cor 10:14), of becoming puffed up with pride (**uperairw**) and of boasting about their abundance (**uperbolhy**) of revelations (2 Cor 12:7).<sup>472</sup> By comparison, Paul can boast of being a superior (**uper**) servant of Christ (2 Cor 11:23) by virtue of the many difficulties, sufferings and afflictions he has endured for the sake of the gospel (2 Cor 11:23-33). This close association of words prefixed by **uper** with the **yeudapostoloi** would

<sup>469</sup> See Barrett’s articles ‘Christianity at Corinth’ and ‘Cephas and Corinth’ in C. K. Barrett, *Essays on Paul* (London: SPCK, 1982), 1-27 and 28-39, respectively. Cf. *idem*, “Paul: Controversies and Councils”, 42-74.

<sup>470</sup> Goulder, *Paul and the Competing Mission*, 20.

<sup>471</sup> Barrett, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 31, who follows Käsemann, “Legitimität”, 42.

<sup>472</sup> Barnett, “Opponents”, 645.

appear to indicate that ~~upper~~ **lian apostolwn** are to be identified with **yeudapostoloi** and, therefore, the two titles are to be understood as referring to the one group of opponents.

Turning now to a third theory concerning the identity of the false apostles, H. Conzelmann has proposed that one need not presume outside influence to explain the appearance of the Cephas Party at Corinth, since Peter would have figured prominently in the essential message first promulgated by Paul himself (cf. 1 Cor 15:5).<sup>473</sup> This too appears equally improbable, as we noted at the outset of this chapter. One is hard pressed to attribute the origins of this pro-Petrine group and its Law-observant gospel solely to a wanton distortion of Paul's own teachings. A much more plausible proposition is that the Cephas party arose as a result of the arrival in Corinth of rival missionaries who were in some manner connected with Peter and the Jerusalem Apostles (1 Cor 9:3-7; 15:1-11).

The evidence we have reviewed in both Corinthian letters attests to the external origins of the troublemakers. Paul repeatedly distinguishes his opponents from the Corinthians (1 Cor 9:2; 15:11; 2 Cor 10:12). He charges them as interlopers (2 Cor 11:4) and rivals whom Paul accuses of preaching "another Jesus" and a "different gospel" (11:4), the crux of which is their proclamation of the "old covenant" observed by adherence to the Law (3:1-18; 5:11-21). Accordingly Paul dismisses them as "false apostles" and "deceitful workers" who disguise themselves as "servants of righteousness" and "apostles of Christ". Moreover, echoes of similar conflicts that occurred earlier at Antioch, Jerusalem and Galatia that resound throughout the Corinthian correspondence lead us to suspect that the perpetrators of the factional conflicts at Corinth were in possession of a good deal of knowledge concerning Paul's previous problems with the Law-observant Christian Jews at Jerusalem. If our supposition that the letters of authorisation derived from Jerusalem has any basis in fact, then it signals a further parallel between the false apostles at Corinth and the agents of Jerusalem whom Paul had previously attacked in his letter to the Galatians. The result of their interference in Corinth was the factional conflict reported by Chloe's people with some of Paul's converts in Corinth joining in this new allegiance to Peter and the Jerusalem church against Paul and his co-workers. Paul's first letter failed to solve the problem, and neither his "painful visit" (2 Cor 2:1) nor the further letter he wrote "with

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<sup>473</sup> H. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, tr. J. W. Leitch (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 32-33.

many tears” (2 Cor 2:4; 7:8) fared any better. By the time he wrote 2 Corinthians, the factional conflict at Corinth had escalated to the point where he was forced to attack these outsiders more vehemently. While in 2 Corinthians Paul nowhere makes the connection between these false apostles and the Jerusalem Apostles explicitly, the overwhelming weight of evidence can only lead in one direction – the false apostles were Christian Jews with close ties to Jerusalem, and possibly also Antioch and Galatia.

#### **4.2. Philippians**

We now turn to Philippians where again we are faced with a number of difficulties in our efforts to identify the opponents to whom Paul alludes. To begin with, as with 2 Corinthians there is an ongoing debate concerning the literary integrity of Paul’s letter to the Philippians. The pertinent problem here is that, apart from 3:2-21, the letter as it stands fails to suggest any significant opposition to Paul at Philippi.<sup>474</sup> Many commentators believe that Philippians consists of two or even three letter fragments that have been joined together by a later editor, with only the aforementioned verses representing the shred of a once discrete correspondence dealing with opponents.<sup>475</sup> However, the rather vague and specious nature of Paul’s polemical statements about his opponents in this section appears to indicate that Paul is not dealing with a crisis in Philippi occasioned by the arrival of a counter mission. Rather, Paul is warning his Philippian audience of the imminent arrival of such a mission.<sup>476</sup> On that basis, one could argue that the impending threat of rival missionaries is only one of the concerns that Paul deals with in this letter. Recent scholarship has inclined towards the literary unity of Philippians, characterising it as hortatory letter of friendship that deals with disparate issues relevant to both Paul’s

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<sup>474</sup> Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 155.

<sup>475</sup> See the discussion in R. P. Martin, *The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary*, rev. edn (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 37-41; and, more fully in R. Jewett, “The Epistolary Thanksgiving and the Integrity of Philippians”, *NovT* 12 (1970), 40-53. See also L. C. A. Alexander, “Hellenistic Letter-Forms and the Structure of Philippians”, *JSNT* 37 (1989), 87-101, who has analysed Philippians in the light of contemporary Hellenistic letters and argued that the inconsistencies in Philippians are compatible with the conventions of Hellenistic letter-forms.

<sup>476</sup> Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 103-109, argues for the presence of an anti-Pauline faction at Philippi. On the other hand, Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 77-80, believes that Paul presents this opposition as an imminent possibility rather than a present reality.

situation and that of his audience.<sup>477</sup> Fortunately, as with the partition theories concerning 2 Corinthians, the problem of Philippians literary integrity is not crucial for our present purposes. A far more important issue concerns the provenance of the letter (or letters), and this has a significant bearing on how we reconstruct the nature of the threat confronting the church at Philippi. Hence, we shall begin with this issue first.

#### **4.2.1. Provenance and Date**

The opening salutation of Philippians (1:7, 13-14, 16) makes it clear that Paul was in prison when he penned this epistle. In the past commentators had generally accepted that this must refer to either Paul's imprisonment in Rome, or at Caesarea prior to his transfer to Rome and, accordingly, date Philippians in the early 60s.<sup>478</sup> More recently there has been a shift towards Ephesus as the place of composition, with dates ranging around 52-54 C.E.<sup>479</sup> This line of argument posits a hypothetical imprisonment for Paul during his extended stay there. Acts makes no mention of Paul being incarcerated at Ephesus, but it does place Paul in Ephesus for a long period of time (19:8, 10), perhaps some two and half years (c. 52-55 C.E.). Paul tells us that his Ephesian sojourn was marked out not only by great opportunity for effective missionary work, but also by a great deal of opposition to that work (1 Cor 16:8-9). In 2 Corinthians (6:5; 11:23) Paul speaks of the trials that accompanied his ministry, including "frequent" imprisonments. Moreover, he specifically alludes to the hardships he and his companions suffered in Asia (2 Cor 1:8-11), when they were in deadly peril (1:10) and felt the sentence of death (1:9); which must be equated to his earlier statement about fighting wild beasts in Ephesus (1 Cor 15:32).

If such comments are not mere hyperbole on Paul's part, it could be that he is referring literally to a situation in Ephesus where he was imprisoned awaiting a trial that would result in a sentence of death *ad bestias* in the arena. It is important to note, as F.

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<sup>477</sup> See, especially, D. F. Watson, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians and Its Implications for the Unity Question", *NovT* 30 (1988), 57-88; and S. K. Stowers, "Friends and Enemies in the Politics of Heaven: Reading Theology in Philippians", in *Pauline Theology*, Vol. 1, ed. J. M. Bassler, 89-104.

<sup>478</sup> The case for Rome is summarised and critically assessed best by Martin, *Philippians*, 20-28.

<sup>479</sup> This argument was first put most strongly by G. S. Duncan, *St. Paul's Ephesian Ministry: A Reconstruction with Special Reference to the Ephesian Origin of the Imprisonment Epistles* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1929), 6, 66-70, 95-97; and followed by Guthrie, *Introduction*, 535; Koester, *Introduction*, 2:130-134; and Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 73-74.

Watson observes, that 1 Corinthians 15:32 functions as part of a larger argument for the resurrection of the dead. In effect Paul is arguing, “If the dead are not raised, what human hope would I have had if I had fought wild animals in the arena at Ephesus?”<sup>480</sup> Even should we accept a more metaphorical interpretation of this statement, it seems that Paul did suffer real physical danger at Ephesus, which he perceived as constituting a genuine threat upon his life. And one of the simplest ways of explaining this is to posit an Ephesian imprisonment, which Paul genuinely felt might result in his execution.

In Philippians (1:19-26), despite his confidence in divine deliverance, Paul is still uncertain of his future. The sentence of death remains a real possibility (1:20-23, 30; 2:17). It is for this reason that Paul delays in sending Timothy to the Philippian community (2:19), for he is unsure of his ultimate fate (2:23). Paul contemplates the possibility of death with a remarkable joy and serenity, which appears in stark contrast to the despair that pervades the recollections in the Corinthian letters (1 Cor 15:32; 2 Cor 1:8-11) of his hardships in Asia. But this may be more a matter of the moment. The Corinthian reference may relate to an earlier period, prior to the arrival of Epaphroditus with aid from Philippi (2:25; 4:18; cf. 1:19; 4:10-20), which seems to have lifted much of the anxiety and sorrow from Paul’s shoulders (2:27-28).<sup>481</sup> Paul speaks of the Philippians’ previous financial support of his missions in Thessalonica and Corinth (4:15-16; cf. 2 Cor 11:8-9), but notes there was a period of time when they lacked the opportunity to send further support (4:10). With the arrival of Epaphroditus the situation was rectified (4:18), and Paul can now “rejoice” (4:10) in the Philippians’ renewed kindness and willingness to share his troubles (4:14). Similarly in 2 Corinthians (1:11), Paul alludes to the “many” whose prayers brought release from the deadly peril (1:10) that confronted him in Asia. And he specifically mentions the community in Macedonia as the source of much financial and spiritual support during his trials (2:12-13; 7:5; 8:1-5; 9:2). Accordingly, the situation that confronted Paul at the writing of Philippians is entirely compatible with his statements in the Corinthian letters about his trials in Ephesus.

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<sup>480</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 73. But see Martin, *Philippians*, 29, who argues that in 1 Corinthians (15:32) Paul is describing in vivid terms a more general hostility towards him, rather than a literal death sentence.

<sup>481</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 74.

However, the strongest argument in support of an Ephesian provenance for Philippians concerns the issue of distance. Philippians bears testimony to several communiqués between Paul and the community in Philippi. First, the Philippians hear of Paul's imprisonment and send support through the agency of Epaphroditus. Second, they are informed that Epaphroditus has fallen ill and, third, Paul has heard that they are anxious to know if he has recovered (2:26). Finally, Paul sends the letter to Philippi, in which he alludes to the imminent dispatch of Epaphroditus (2:25-29), followed by Timothy (2:19-23) and, pending Paul's release from prison, Paul himself (2:24). This frequent interchange of messages and messengers weighs against a Roman provenance where the prohibitive distance between Rome and Philippi would have hampered rapid communication between the two centres. Similar problems attend the Caesarean hypothesis, since Caesarea is even farther from Philippi. Moreover, we need to note that Paul's expressed wish to visit Philippi stands in contradiction to his statements in Romans (1:10-15; 15:22-29) about his future plans to travel to Spain via Rome.<sup>482</sup> Whereas in 2 Corinthians Paul testifies that, following his deliverance from the deadly peril that confronted him in Asia (1:8-10), he went to Macedonia via Troas (2:12-13; 7:5; 8:1-5; 9:2). In view of these considerations, we can only conclude that assigning Philippians to Paul's Ephesian period (c. 52-54 C.E.) fits the available evidence best. It may be true that we have no explicit evidence that Paul was imprisoned during his stay at Ephesus. But there is ample implicit data within the Corinthian correspondence that suggests the possibility of such an imprisonment.

#### ***4.2.2. The Impending Crisis in Philippi***

If we are correct in placing Philippians within the context of Paul's Ephesian ministry then this opens up important possibilities for interpreting the nature of the opposition to which Paul refers in this letter. Paul begins his letter with a general reference to rival missionaries who, emboldened by his imprisonment (1:14), preach Christ out of envy and strife (1:17). Most scholars have argued that these missionaries were active in Ephesus, since Paul accuses them of stirring up trouble for him while he is in prison (1:17). There is here a clear absence of the bitterness that pervades Paul's attack on the false apostles in 2 Corinthians, or even earlier on the troublemakers at Galatia. Paul is willing to concede that his

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<sup>482</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 74.



opponents preach Christ (1:14), criticising them not on the basis of doctrine, but only on the basis of their motives. However, such is the fleeting nature of the reference to rival missionaries in the opening chapter of Philippians that we cannot draw any firm conclusions about the location or the nature of this opposition. Furthermore, D. Watson is probably correct in identifying the whole of Philippians 1:3-26 as an extended *exordium*. Its purpose is to introduce the audience to one of the major themes of Paul's letter – that is, that Paul's trials and tribulations, including his imprisonment and his difficulties with rival missionaries, have only served to advance the gospel (cf. 1:12-18) by providing what we today might call “free publicity”.<sup>483</sup> Paul does return to the subject of opposition later in the letter (3:2-3), and in this case Paul's comments are more specific and his tone much sharper.

The opening salvo of this section of Philippians (3:2-3) is clearly polemical. Paul resorts to insult and name calling by telling the Philippians, “Beware (**Βλέπετε**) of the dogs (**κυνᾶς**), beware (**βλέπετε**) of the evil workers (**τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργατὰς**), beware (**βλέπετε**) of the mutilators (**τὴν κατὰ τὸν νόμον**)”. The repeated use of **βλέπετε** and the derogatory nature of the threefold insult signal the seriousness of the situation Paul is referring to. But the manner in which Paul introduces and develops this entire chapter, indicates that he is reiterating previous teachings and warnings (3:1, 18; cf. Gal 1:9), and this suggests that the threat posed by these opponents is merely a future possibility.<sup>484</sup> They have not yet arrived in Philippi, but Paul wants to warn his audience, as he has repeatedly done so in the past, of their impending appearance. Paul had recently been involved in the battle with the Christian Jewish interlopers at Galatia and was presently preoccupied with a similar situation at Corinth. It would therefore not be surprising if Paul were merely making a general statement alluding to the various rival missionaries who were troubling his converts throughout the Pauline communities.<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> Watson, “Rhetorical Analysis”, 61; who is followed by C. Osiek, *Philippians, Philemon* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 39.

<sup>484</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 77. Cf. Stowers, “Friends and Enemies”, 115-116. Similarly, R. Russell, “Pauline Letter Structure in Philippians”, *JETS* 25 (1982), 295-306, identifies this entire section as an “exhortation”, which is paragenetic in style and is filled with a good deal of “hortatory idiom” common to Greco-Roman hortatory letters of friendship.

<sup>485</sup> Russell, “Pauline Letter Structure”, 301; Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 77; and G. F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC 43; Waco: Word Books, 1983), 711, all argue for Judaisers at Galatia and Corinth. Similarly, R. Jewett,

The term “dogs” commonly used by both Jewish and Christian authors as an insulting reference to non-Jews, apostates, and evildoers (Ex 22:30; Ps 22:16; cf. Matt 7:6; 15:26; Rev 2:15) has been seen by some scholars as indicating that the threat Paul refers to comes from opponents who were either Gentiles or antinomian Gnostic libertines who eschewed all aspects of Law-observance.<sup>486</sup> On the other hand F. Watson argues for Christian Jews, speculating that Paul is appropriating his opponents’ distinction between themselves as members of the true people of God and the Gentiles converted by Paul. Paul simply reverses the application of this distinction.<sup>487</sup> Watson rightly notes that Paul’s other two epithets support this speculation.

The designation *ejrgathß* appears regularly in the Pauline corpus and elsewhere in early Christian documents as a technical designation for missionaries (eg. 2 Cor 11:13; 1 Tim 5:18; 2 Tim 2:15; Matt 9:37, 38; Lk 10:2, 7), and thus these opponents are most likely Christians.<sup>488</sup> The third insult, derived from the word for “mutilation” (*katatomhß*), seems obscure. But when taken in conjunction with the following verse (3:3), where Paul speaks of himself and his converts as “the circumcision...who put no confidence in the flesh”, it seems that Paul is clearly using the term to refer to those missionaries who require circumcision of the Gentile converts.

What is remarkable here is that the terminology Paul uses to describe his opponents in Philippians echoes that which he uses in Galatians (2:12) when he speaks of the James people at Antioch, whom he also calls those of the circumcision (*touß ejk peritomhß*). Similarly in 2 Corinthians (11:13), Paul disparages his Christian Jewish opponents as “deceitful workers” (*ejrgatai dolioi*) who view Christ only in “fleshly” terms (*kata;sarka* – 5:16), boast of their Jewish heritage (11:21), use “fleshly” (*sarkika*;– 10:4) arguments, and place their confidence in the Mosaic covenant (3:4-18). If nothing else, these notable parallels lead us to suspect that in Philippians 3:2 Paul is not on unfamiliar

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“Conflicting Movements in the Early Church as Reflected in Philippians”, *NovT* 12 (1970), 362-390 (365-369), sees this as a reference to the “divine men” encountered at Corinth.

<sup>486</sup> Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, 84-85; A. F. J. Klijn, “Paul’s Opponents in Philippians III”, *NovT* 7 (1964-65), 278-284 (278-280); and P. T. O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 14.

<sup>487</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 75; see also Friedrich, “Die Gegner”, 159.

<sup>488</sup> The same point is made by Georgi, *Opponents*, 49-51.

territory. He has met these opponents elsewhere, at Jerusalem, Antioch, Galatia and Corinth, and in all cases they are people who place their confidence in their Jewish pedigree.

W. Schmithals reasons that Paul's comments indicate that these opponents, unlike James' party at Antioch, did not demand circumcision, but only that they boasted of their own circumcision as a sign of their superior Jewish lineage.<sup>489</sup> It is for this reason that Paul goes on to present his own credentials: "circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; in regard to the Law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as to the righteousness of the Law, blameless" (Phil 3:4-6). However, this too is a ploy that Paul used previously in Galatians (1:13-14) and 2 Corinthians (11:21) and, as we have seen, in both cases Paul was dealing with opponents who did demand that the Gentile converts submit to circumcision and adhere to the demands of the Mosaic Law. Moreover in Philippians (3:4-8), the combination of Paul's sarcastic wordplay on *katatomhē* and *peritomhē* and his later caustic dismissal of his own Jewish background (3:8) as mere "dung" or "rubbish" (*skubala*) makes it obvious that Paul has in mind Christian Jews who required circumcision and Law-observance. This is made even more obvious by Paul's ensuing statement that, unlike his opponents, he does not rely on the "righteousness...that comes from the Law", but on "faith in Christ", that is "the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith" (3:9).

Paul follows this argument up with an impassioned plea to the Philippians to follow his example (3:17), by "forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead...the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (3:14). Again, Schmithals sees here a reference to a Gnostic tendency on the part of Paul's opponents, who inclined towards a realised eschatology based on their belief that the resurrection from the dead had already occurred.<sup>490</sup> Paul is certainly keen to stress that the resurrection of the dead is a future event (3:12), and that this is the mature "view of things" (3:15). However, it seems clear that these admonitions are purely hortatory and devoid of any strong,

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<sup>489</sup> Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, 89, 119.

<sup>490</sup> Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, 65-67.

polemical notes.<sup>491</sup> Paul is not addressing these comments to his opponents, but is rather speaking of his own and his readers' situation.<sup>492</sup> If there is a link to the foregoing assault on the "dogs" and "mutilators", it is probably to be found in Paul's counsel to "follow his example" (3:17). Just as he has forgotten "what is behind" him – his Jewish heritage and his past attempts to win righteousness by following the Law (3:9-11) – so too should his Philippian converts, by placing no credence in the Law-observant gospel of his opponents.

Further corroboration that this interpretation is probably what Paul intends is made clear by Paul's subsequent remark, "For as I have often told you before and now say again, even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ" (3:18). The sense of this statement is that it is to be read in conjunction with the foregoing exhortations. The reference to living "as enemies of the cross of Christ" (3:18) fits well with his previous attack on the "dogs" and "mutilators". Given that these people were most likely Christian Jews who promoted a gospel of works righteousness, they probably also deprecated the salvific character of Christ's death – as we saw with the false apostles at Corinth (2 Cor 5:14-21). Similarly in Galatians (2:21; 3:1; 5:11; 6:12-14), Paul argues that the gospel of the Judaisers, which centred on circumcision and Law-observance, was diametrically opposed to the cross of Christ, which was the centre-piece of his own gospel of justification by faith. Accordingly, in Philippians 3:12-17 Paul wants to stress that the only true path to salvation is via faith in Christ and not by seeking righteousness through the works of the Law.

Paul goes on to qualify what he means by "enemies of Christ", by saying that "their god is their stomach, and their glory is their shame" (3:19). R. Jewett argues that this assertion represents a new transition in Paul's thought, signalling that Paul is now speaking of a second set of opponents who were libertarians eschewing any form of Law-observance.<sup>493</sup> On the other hand, Schmithals contends that this additionally demonstrates that the original Gnostic Jewish opponents promoted an antinomian stance in accordance

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<sup>491</sup> Stowers, "Friends and Enemies", 109.

<sup>492</sup> Klijn, "Paul's Opponents", 278-284 (278-280), who is followed by Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 75. Cf. Jewett, "Conflicting Movements", 373.

<sup>493</sup> Jewett, "Conflicting Movements", 382.

with their realised eschatology.<sup>494</sup> But, as F. Watson points out, these arguments depend primarily on a very literal reading of Paul's comments, which are not intended as "a literal description but as violent polemic".<sup>495</sup> When Paul claims that his opponents worship their stomach and glory in their shame, he is not suggesting that these people were lax in matters of food and sex. Here both the word "stomach" (**koilē**) and the word "shame" (**aiscunē**) are probably best understood as euphemisms for the genitals; which, in effect, means that Paul is crudely suggesting that these people "worship their genitals".<sup>496</sup> If this is the correct interpretation, then these comments must be seen as a further qualification of his earlier comments about the "dogs" and "mutilators" who put "their confidence in the flesh" (3:4).

It seems, therefore, that the whole of Philippians 3:1-21 is cut from a single fabric. Paul weaves together both the threads of polemic and exhortation, but the overall picture that emerges is a coherent one. Paul wants to alert his Philippian congregation to the possible incursion of a Judaising mission. There is no evidence to suggest that this threat came from Gnostic Jewish perfectionists or antinomian libertarians. The threat came from opponents with whom Paul was all-too-familiar, and he had repeatedly warned the Philippians of the very real danger posed by his opponents and their Law-observant gospel (3:2, 18). In Philippians, there is no suggestion that these opponents had yet arrived. Unlike Galatians and the Corinthian letters, Paul does not appear to have written Philippians as a direct response to a present attack on his mission at Philippi. But the urgency with which Paul delivers his warning, and the violence of the abuse he directs towards his enemies, suggests that his own immediate context was one of conflict and division. Certainly, he was imprisoned at the time and may even have been facing possible execution. But if we are correct in assuming that the location of his imprisonment was Ephesus, in the period shortly following the crisis in Galatia and amidst the earliest stages of the factional conflict at Corinth, then this suggests that Philippians 3:2-21 was directed at the Christian Jewish missionaries who were responsible for these two conflicts.

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<sup>494</sup> Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, 65-67.

<sup>495</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 75.

<sup>496</sup> Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 76.

### 4.3. Paul's Final Visit to Jerusalem

No examination of Paul's career, following his split with the Antiochene community, would be complete without a brief look at Paul's third and final visit to Jerusalem, as described in Acts 21:15-23:23. While we do not have any more direct source of information on this visit, other than Luke's highly polished and heavily reworked account, Romans 15:25-33 does provide some important insights into both Paul's reasons for going to Jerusalem and his concerns about the outcome of that venture. Moreover, this section of Romans also supplies a number of significant hints about the outcome of Paul's earlier conflicts with his Christian Jewish opponents at Galatia and Corinth.

#### 4.3.1. Paul's Situation Prior to his Visit to Jerusalem

It is generally agreed that Paul wrote to Rome during his extended winter stay in Corinth (c. 58 C.E.), just prior to setting out for his third visit to Jerusalem.<sup>497</sup> Paul tells his Roman auditors that the purpose of this trip to Jerusalem was to deliver the collection he had gathered from his Gentile congregations in Macedonia and Achaia (Rom 15:25-26, 28; cf. Acts 20:1-4, 16; 24:17). In 1 Corinthians (16:3-4) Paul had indicated that the money would be transported by elected delegates bearing letters of accreditation from him. In the interim between the writing of 1 Corinthians and Romans, Paul decided to take this task upon himself partly, it seems, because he anticipated both a cool reception from the Jerusalem church and hostility from "unbelievers" (τῶν ἀπεικονιστῶν) in Judea (Rom 15:31). Although Paul probably had several reasons for writing to Rome, it seems clear that one of those reasons was to canvas support for his task in Jerusalem in the event that this

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<sup>497</sup> The majority opinion holds that Paul wrote to Rome in the latter half of the decade of the 50s, with either late 57 or early 58 being the most likely. A detailed discussion of the question can be found in J. A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 86-88. See also Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 105-127; Koester, *Introduction*, 2:138; Bornkamm, *Paul*, xii; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Commentary on Romans* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 12-16; F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1977), 324; R. Jewett, *Dating Paul's Life* (London: SCM Press, 1979); J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (WBC 38A; Dallas: Word Books, 1988), xlii-iv; and B. Byrne, *Romans* (SP 6; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 8-9. A small minority of scholars has suggested an even earlier date of 55 or 53-54. For 55, see Haenchen, *Acts*, 67 and A. Suhl, *Paulus und seine Briefe* (SNT 11; Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 1975), 249. For 53-54, see J. L. Knox, *Chapters in a Life of Paul* (London: A. & C. Black, 1954), 86. However, these theories for an earlier dating of Romans appear improbable, since they allow insufficient time for Paul's missionary activities in Asia Minor and Greece and leave a long, and clearly inexplicable, lapse between Paul's final journey to Jerusalem and his arrival in Rome – see Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, xlv.

enterprise should prove ill fated, resulting in further, serious conflict in Jerusalem.<sup>498</sup> Accordingly, Paul asks the members of the Roman communities to join his struggle by praying for his own personal safety and the success of his mission to deliver the collection (15:30-32).

Why did Paul entertain such foreboding concerning this visit to Jerusalem? This is a complex question, and there appears to have been several factors involved. To begin with, Romans 15:26 suggests that, during the intervening years between 1 Corinthians and Romans, the collection had not proven to be the overwhelming success that Paul had at first anticipated. Paul implies that only Macedonia and Achaia had embraced the collection wholeheartedly. One might wonder why Galatia is not also mentioned. In 1 Corinthians (16:2), Paul specifically refers to the participation of the Galatian churches and, therefore, their omission from the list of contributors in Romans (15:26) is puzzling. The only possible explanation is that, despite Paul's best attempts to counter the invasion of the Christian Jewish agitators at Galatia, he was ultimately forced to concede the field to his opponents. As a result, he not only lost significant missionary territory but also the financial backing of those communities in Galatia, which he had formerly struggled to protect from the incursions of James' circumcision putsch.<sup>499</sup>

Similarly with Corinth we find that, while Paul does mention Achaia, which may include Corinth, he does not explicitly cite the Corinthians' involvement. We have already noted the prominence Paul gives to the collection in both letters to Corinth, primarily because it seems to have been an issue upon which his opponents there sought to question Paul's authority and honesty. The final result of this clash may not have been as disastrous as that in Galatia, but the conspicuous absence of Corinth from the contribution roster in Romans 15:26 might possibly indicate a residual reticence amongst the Corinthians to donate significant funds towards Paul's project.<sup>500</sup> Whatever the precise details of the outcome in Corinth, it seems plausible to argue that the quantity of money Paul did collect

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<sup>498</sup> Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, lvi; and Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 110-111. For a wider examination of Paul's various reasons for writing to Rome, see the available commentaries, for example Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, liv-vii; Byrne, *Romans*, 8-19; and L. Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 7-18.

<sup>499</sup> Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 59-60. Cf. Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 167; and L. Hurtado, "The Jerusalem Collection and the Book of Galatians", *JSNT* 5 (1979), 46-62 (49-50).

<sup>500</sup> See the discussion in Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 307-308, 345-347.

from all his communities was considerably less than he had expected. Moreover, this poor result was probably in direct proportion to the substantial success that Paul's Christian Jewish opponents had achieved amongst his former Gentile converts. It was with good reason that Paul anticipated a hostile encounter on his visit to Jerusalem. Disadvantaged by the loss of the important territories in Asia Minor and Greece, and bearing a peace offering that was far less than he predicted, Paul would not have been able to negotiate a resolution to his ongoing problems with Jerusalem from a position of strength.

Secondly, Paul probably felt hard-pressed by the increasing influence of his Christian Jewish opponents and their encroachment on his former missionary fields, and we might further speculate that he believed that the delivery of the (albeit meagre) collection monies offered his last, best hope of achieving a rapprochement with Jerusalem. Paul had expended a great deal of time and effort in pursuing the collection for Jerusalem. And he continued to do so, despite the fact that he had earlier accused James, Peter and the circumcision party of failing to honour the agreement reached at Jerusalem (as Paul saw it) by interfering in matters at Antioch and Galatia and forcing Law-observance on the Gentile converts (Gal 2:1-14). Paul's persistence with regard to the collection may partly be explained, as some scholars have proposed, in Paul own sincere belief that unity rather than division presented the best prospect for the advance of the Christian message.<sup>501</sup> This conclusion has been carried further by J. Jervell, who proposes that Paul used the occasion of Romans to rehearse the defence he planned to make at Jerusalem, and thus it is probably the case that the members of the Jerusalem church were the "secret addressees" of the letter to the Romans".<sup>502</sup>

Jervell's proposal would certainly explain the curious character of the letter itself, which is not concerned with local matters *per se*, but reads more like a detailed apology for Paul's peculiar understanding of the gospel message as he preached it amongst the Gentiles (1:14-16). Along the way Paul revisits many of the arguments against the continuing validity of the Mosaic Law that he had previously developed during his earlier conflicts with his Christian Jewish opponents reflected in Galatians, Philippians and the Corinthian

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<sup>501</sup> So Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 175-176, who is followed by Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 167.

<sup>502</sup> J. Jervell, "The Letter to Jerusalem", in *The Romans Debate*, ed. K. P. Donfried (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1977), 61-74 (64, 67).



letters. But, in the case of Romans, Paul's line of argument concerning the Law (eg. 2:1-3:8; 7:1-25; 13:8-10) lacks much of the bitterness and rancour apparent in these earlier letters (Gal 2:15-4:31; 2 Cor 3:1-4:6; Phil 3:2-21). This is probably what we would expect of Paul if his primary purpose in writing Romans were to practise the apologetic defence he intended to give before his erstwhile opponents at Jerusalem. However, it is also true that Paul was not only apprehensive about how he and the collection would be received at Jerusalem, but also about his reception at Rome and his future missionary plans that centred on Rome (15:23-32).

At the time of writing Romans, Paul evidently felt that he had accomplished one phase of his missionary plan, encompassing an area spanning the distance from Jerusalem to Illyricum (15:19), and was anticipating an advance into new mission fields in the western provinces of the Empire (1:13; 15:23, 29). In Romans (15:24, 28), Paul explicitly details his plans to evangelise Spain, and on this basis, the Christian communities in Rome would provide an excellent seat of operations for pushing west into the Iberian Peninsula. Paul expresses the hope that in "passing through" Rome on his way to Spain he may garner support for this new missionary enterprise from the Roman communities (15:24). But Paul is aware that he is not the most popular missionary in the early Church, and he explicitly notes that the Roman communities had heard something of the "slander" about the gospel he preached (3:8) that was current parlance in some sections of the Christian movement. This suggests that Paul suspected that he might be the subject of some criticism in certain quarters at Rome, and he could not readily assume that all of the constituents of the Roman community would unanimously support his future missionary plans for Spain.

Paul's concerns about his reception at Rome probably explains why he believed it necessary to both provide a lengthy apology for his gospel message and address his fears about his impending visit to Jerusalem. If his plans for Rome and Spain were to prosper, Paul presumed that he must first attempt reconciliation with James and the Jerusalem church, and the delivery of the collection monies offered him the best opportunity of achieving a truce with his former opponents at Jerusalem.<sup>503</sup> Anticipating that matters may go awry at Jerusalem, however, Paul hoped to salvage his prospective plans for Rome by

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<sup>503</sup> Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, lvi; and Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 110-111.

writing a lengthy apology to the Roman communities, in which he apprises them of the possible, negative outcome of his visit to Judea and begs a sympathetic hearing from his Roman audience none-the-less. With these twin concerns in mind, Paul wrote Romans as a “letter of introduction”, not simply to rehearse the defence he planned to make at Jerusalem (though this could have been one of his aims), but to establish his credentials and counter any possible opposition to his anticipated partnership with the Roman communities.<sup>504</sup>

#### **4.3.2. *The Collection***

At this point it may be valuable to consider the significance of Paul’s collection for Jerusalem, and, specifically, his reasons for pursuing it despite the obvious problems he continued to suffer with regard to his ambivalent relationship with the Jerusalem church. The collection was a major emphasis in the ministry of Paul, occupying much time and energy in the closing years of his ministry. As noted above, in personally bringing the collection to Jerusalem, Paul showed that he was even willing to risk further conflict to complete this task (Acts 21:13). Why was it so important to Paul? What motivated him? Why did he expend so much of his time and energy in the later part of his life to bring the collection to Jerusalem? On these issues, various scholars have suggested a variety of answers. Most recognise that Paul’s collection was to be more than just charity or relief. The collection held symbolic significance. As to the precise nature of that significance, scholars have suggested several possibilities: that Paul saw it as symbolic of the Gentiles’ spiritual indebtedness to the Jerusalem church; of the concept of the Temple tax; or as a peace offering to mend the schism between the Jewish and Gentile churches.

We need not dispute the possibility that the church in Jerusalem could have been experiencing severe poverty; although the reasons for their plight are often disputed between commentators. Possible reasons are proposed: the dramatic growth in size of the church presented an unsustainable demand upon already limited resources.<sup>505</sup> On this line of argument, it is proposed that the Jewish practice of pilgrimage to the Holy City in anticipation of death was continued by the church, and many new converts immigrated to the mother church in Jerusalem. This practice may have flourished during the earliest

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<sup>504</sup> So Byrne, *Romans*, 9; Kümmel, *Introduction*, 221-222; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, lv-lvi; Morris, *Romans*, 17; and Vielhauer, *Geschichte*, 181-184.

<sup>505</sup> See the discussion in Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 256.

years as excited anticipation of the *parousia* drove developments in the Jesus movement. Another possible reason was that the Jerusalem church continued to live according to its communistic ideals, liquidating assets and pooling their finances (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32). However, with the delay of the *parousia*, this “communism of love” resulted in continual hemorrhaging of resources. This could have been compounded by bad harvests and drought. A severe famine was recorded in Middle East in 47-49 C.E.<sup>506</sup> Roman exploitation would have further compounded the church’s already impoverished status. Although we cannot be certain, it would be fair to say that interplay of the above factors caused the poverty of the Christians in Jerusalem. But is this a sufficient reason in itself to explain why Paul initiated the collection for Jerusalem in the first place? One scholar who argues the case in favour of this view is C. K. Barrett.

While Barrett recognises that Paul may have had several reasons for pursuing the collection, Barrett sees Paul’s main motivation as being the provision of humanitarian aid for the poor in Jerusalem. “By far the most important point to Paul, and the only one that he himself makes explicitly, is that the collection was an act of love for the benefit of those who were in material need”.<sup>507</sup> As evidence for this position he observes how Paul’s concern for the poor would have echoed closely that of Jesus’ focus on poverty. The collection was called an act of *diakonia* (2 Cor 8:4; 9:1, 12) and *caritas* (2 Cor 8:1, 6; 9:14); therefore, it is probably related to the grace of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 8:9).<sup>508</sup> At the time of Paul’s usage, *diakonia* had not yet gained technical status as indicative of ministerial office, but had a broader sense. By designating the collection *diakonia* it would be seen as an essential act of “fellowship” fulfilled in the service of the Lord.<sup>509</sup> With reference to the collection, Paul three times employs the noun *koinwnia* (Gal 2:9-10; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:13) and once the verb *koinwnen* (Rom 15:26; cf. 12:13).

Similarly, K. F. Nickle notes the close association of Christian fellowship with the celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>510</sup> In utilising the term *koinwnia* of the collection, material provision was seen as integral to the very heart of the faith. In speaking of the

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<sup>506</sup> Hengel, *Acts*, 118.

<sup>507</sup> Barrett, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 28. Similarly, Munck, *Paul*, 287-288.

<sup>508</sup> Barrett, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 27-28.

<sup>509</sup> Barrett, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 27.

<sup>510</sup> K. F. Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Paul’s Strategy* (SBT 48; London: SCM Press, 1966), 125-129. Cf. Roetzel, *Paul*, 116-117; and Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul*, 144-146.

Macedonian's enthusiastic response (2 Cor 8:4), Paul combines these three terms in speaking of the collection. The collection was thus seen as an integral expression of the Christian faith, as the Gentile churches participated in fellowship with the Jerusalem church through charitable service to those in need in Judea. For Paul this was a powerful reminder of the unity shared by all in Christ. However, this does not explain why Paul was urging his communities to contribute to a collection for the Jerusalem church specifically. Other communities no doubt suffered financial setbacks, droughts, and famine. Yet Paul's collection was destined for Jerusalem alone. Paul clearly had reasons for pursuing this collection other than simple charity.

The first and most obvious answer was that Paul promised to promote such an offering. Galatians (2:10) suggests that the instigation of the collection was at the request of the Pillars Apostles of Jerusalem "to remember the poor". For M. Hengel this is not just the materially poor within the Jerusalem church, but a designation of the whole church.<sup>511</sup> As evidence we note that later the Palestinian Jewish Christians were called Ebionites, and other religious communities such as the Essenes of Qumran already called themselves "the poor". We noted earlier, that it is entirely possible that a similar title emerged at Jerusalem to describe this first community of messianic Jesus people who pooled their resources and established a community in anticipation of the coming eschaton (cf. Rom 15:26). Paul's pursuit of the collection would then be seen as a fulfilment of a promise he made a decade earlier. B. Holmberg has suggested that the Pillars had imposed the offering as a symbol of their power and authority.<sup>512</sup> Given the direct historical ties with the historical Jesus, and the role the Jerusalem community had played in the first two decades of the Church's life, it would be surprising if disputes on authority did not play some role in the offering. But there must have been for Paul additional reasons that went beyond the symbolic recognition of the pre-eminence of the Jerusalem Apostles – a pre-eminence that Paul demonstrably viewed with a sceptical eye.

The injunction to "remember the poor" was laid upon the Antiochene community, not just Paul alone. However, Paul's initiative involves only those communities in the

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<sup>511</sup> Hengel, *Acts*, 118-120; and Fitzmyer, *Semitic Background*, 288.

<sup>512</sup> Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 55-56.

Aegean basin that were directly founded by him.<sup>513</sup> There is here a disparity in terms of implementation that suggests that Paul's reasons for pursuing the collection must have changed over the years since it was first instituted by the Jerusalem authorities. Moreover, if the sole purpose of the collection was charitable, a humanitarian exercise to relieve genuine want, then Paul seems to have been rather tardy in bringing that relief to those in need. By our reckoning it would have been near on a decade between the Jerusalem Council (49 C.E.), when the collection was first instigated, and the composition of Romans (58 C.E.), when Paul speaks of its completion and his intention to deliver the offering to Jerusalem.

One other possibility is that both Paul and the Jerusalem church viewed the collection as analogous to the Temple tax imposed on all Jews as a demonstration of their attachment to, and support for, the central institution of their faith. This position has been argued by K. F. Nickle, who has reviewed various uses of taxation in Second Temple Judaism, including the half-shekel Temple tax, local community collections for the poor, the Qumran economy, and the patriarchal tax collected by the Apostles as described in the opening chapters of Acts.<sup>514</sup> From his analysis Nickle concludes that Paul "borrowed most heavily for the organisation of his collection from the Jewish Temple tax".<sup>515</sup> This borrowing was not just in terms of organisation of the tax but also in the symbolic significance it bore for the Diaspora. For Jews everywhere the collection of the Temple tax constituted a means by which the dispersed could express their loyalty and indebtedness to their spiritual source, Jerusalem. The tax served as an annual reminder and maintainer of the special bond that existed between the Diaspora and the Temple. However, there are a number of problem with drawing too heavily on supposed parallels between the Temple tax and Paul's offering to Jerusalem.

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<sup>513</sup> A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 39; *idem*, "Paul's Collection: Chronology and History", *NTS* 48 (2002), 95-110; and D. J. Downs, "Paul's Collection and the Book of Acts Revisited", *NTS* 52 (2006), 50-70 (60-61). Martyn, *Galatians*, 222-228, argues that we have here evidence of two separate initiatives, the first established at the Council, and the second initiated by Paul himself after his departure from Antioch.

<sup>514</sup> Nickle, *Collection*, 90-99.

<sup>515</sup> Nickle, *Collection*, 90.

Nickle is quick to clarify that the Pauline model is not to be seen as an attempt to interpret Paul's initiative as a tax imposed upon him and his Gentile communities by the apostolic authorities at Jerusalem. But Galatians 2:10 explicitly attributes the institution of the collection to the Pillar Apostles, which suggests that this is precisely what James, Cephas, and John did intend. The insights of social science also offer a relevant elaboration of that point. For example, S. Mott argues that the collection must be seen from the perspective of the benefactor-beneficiary relationship, which he argues undergird much of the social exchange within the Greco-Roman world. "The formal obligation of rendering appropriate honour and gratitude to one's benefactor at once motivated and controlled personal, political and diplomatic conduct".<sup>516</sup>

The act of benefiting would set up a chain of obligation with the recipient being obliged to respond with gratitude. This response would then further obligate the benefactor to continue his generosity. This dynamic interaction resulted in mutual benefit and obligation. Because of the obligation exerted upon the original benefactor by the expression of gratitude, the recipient of the benefit would achieve in that engagement a position of superiority over someone more powerful than him or herself.<sup>517</sup> Not only would they receive the original gift but also, by their expression of gratitude, the original benefactor would be obliged to continue his largesse. This obligation was so prevalent and strong in Greco-Roman society that in some instances it was codified into the legal system, and even extended to the interaction with the gods of the Greco-Roman religions. As benefactors, the gods were viewed as having the same reciprocal duties as that of human benefactors, and worship was seen as a response to divine benevolence. Although largely limited to the upper classes, Mott argues that this relationship of reciprocity was widespread and could affect almost every relationship in Mediterranean life and social interaction.<sup>518</sup>

With this concept in mind, we would have to view the imposition of any tax by the Jerusalem church upon the Christian Diaspora as commensurate with Greco-Roman

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<sup>516</sup> S. C. Mott, "The Power of Giving and Receiving: Reciprocity in Hellenistic Benevolence", in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation*, ed. G. Hawthorne (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 62-72 (60).

<sup>517</sup> See also Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 144-145.

<sup>518</sup> Mott, "The Power of Giving", 61-64, 72. Cf. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 144, who points out that within the social dynamic of ancient Mediterranean culture the collection would have had the effect of placing the Jerusalem church in debt to the Gentile churches by rendering Jerusalem the client and Antioch the patron.

concepts of reciprocity. Using these observations as a lens, we must see that the offering would have amounted to the admission of indebtedness on the part of Paul and his Gentile converts to the Jerusalem community. This may have been the view from Jerusalem at the time of the Council, which could have seen the collection as an effective tool for yoking the Antiochene community to Jerusalem in a relationship that stressed the superiority and primacy of the latter over the former. But does this adequately explain Paul's reasons for continuing to collect monies for Jerusalem long after his break with Antioch? Moreover, it seems incredible that Paul would have done so given the widespread assumption that such actions made him dependent upon and obligated to the Jerusalem community – two claims that he had consciously opposed consistently since his split with Antioch.

It is entirely possible that Paul saw the other side of the equation and maintained the collection for his own political ends. By conceding to Jerusalem the right to impose a tax on his Gentile converts, Paul sought to make the Apostolic community obligated to him and the Gentile churches. By so doing, Paul gained political leverage over Jerusalem, effectively manoeuvring the apostolic authorities into a position where they were obligated to reciprocate the generosity of the Gentiles by recognising the legitimacy of Paul's Law-free mission amongst the Gentiles. But this too seems unlikely. Such political expediency on Paul's part would have seriously undermined his own integrity, not to mention his hard-fought claims to independence.

Still, we cannot totally dismiss the symbolic importance of the collection against the background of the demands of reciprocity current in Paul's time. If Paul was not seeking to simply bribe the Jerusalem Apostles for his own political gain, he may have been genuinely seeking to heal over a potential irrevocable rift and unite the Gentile with the Jewish communities. The Gentile church owed Jerusalem an unpayable debt for their spiritual heritage. To respond to the material need of the Jerusalem church was thus a means of maintaining unity and fostering fellowship. For Paul, it could also function as a means of demonstrating his fundamental goodwill and desire to keep the peace.<sup>519</sup> By the time Paul came to compose Romans his relationship to the apostles of Jerusalem was, to say the least, strained. Agents of the Jerusalem church appear to have dogged his steps

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<sup>519</sup> Barrett, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 27-28.

throughout the Aegean basin, and Paul apparently had lost significant sections of his former missionary communities. The possibility of schism loomed large, and threatened to undermine his future plans to expand his mission into Spain.

Faced with such prospects, Paul had three possibilities. He could attempt to continue as he had till then, pursuing his Law-free mission independent of Jerusalem – a tactic that had failed to guarantee his immunity from the interference of James’ people. Alternatively, Paul could admit defeat, and allow his Gentile converts to become subject to the requirements of the Mosaic Law – a development which would amount to a complete reversal of everything that he had fought for over many long years since his initial involvement with Antioch back in the middle thirties. Finally, he could accept a situation whereby his Gentile converts remained “God-fearers”, in effect rendering them inferior associates of the Christian Jews – a situation with identical results to the second alternative. Paul however appears to have sought to re-establish a relationship with Jerusalem while maintaining the independence of his Law-free mission to the Gentiles – a tactic that K. F. Nickle rightly describes as the “more difficult and less certain approach”.<sup>520</sup> There was a twin danger here.

On the one hand, the collection could be viewed as Paul’s recognition of his dependence upon Jerusalem, thereby making it appear as though Paul was subordinating his Gentile converts to the Christian Jews. On the other hand, while Paul viewed the collection as entirely voluntary, it could be viewed by Jerusalem as a tribute (analogous to the Temple tax) due to them by virtue of their historical and spiritual primacy within the Jesus movement. Paul most likely hoped that, despite the reservations the Christian Jews at Jerusalem had concerning the Gentiles, the collection would serve as tangible evidence of Christian solidarity. The collection was also to serve as irrefutable proof of the genuineness of the Gentile faith (2 Cor 8:11-12). Paul relied upon it to testify to the Jerusalem Christians of the real and full inclusion of Gentile believers into the body of Christ. More importantly, he hoped that the collection might also relieve the continuing tensions that existed between himself and Jerusalem and, therefore, circumvent the Judaizers’ continuing efforts to undermine his mission. Only these motivations can adequately explain why Paul would

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<sup>520</sup> Nickle, *Collection*, 119.



continue to engage in the collection long after he had severed his ties to either the Jerusalem community, who first instigated it, or the Antiochene congregation, upon whom it was first enjoined.

#### **4.3.3. *Paul's Visit to Jerusalem***

At this point we may now turn to the Lukan account of Paul's final trip to Jerusalem to determine if the fears Paul expressed in Romans about this enterprise were well founded. For the most part, Luke's version of events presents Paul's reception at Jerusalem as initially fortuitous. James and the elders welcome Paul, and praise God for the great success that Paul has achieved amongst the Gentiles (21:17-26). The only discordant note occurs when James and the elders draw Paul's attention to the "many thousands" of zealous, Law-observant Jews who have joined the Jerusalem church, and who were scandalised by reports that Paul had instructed "all Jews living among the pagans" to apostatise and break with the customary practices of the Mosaic Law (21:20-21). To avoid further discord, James requests that Paul reaffirm his commitment to Law-observance (21:20-22, 24b) by underwriting the costs incurred by four Nazirites, and joining with them in the performance of the purificatory rites prescribed for those undertaking the Nazirite vow (21:23-24). Remarkably, Paul accepts this decision and willingly joins the four men in their week-long observance at the Temple. But this compromise proves fatal when "some Jews from the province of Asia" incite a riot on seeing Paul in the Temple (21:27-31), resulting in Paul's arrest (21:33-36), his subsequent trials before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem (22:30-23:10), the Roman Governor Felix (24:1-26), his successor Festus (24:27-25:12) and King Agrippa (25:23-26:32) at Caesarea, and his eventual deportation to Rome (27:1-28:31). A cursory reading of these events reveals a number of important issues that are pertinent to our present discussion.

To begin with, Luke's account of Paul's final visit to Jerusalem confirms our aforementioned observation that Paul had good reasons for expressing in Romans grave concerns for his anticipated encounter at Jerusalem. According to Luke, Jesus' brother James, whose agents had previously clashed with Paul at Antioch, Galatia, and probably also Corinth, still held the central position of authority at Jerusalem and appears to have further consolidated his influence at Jerusalem. Neither Peter, the undisputed leader of the

Jerusalem church during Paul's first visit in 36 C.E. (Gal 1:18-20), nor the apostolic circle, who formerly functioned as part of the authoritative structure of the church during Paul's first parley with Peter (Gal 1:19) and his second conference with the "Pillars" in 48 C.E. (Gal 2:1-10; Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 2), play any part in this final encounter between Paul and the Jerusalem church. This implies that Peter had not returned from Antioch following the events described in Galatians (2:11-14), and that the other Apostles had either similarly departed Jerusalem or had been marginalised and ousted from their previous positions of authority.<sup>521</sup> Given what we said previously of James' position vis-à-vis Law-observance and his Pharisaic and priestly connections, we must assume that Paul's arrival in Jerusalem would not have been welcomed as warmly by the then well-established, Law-observant faction (led by James and the elders) as Luke would have us believe.

The hostility that must have existed between Paul and James is only thinly veiled by Luke. In Luke's account, James reports hearing of Paul encouraging Jewish converts to the Jesus movement to abandon their observance of the Mosaic Law (21:21). Here, as elsewhere in Acts (16:3; 22:3; 24:11-15; 25:8; 26:4-5), Luke makes every attempt to exonerate Paul of this charge, claiming that Paul agreed to James' demand that Paul make a symbolic reckoning in the form of his participation in the purificatory rites of the Nazirites (21:22-24). Moreover, there are a number of fanciful elements to Luke's story – most obviously, James' recapitulation of the Apostolic Decree (21:25), which we saw earlier is likely to have been the product of later historical developments within Luke's own community. However, what we know of Paul based on his letters to Galatia, Corinth and Philippi suggests that the charges attributed to James by Luke were probably justified. All indications in Paul's letters point to the fact that, while Paul focused his mission primarily on Gentiles, the communities with which Paul was associated were ethnically mixed congregations that welcomed both Jews and Gentiles *sans* the purity and dietary demands of the Mosaic Law. Galatians in particular bears ample testimony to Paul's animosity towards the members of James' pro-circumcision putsch, who preached a "different

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<sup>521</sup> Evidence for Peter's continuing influence at Antioch is probably found in the Gospel of Matthew. Patristic evidence also credits Peter as the first bishop of Antioch. See also Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 45-72; and Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 198-199, 236-237, 247. On the Patristic evidence, see the collection of citations in G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 583-586.

gospel” (1:6), which entailed a complete obedience to the Mosaic Law (3:10), including circumcision (5:2-4; 6:12-13) and the observance of the Sabbath and the Jewish feast days (4:8-11). For Paul, such boundary markers distinguishing Jews from Greeks no longer held sway (Gal 3:28; cf. Rom 10:12; Col 3:11), and true circumcision was matter of the heart, not of the flesh (Gal 6:13-15; cf. Rom 2:28-29; 7:6; Phil 3:3).

As to Paul himself, it seems clear that Paul, who speaks in Galatians (1:13-14) and Philippians (3:4-6) of his former life in Judaism as a zealous advocate of strict Law-observance and a persecutor of the Church of God, no longer preached circumcision (Gal 5:11; cf. Phil 3:2-3, 7-11). In 1 Corinthians (9:20) Paul explicitly declares that he no longer considered himself to be “under the Law”. Even in Romans, where for the most part Paul presents a far more conciliatory attitude to the Law, he speaks of being “dead to the Law” and aligns himself with those, both Jew and Gentile alike, who are “released from the Law” so as “to serve in the new way of the Spirit, not in old way of the written code” (7:4-6; cf. Gal 3:15-21). For him, the gospel was “the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16; cf. 2:9-10; 1 Cor 1:25; 2:1-5). Accordingly, Luke was probably drawing on sound information when he claimed that James did indict Paul on the charge of having encouraged apostasy amongst both Jewish and Gentile converts to the Jesus movement.<sup>522</sup> Although the exact wording of the indictment owes more to Luke’s inventiveness than the data Luke had on hand, it does accurately reflect the fact that Paul’s antinomian policy remained the fundamental point of contention between Paul and the Law-observant Jerusalem church.

This brings us to the question of the collection. On this subject, it is interesting to observe that, despite Luke’s lengthy description of the events surrounding Paul’s final journey to Jerusalem, there is no direct mention of Paul’s delivery of the collection, which according Romans 15:25-28 was the primary purpose of Paul’s visit. A possible allusion to the collection monies may be found in Acts 24:1-23, where Paul’s defence before Felix includes Paul’s statement that the purpose of his trip to Jerusalem was “to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings” (24:17). This implies that Luke’s sources did include reference to the collection, but Luke has chosen to expunge this reference from his

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<sup>522</sup> Achtemeier, *Quest*, 60; and Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 59-62. Cf. Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul*, 347-351.

account of Paul's initial meeting with James and the elders. We noted earlier that Luke appears to have used this data on the collection to assemble his previous record of the famine visit in Acts 11:27-30. The only plausible explanation for Luke's deft, editorial work here is that he wished to gloss over the fact that James and his supporters refused to accept the cash Paul had collected from his Gentile churches.<sup>523</sup>

Not all scholars concur with this interpretation. Some argue that the evidence is too ambiguous for us to draw any firm conclusions regarding the acceptance or rejection of Paul's offering.<sup>524</sup> Others believe that Luke's reference to the collection in Acts 24:17 indicates that, despite Paul's arrest, the Jerusalem church did receive both Paul and his Gentile monies warmly, as Luke indicates (Acts 21:17-20).<sup>525</sup> A related view holds that Luke's account in Acts 21:17-26 attests that James and the elders were willing to receive Paul's peace offering on the condition that Paul used some of this money to cover the costs incurred by the four Nazirites.<sup>526</sup> This last proposal appears to make logical sense of Luke's evidence. But it relies too heavily on a very literal reading of Acts; an enterprise, which as we have seen previously, can only be done with the utmost caution.

We have shown elsewhere in dealing with other sections of Acts that Luke's persistent penchant is to demonstrate a basic unity between the various factions that constituted the early Church. It seems, therefore, incredible that Luke did not take the opportunity here to explicitly draw a connection between the collection and Paul's financial support of the Nazirites. Had he done so, it would have strengthened his argument for presenting a harmonious relationship between Paul and the Law-observant community at Jerusalem. Given that Acts 24:17 suggests that Luke was aware that the original purpose of Paul's visit was to deliver the collection monies, his failure to explicitly cite this information at an earlier juncture indicates that he wished to suppress the story of James' rejection of Paul's offering. In its place, Luke supplies the story of Paul and the Nazirites; a

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<sup>523</sup> So Achtemeier, *Quest*, 60-61; Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 60-61; Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 256-267; Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 168; and Franklin, *Luke*, 117-118.

<sup>524</sup> Becker, *Apostle to the Gentiles*, 451-457.

<sup>525</sup> Nickle, *Collection*, 70-72.

<sup>526</sup> Haenchen, *Acts*, 613-614; Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 42-43; Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews*, 177-178; Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 42-43; Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church", 479; and D. Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 124-126.

story, moreover, that is most likely a pure Lukan invention, since the roles credited to both James and Paul in this story seems so out of character with what we know of the historical James and Paul.<sup>527</sup> Had James accepted the collection directly, as an offering of support from the Gentile churches, or even indirectly as a financial contribution to the four Nazirites, it would have been seen symbolically as acceptance of, and legitimation for, Paul's Gentile mission.

This is certainly how Paul understood the significance of the collection, and why he continued to pursue this project despite his previous troubles with Jerusalem. Furthermore, if Paul had accepted any concession that forced him to demonstrate his commitment to Law-observance, which would have amounted to an admission that his Law-free missions amongst the Gentiles were misdirected and illegitimate. As a result, his past consistent defence of his independent apostolic status and the legitimacy of his revelatory call to be the Apostle to the Gentiles would have been flatly negated, and his future plans to evangelise the western provinces of the Empire would have been seriously compromised.

Further evidence of Paul's failure to win the approval of James is found in Luke's subsequent record of the events surrounding Paul's arrest (21:27-23:40). Nowhere in this lengthy report is it suggested that either James or any member of the Jerusalem community offered support to Paul; they neither attempted to rescue Paul from the angry crowd at the Temple, nor, on the following day, did they appear before the Sanhedrin to defend Paul's actions. There is here a clear parallel between Paul's predicament and that of Stephen and the Hellenists, described earlier in Acts. Just as the Hebrews refused to come to the aid of Stephen and his Hellenist supporters when they suffered a similar persecution decades before, so too with Paul, James and his Law-observant followers chose to ignore Paul's invidious situation.

What makes their latter failure to offer assistance to Paul all the more remarkable is that our previous discussion of James' martyrdom indicated that James commanded broad repute and respect amongst the wider Jewish community in Jerusalem. Moreover, Luke explicitly highlights the popularity of Jerusalem's Jesus movement amongst the Jews

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<sup>527</sup> Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 168 n. 3.

of the city when he has James and the elders point out to Paul the “many thousands” of zealous, Law-abiding Jews who have joined the movement (21:20). Therefore, it seems that James, as head of this popular, Law-observant, Christian Jewish community, would have been well placed to intervene on Paul’s behalf. Luke’s silence on the subject suggests that no intervention was forthcoming, and the Jerusalem church was content to see one further troublemaker conveniently dealt with by the Jewish authorities.<sup>528</sup>

It may even be possible that the “Jews from the province of Asia” (21:27) who initiated the riot that led to Paul’s arrest were related to the Christian Jewish missionaries who had caused problems for Paul at Galatia.<sup>529</sup> We cannot now determine precisely the circumstances that led to Paul’s arrest, so we might be inclined to shy away from levelling such a harsh charge against Paul’s Christian Jewish co-religionists. However, the fact that Luke fails to mention that James and the Jerusalem church stood by Paul in his trials adds further weight to our basic premise. James and the Jerusalem community neither accepted the monies raised by Paul from amongst his Gentile churches, nor compromised their previous enmity towards Paul and his Law-free mission.

On the basis of the above observations, we must judge Paul’s final journey to Jerusalem an abject failure. Despite his hard-fought efforts to secure a rapprochement with his Christian Jewish opponents by continuing to pursue the collection for Jerusalem, James and the Jerusalem church refused to reciprocate in kind. They neither accepted Paul’s peace offering, nor did they offer Paul support when his presence in Jerusalem caused a riot resulting in Paul’s arrest and transportation to Rome. It is probably, therefore, with sound reasoning that Paul urged his Roman audience to pray that he might “be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there, so that by God’s will I may come to you with joy” (Rom 15:30-32). Come to Rome, he did; but not “with joy”, as he had hoped, having made his peace with James and the Jerusalem church. But rather, he arrived with a military escort, as a prisoner of the state awaiting trial

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<sup>528</sup> This view is supported by Achtemeier, *Quest*, 60; Lüdemann, *Opposition*, 61; Dunn, *Unity*, 256; Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 168; and R. P. Martin, *James* (WBC 48; Waco: Word Books, 1988) xxxi-xxxiv.

<sup>529</sup> It has been suggested that Paul’s opponents may have followed Paul from town to town, attempting to discredit him and disrupt his missionary program. See Duncan, *Galatians*, xxix.

on the charges of being a rabble-rouser and a troublemaker, an indictment with which James and the Jerusalem church would have most likely concurred.

#### **4.4. Conclusions**

In this chapter, we have reviewed a remarkable sequence of conflicts between Paul and a series of opponents in Corinth, who were threatening to cause similar problems at Philippi, and may even have played an important role in the clash between Paul and James following Paul's final, fateful journey to Jerusalem. Our purpose in doing so was to identify these opponents, and explore the possible connections between the problems they posed for Paul in his missionary communities of Asia Minor and Greece, and Paul's earlier difficulties at Antioch, Jerusalem and Galatia. As a result of this investigation it would appear that we have established several firm outcomes concerning these questions. On the issue of identity, we found in the cases of Corinth and Philippi that Paul, as earlier in Galatia, was confronted by Judaisers who came from outside the Pauline communities with a view to undoing his missionary achievements and unsettling his Gentile converts by questioning the validity of his gospel message and his right as an apostle to preach it. Similarly, although our information concerning Paul's final visit to Jerusalem is scanty and incomplete, it seems that in this instance also Paul faced a hostile community who neither accepted the legitimacy of his mission nor his attempts at reconciliation. In this we found a number of remarkable parallels with Galatians vis-à-vis both the situation Paul faced and the rhetoric he employed in his response. If we were to ask why such parallels exist, the simplest answer is that the Judaisers whom Paul encountered in Corinth, and to whom he alludes in Philippians, were acting under the authority of James, Peter and the Jerusalem church. On this understanding, we must imagine that following their success at Antioch and Galatia, the proponents of James' pro-circumcision putsch moved on to Paul's foundation in Corinth with a view to bringing this community also under the authority of Jerusalem. Accordingly, we must conclude the clash between the Law-observant and Law-free missions that had begun in Jerusalem with the split between the Hebrews and Hellenists continued to plague Paul's missionary endeavours long after Paul's bitter split with the Antiochene community.

## CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this study has been to capture the full panorama of an important and decisive conflict in the early Church. The crisis in Galatia brought forth a written response from Paul that may be our earliest extant Christian text. A cursory reading of the letter reveals that Paul faced a severe attack upon his apostolic work in Galatia engineered by Judaisers bent on forcing his Gentile converts to adopt Jewish customs and faith-practice. However, while the identity of Paul's opponents, the nature of their attack upon Paul, and the content of their message are alluded to throughout the letter to Galatia, they are never definitively described. Paul's response to these troublemakers is a finely crafted piece of rhetoric, which appeal to history, reason, and emotion to win back his congregations. As such it is only by resort to "mirror-reading" that we are able to speak of Paul's opponents and their message. Even then, there is much that Paul leaves unsaid or only partly described that tantalises the imagination with hints of a larger story behind the one we can reconstruct from Galatians alone. Simply reading between the lines of Galatians will not reveal everything the historian would wish to know about the events surrounding this crisis.

In an attempt to fill out the broader historical context of the Galatian crisis we have examined other related materials in the Acts of the Apostles that purport to describe events pertinent to the advent and progress of the crisis in Galatia. In the process, we have uncovered evidence that suggests that the crisis in Galatia was but one instance of a broader conflict that had its advent in the earliest origins of the Jesus movement in Jerusalem. Echoes of similar material in Paul's Corinthian letters, Philippians, and Romans indicate that the progress of this conflict was not arrested by the reception of Paul's letter in Galatia. A closer examination of all the polemics in these Pauline letters and the Acts of the Apostles allowed us to piece together a cumulative story that demonstrates that the composition of Galatians was but one chapter in a narrative continuum, which informs our reading of Paul's career from his first appearance as a persecutor of the Church until his final fateful journey to Rome.



The spectre of Jerusalem and its apostolic leadership figure prominently throughout the pages of Paul's letter, both directly in Paul's account of his earliest dealings with the apostolic community and indirectly in his attacks on the Galatian Judaisers. There are probably sound reasons for this. In chapter one, we discovered that the available evidence, drawn primarily from Acts, suggests that the origins of the conflict over the Law that dominates Paul's rhetoric in Galatians must be traced back to Jerusalem in the years prior to his conversion. Despite the tendentious nature of our major source, we were able to reconstruct the emergence of two competing forms of the Christian tradition, labelled by Luke as the "Hebrews" and the "Hellenists". Luke's account of their dispute is short on details and significantly reworked to suit his theological agenda. But an analysis of his material in conjunction with relevant data drawn from Paul's letters and other contemporary texts exposed the fact that this dispute led to the advent of two distinct liturgical groupings within the Jerusalem church, each with its own language, its own Scriptures, its own worship services, its own leadership group, and even its own missionary fields. Indeed, the Hellenists' conflict both with their Hebrew co-religionists, and later with the wider Greek-speaking Jewish community, effected a significant watershed in the history of early Christianity. The advent of the Hellenists served to demarcate the Law-observant mission to the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 1-5) from the Law-free mission in Samaria (Acts 8:1-40) and Syrian Antioch (Acts 11:19-26). It was the Hellenists whom Paul persecuted. It was to the Hellenist community that Paul converted after his numinous encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. And it was during his long association with the Law-free mission at Antioch that Paul worked out the full implications of his call to be the Apostle to the Gentiles.

In the second chapter, we turned our attention to the ongoing conflict between Jerusalem and Antioch, which appeared to constitute the immediate background to the crisis in Galatia. Our exegesis of Acts and Galatians revealed that what had commenced as a conflict between two factions in Jerusalem had become two distinctly different forms of faith in Jesus Messiah. The first, a Law-observant Christian Judaism led by Peter and the Twelve and centred in Jerusalem. The second, a Law-free Christianity based primarily in Syrian Antioch and composed of Diaspora Jews who embarked on a vigorous program to convert Gentiles without demanding circumcision or obedience to the Mosaic Law. The

Gentile mission flourished and spread into Cyprus and throughout the Roman Province of Galatia in Asia Minor. With the ascendancy of Jesus' brother James to a position of authority at Jerusalem further conflict erupted. Through a series of envoys James and his circumcision party brought the troublesome Hellenists to the conference table at Jerusalem. What the actual result of that meeting was remains unclear. But the one thing that is obvious is that neither James nor the Jerusalem church agreed to permit Antioch to continue its independent Gentile mission. After additional debate and conflict in Antioch, James was ultimately successful in imposing strict Law-observance on the Hellenists' community. Only Paul resisted the imposition of Jerusalem's authority upon Antioch. He, however, was in the minority and he was fighting a rear guard action. As a consequence, he was marginalised and compelled to sever all contact with Antioch and launch a new missionary offensive beyond the expanding grasp of James' circumcision putsch.

At this point we were able to assemble our picture of the Galatian crisis itself. Focusing on Paul's rhetoric, and appealing to Acts for background data, we located the letter chronologically within the framework of Paul's mission and, using mirror-reading, we reconstructed the message and the origins of Paul's opponents at Galatia. What we discovered was that the letter was most likely addressed to communities in the province of Galatia which were evangelised by Paul and Barnabas during Paul's association with the Antiochene community. As such, these communities were the focus of a series of interrelated conflicts between Paul and a single group of adversaries who were clearly advocating a Law-observant gospel, for which they claimed the authority of the Jerusalem church. In Galatians 1:11-2:14, Paul explicitly promotes a link to the Jerusalem Apostles by claiming that the issue of circumcision and Law-observance, which had proved a divisive element in his previous dealings with Jerusalem, was also central to the problems at Galatia. Moreover, his entire treatment of these issue makes it clear that the source of his problems was Jerusalem and its leadership, in particular James and his pro-circumcision party. On this understanding, we must imagine that following their success at Antioch, the proponents of the James party moved on to the churches in Galatia with a view to bringing these communities under the authority of Jerusalem. Given that the churches of Galatia were established under the auspices of the Antiochene church, we must conclude that James would have been eager, not only to regain the Antiochene congregation for the Law-

observant mission, but also to achieve control of the communities beyond Antioch, which had been founded and continued to function as adjuncts of the Antiochene Law-free faction. On that basis, the crisis in Galatia must be viewed as the culmination of the conflict that led to the Jerusalem Council and Paul's acrimonious divorce from Peter and James' people, as well as his erstwhile missionary companions Barnabas and the Antiochene church.

Finally, we sought to complete our picture of the crisis by examining its aftermath as indicated by the Corinthian letters, Philippians and Romans. Looking at the evidence of these letters and Galatians, we noted that the manner in which Paul responds to the various threats he faced at Galatia and Corinth implies that all his opponents were Christian Jews who, in addition to their belief in Jesus Messiah, preached a gospel of Law-observance, which entailed the necessity of circumcision and strict adherence to the ritual and dietary requirements of the Mosaic Law. Paul's opponents at both Galatia and Corinth professed to represent more faithfully than Paul the teachings and faith-practice of the apostolic circle at Jerusalem. Moreover, they seem to have been well informed of Paul's previous difficulties with the Jerusalem church. In both Galatians and the Corinthian letters, Paul appeals to his numinous experience of the risen Jesus (Gal 1:12-16; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; 2 Cor 3:4-6; 5:11-21) as the legitimation of his independent, apostolic status. It is probably also true that Paul's opponents made much of the fact that Paul himself had once actively persecuted the followers of Jesus (Gal 1:13; 1 Cor 15:9; Phil 3:6). Both explicitly in Galatians (2:1-14) and implicitly in 1 Corinthians (9:3-6; 15:9-11; cf. Phil 3:4-11) he seeks to set the record straight concerning his past and his difficult relationship with the Jerusalem Apostles. Taken together this conspicuous coincidence in the details that Paul supplies concerning these various opponents provides a strong cumulative argument for viewing them all, not only as representatives of a single Christian Jewish faction, but one which had a direct relationship to Paul's earlier opponents at Antioch and Jerusalem.

These conclusions necessarily raise one further question – to what extent were Peter, James and the Jerusalem church directly responsible for the opposition Paul encountered following his departure from Antioch? Our strongest evidence for propounding such a relationship comes from Galatians, where Paul himself expressly connects the events surrounding the roles played by Peter and James in both the Jerusalem

Council and the Antiochene incident with the activities of the troublemakers at Galatia. As to the Corinthian letters, we found a number of explicit links in 1 Corinthians between the Cephas party at Corinth and the apostolic circle around Peter and James at Jerusalem. We also noted that the language and the arguments employed by Paul in both 1 and 2 Corinthians implicitly correlated with those he used earlier against his opponents in Jerusalem, Antioch and Galatia. On this basis, we argued that the letters of recommendation, which Paul's opponents bore at Corinth, derived their authority from Jerusalem, which explains why the arrival of these people in Corinth resulted in some of Paul's converts joining in a new allegiance to Peter and the Jerusalem church against Paul's party of supporters. Since it is highly unlikely that Peter himself had ever visited Corinth, the only logical explanation is that Paul's opponents at Corinth were accredited envoys of the Jerusalem church where the Law-observant gospel of Peter and James held sway.

Such was the pervasive threat posed by the pro-circumcision putsch, and the demonstrable unity of purpose exhibited by its protagonists, that Paul felt it necessary to issue repeated warnings even to those communities as yet untouched by the conflict, as is evident from Philippians (3:2, 18; cf. Gal 1:9). Later Paul implies in his letter to Rome that his opponents had made critical advances into his missionary territories. They had apparently reclaimed the churches in Galatia for the Law-observant mission and were still the cause of residual problems at Corinth. Romans also testifies to the fact that Paul clearly saw a direct connection between these opponents and the Jerusalem church, since he apparently felt that his only chance of undermining the increasing influence of his Christian Jewish opponents was to hew to the agreement reached at the Jerusalem Council concerning the collection for the poor. However, Luke's account of Paul's journey to Jerusalem implies that his attempt to deliver the collection monies to James and the Jerusalem community met with no better success. Luke's silence concerning both Jerusalem's acceptance of the collection and its support for Paul after his arrest speaks volumes about the depth of the divisions that existed between Paul and the Jerusalem church, and the manner in which this rift reflected the earlier conflicts between Paul and the agents of the Jerusalem church in Galatia and Corinth.

Perhaps the most important corollary of our study was to highlight the significance of the Antiochene dispute between Paul and Peter. We noted that, not only is

the account of this episode a focal point of Paul's attack on the Judaisers at Galatia, it seems to have marked an important turning point in Paul's career. Our exegesis of Galatians 2:11-14 suggested strongly that Paul was forced to surrender the field to James and Peter at Antioch. While he doggedly champions his defiance of James' people and affirms the legitimacy of his own position, Paul admits that his actions left him in the minority, as Barnabas and the whole Jewish constituency at Antioch defected to the pro-circumcision putsch. His account of the conflict terminates abruptly with no definitive account of its outcome. This implies that he was unable to win any of his erstwhile collaborators back to the cause of the Law-free mission. It may be true that in Galatians (2:1-14) Paul attempts to distinguish between, on the one hand the Jerusalem Apostles with whom he claims to have enjoyed amicable relations, and on the other hand the false brothers at Jerusalem and the people from James at Antioch who were the real cause of the disputes. However, as we concluded in chapter two, Paul never completely exonerates James and Peter of the charge of having conspired with the pro-circumcision party at Jerusalem and Antioch. Accordingly, he accuses James of acting with duplicity in sending a delegation to Antioch to undo the agreement forged at Jerusalem. He cites Peter's hypocrisy in yielding to James' initiative, despite Peter's previous acceptance of the mixed table fellowship at Antioch. And, he implicitly groups the "Pillars" with the Judaisers at Galatia, charging them all with seeking to impose circumcision on the Gentiles out of fear of persecution and in the interests of their own self-aggrandisement.

In the light of these findings, then, it seems that the various Law-observant opponents whom Paul encountered in Jerusalem, Antioch, Galatia and Corinth, and to whom he alludes in Philippians, were directly commissioned by and acted under the authority of James, Peter and the Jerusalem church. As we noted in chapter three and will again point out here, the only logical inference we can draw from the evidence is that Paul is fighting, on several fronts, a war against a single group of adversaries whose origins must be attributed to the circumcision party around James at Jerusalem.

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