

AN ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHING AND ACTIVITY
OF THE JUDAIZERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
------------------------	---

Chapter

THE BACKGROUND OF THE JUDAIZERS	3
---	---

Their Identity

Their Religious Origin

Accepted by the Faculty of the Grace Theological Seminary

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Christ

The Master of Theology

Salvation

Circumcision

Grade

B

Their Character

INITIAL CONFLICTS	20
-----------------------------	----

Examining Committee

Early Stages Of The Conflict

The Growth Of The Gentile Element

Peter's Visit To Cornelius

Paul's Journey To Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1-10)

Paul's Journey To Jerusalem

James A. Kent, Jr.

The Conflict At Antioch

The Setting Of The Conflict

The Basis Of The Conflict

The Cause Of The Conflict

James H. Boyer

The Date

The Occasion

THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL	51
---------------------------------	----

The Basic Issue

The Solution

The Speeches Made

The Decree Approved

The Relationship Of Paul To The Decree

The Effectiveness Of The Decree

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter	
I. THE BACKGROUND OF THE JUDAIZERS	3
Their Identity	
Their Religious Origin	
Galatians	
Acts 15	
Their Teaching	
Christ	
The Law	
Salvation	
Circumcision	
Their Character	
II. INITIAL CONFLICTS	20
Early Stages Of The Conflict	
The Growth Of The Gentile Element	
Peter's Visit To Cornelius	
Paul's Journey To Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1-10)	
The Identity Of This Journey	
The Nature Of This Journey	
The Conflict At Antioch	
The Setting Of The Conflict	
The Basis Of The Conflict	
The Nature Of The Conflict	
The Writing Of Galatians	
The Date	
The Occasion	
III. THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL	51
The Basic Issue	
The Solution	
The Speeches Made	
The Decree Approved	
The Relationship Of Paul To The Decree	
The Effectiveness Of The Decree	

IV. AN ANALYSIS OF RELATED PASSAGES 72

Acts
Galatians
Corinthians
Romans
Philippians
Colossians

CONCLUSION 89

BIBLIOGRAPHY 91

INTRODUCTION

The topic of the Judaizers is surprisingly not a widely discussed one. Its significance to the New Testament, however, is very evident. The Judaizers precipitated the first serious doctrinal dispute in the church. Their activity began very early in the history of the church and continued to grow until it reached its peak at the Jerusalem Council. They were directly or indirectly responsible for causing several conflicts and disputes within the church. Understanding their teaching and their activity is basic to the understanding of certain New Testament passages. It is the intention of this writer that this paper will provide a satisfactory framework for a better understanding of the Judaizers in the New Testament.

The purpose of this paper will be to attempt to identify and analyze the activity of the Judaizers in a historical perspective. The first chapter will include an analysis of their identity, their religious origin, their teaching, and their character. The second chapter will discuss the initial conflicts that involved the Judaizers, including the early stages of the conflict, Paul's second trip to Jerusalem, the conflict at Antioch, and the writing of Galatians. In the third chapter the Jerusalem Council will be discussed. This will include the writer's assessment

of the basic issue involved, the solution of the council, and the effectiveness of that solution. Finally, the last chapter will consist of a survey of various books of the New Testament in an attempt to ascertain their relevance to the activity of the Judaizers.

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND OF THE JUDAIZERS

Their Identity

In order to establish what a Judaizer is, it first must be determined what it means "to Judaize." The verb *ἰουδαίζω* occurs in the New Testament only in Galatians 2:14. According to Thayer's Lexicon, this verb means to "adopt Jewish customs and rites, imitate the Jews, Judaize."¹ Outside the New Testament it implies conversion to Judaism through circumcision (Est. 8:17?) or sympathy with Judaism which leads to total or partial adoption of Jewish customs.² Filson makes a keen observation when he states that it is always used in reference to Gentiles who live like Jews.³ This observation is borne out in other extra-Biblical uses of the word. Plutarch (Cicero 7:6) uses

¹Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968), p. 305.

²Gutbrod, "*Ἰουδαῖος*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vols. I-V ed. by Gerhard Kittel, vols. VI-IX ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964-74), III, 383.

³F. V. Filson, "Judaizing," in The Interpreter's Dictionary Of The Bible, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), II, 1005.

this word in reference to someone who was "guilty of Judaizing" (living as a Jew). Josephus uses the word in reference to a Gentile who saved his life by promising to "Judaize even to circumcision." Likewise, in the Acts of Pilate 2:1 Pilate says "you know that my wife is god-fearing and more than ever Judaizes with you."¹

Thus, it is clear that according to Greek usage the verb "to Judaize" always refers to a Gentile who lives like a Jew by adopting certain Jewish rituals such as circumcision. This meaning is evident in Galatians 2:14. Here Peter's unfortunate example of "living like a Jew" in the presence of Gentiles served as a compulsion for them to live like Jews also. It is true, as Filson points out, that "the modern use of the word to mean 'inculcate or impose Judaism,' . . . has no basis in the Greek usage."² However, since usage determines the meaning of words anyway, this writer feels that the meaning of "impose Judaism" could be used as a secondary meaning of Judaize provided that it is made clear that this is the way the word is being used. This is the way that it is represented by Webster's Third New International Dictionary.³

It is the latter definition that provides us with the basis for what a Judaizer is. The meaning of the word

¹Ibid. ²Ibid.

³"Judaize," Webster's Third New-International Dictionary, 15 ed., p. 1222.

Judaizer as it is now used refers to one who compels Gentiles to live like the Jews. Although this meaning does not coincide with the Greek usage of the verb *ἵνα ὁμοιωθῶνται*, it has an established usage which is practically universal. A Biblical definition of what a Judaizer is is very difficult to arrive at since the Bible never uses this term. Although the Bible does not use the term Judaizer, it does provide the basis of what a Judaizer is. In other words, the term Judaizer is purely a descriptive term that has been used as a label for a group of people that the Bible describes.

Very few writers have attempted to define exactly what a Judaizer is. The problem of defining a Judaizer is similar to the problem of defining a legalist. Many Christians are legalistic to a certain degree, but that does not necessarily mean that they should be classified as legalists. In the same way, every Christian who Judaized (compelled Gentiles to live like Jews) should not automatically be classified as a Judaizer.

Probably the closest one can come to defining a Judaizer is that a Judaizer is a legalistic Christian Jew (not necessarily born again Christian) who consistently attempted to compel other Christians (especially uncircumcised Gentiles) to adopt Jewish customs and practices (the rite of circumcision in particular). By this definition the writer intends to include only those who clearly and consistently acted in this regard. The tendency to Judaize varied

greatly. For example, although Peter may have acted like a Judaizer at Antioch there is no indication that he consistently acted this way or that he sympathized with Judaizing principles. Similarly although the conduct of the circumcision party (Acts 10:45; 11:2; Galatians 2:12) may at first appear to categorize them as Judaizers, closer inspection reveals that this is not so. On the other hand, there were many professed Christians who consistently adopted this teaching both in practice and principle, even to the point of impugning Paul's motives and disrupting his mission.

It should be kept in mind that the Judaizers were not a fixed group or sect within Christianity. They are not represented this way in the New Testament. They are called Judaizers on the basis of the description that the New Testament gives of their activity and beliefs.

Their Religious Origin

Galatians

The religious background of the Judaizers is not so easily determined as it might seem. There are several complex issues involved in this question. Since the book of Galatians is the source most commonly drawn from with regard to a description of the Judaizers, it is fitting that we should begin with this book. There are various views as to the identity of Paul's opponents (the Judaizers) in Galatians. Baur, the great Tübingen critic, has proposed that they were the Jerusalem apostles themselves. Others

have proposed that they were members of the Jerusalem church who were supported by the apostles.¹ That anyone would think that these Judaizers were the apostles or were supported by the apostles is hard to imagine. Although there were obvious points of tension between Paul and the Jerusalem apostles at times, this tension was never so severe as to merit the strong language that is used in Galatians. The very fact that Paul charged Peter with "play-acting" shows that Peter must have been acting contrary to the principles of the apostles themselves.² Moreover, Paul himself never identified his opponents as being the apostles or a group supported by the apostles.³ Nor does he imply that the Jerusalem leaders sided with the Judaizers.⁴

Another theory is the one proposed by Munck who postulates that Paul's opponents were Gentile Christians.⁵ The primary support for this theory is drawn from Galatians 6:13. Here the present participle *περιτεμνόμενοι* is

¹James L. Blevins, "The Problem in Galatia," Review and Expositor, LXIX (Fall, 1972), 451.

²F. F. Bruce, "Galatian Problems 3. The 'Other' Gospel." Bulletin Of The John Rylands Library, Vol. 53 (Spring, 1971), 257.

³Blevins, "The Problem in Galatia," p. 451.

⁴Richard N. Longenecker, Paul Apostle of Liberty (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 215.

⁵Johannes Munck, Paul And The Salvation Of Mankind (Richmond, Virg.: John Knox Press, 1959), p. 87.

taken to refer to Gentile Christians who receive circumcision. Munck asserts that the present middle participle of *περιτέμνω* never means "those who receive circumcision."¹ According to this view, those Gentiles who had already submitted to the rite of circumcision were now demanding that other Gentiles receive circumcision also.² This view has met very little acceptance. It is based primarily on the interpretation of one verse, and particularly one word. It is not necessary to hold that the participle *περιτεμνόμενοι* refers to Gentile believers who are in the process of receiving circumcision. It can be taken as being timeless, in the sense of those who are advocating circumcision.³ Thus, it could refer to either Jews or Gentiles, but probably Jews only. This seems to be its sense here. This interpretation would be more in keeping with the idea that the ones that Paul was referring to were obviously more immersed in the Jewish Law than Gentiles would be.⁴ Furthermore, Paul never definitely says that any of the Galatian Christians had already received circumcision, but only that they had been thinking of doing so (Gal. 5:1-3). Finally, this view ignores the implication

¹*Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

²*Ibid.*, p. 88.

³R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians to the Ephesians and to the Philippians (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937), p. 315.

⁴Blevins, "The Problem In Galatia," p. 453.

of Acts 15:5 that all Judaizers were Jewish in origin.

Neither should we assume that Paul's opponents were simply Jews advocating Judaism.¹ The fact that Paul labeled the false teaching as being "another gospel" would seem to eliminate Judaism per se.

The most logical explanation appears to be that Paul's opponents in Galatians were Jewish Christians from Jerusalem who claimed the authority of their home church.² This is in accord with the whole tenor of the book of Galatians. The fact that Paul always refers to the agitators in the third person while he uses the second person to refer to the Galatians themselves indicates that he viewed them as being separate from the Galatian congregation.³ Paul's strong denial that the gospel he preached had originated from the Jerusalem disciples indicates that his opponents had been claiming that it did. Likewise, Paul's defense of his independent apostleship may indicate that they claimed that he was dependent upon the authority in Jerusalem. Moreover, Paul's anathema (1:8-9) upon anyone who preached a different gospel indicates that his opponents claimed some high qualifications.⁴

¹Longenecker, Paul Apostle Of Liberty, p. 213.

²Ibid., p. 214.

³Robert Jewett, "The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation," New Testament Studies, XVII (Jan., 1971), 2-4.

⁴Longenecker, Paul Apostle Of Liberty, p. 214.

What real association there was between the Judaizers and the Jerusalem church may be difficult to evaluate, but it has clearly been over-emphasized. The fact that they may have claimed a certain amount of authority does not mean they actually possessed it. The only clue that they may have had some sort of delegated authority is Galatians 2:12: "certain ones that come from James." Whether this party was simply name-dropping or had actually been sent by James for some purpose cannot be readily ascertained. In any event, the leaders of the Jerusalem church later denied that any had been sent out by them for the purpose of teaching others that the rite of circumcision and observance of the law was mandatory (Acts 15:24). Furthermore, Paul appears to have been personally in agreement with James on at least two separate occasions: once during Paul's second visit to Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9) and again during his third visit to Jerusalem (Acts 15:13-29).

Acts 15

Another source that is commonly used to identify the Judaizers is the fifteenth chapter of the book of Acts. The primary verse that suggests that Judaizers are in view is Acts 15:5:

But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

Another verse that suggests the presence of a strict law-abiding group in the Jerusalem church is Acts 6:7: "and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Whether or not this group is the same one that Paul faced in Galatians is uncertain, but not unlikely. Their common background (both groups being highly enthusiastic for the observance of the law) suggests that they were the same ones or that they were from the same group.

Whether or not Acts 15:5 demands the notion that all Judaizers were Pharisees is uncertain. It is highly probable that the Pharisees were the nucleus of the group. It seems possible that all believing Pharisees were Judaizers to a certain extent. However, it is not necessarily true that all Judaizers were Pharisees, although their theological position closely resembled and frequently even paralleled the theological position of the Pharisees, especially in reference to the Law. Moreover, it is not necessary to think of the Judaizers who were Pharisees as ex-Pharisees. Actually a Pharisee could conceivably become a Christian without giving up certain distinctive beliefs.¹ This is not true of the Sadducees. Their denial of the resurrection would necessitate a radical change in their theology. The rest of the passages are not as crucial as these and will

¹Homer A. Kent Jr., Jerusalem to Rome Studies in the Book of Acts (Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1972), p. 122.

be discussed later in the paper.

Their Teaching

It is difficult to be very specific concerning the various teachings of the Judaizers. Actually very little is known about what they believed. The most significant doctrines are the person of Christ, the observance of the Law, salvation, and circumcision.

Christ

With regard to the person of Christ, there is no direct statement of what they believed. The only evidence of how they viewed Christ is what can be inferred from the statement that they believed (Acts 15:5). This evidently means that they believed in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. If there was one point on which they disagreed with the unbelieving Pharisees it would be concerning the person of Christ. To the unbelieving Pharisees, Christ was a bitter enemy who condemned them for their outward piety. They regarded Christ as a false prophet and an enemy of the Jewish religion. The Judaizers, on the other hand, appear to have had a much higher regard for Christ. They evidently accepted Him as their promised Messiah and recognized His divinity as much as Paul or the other apostles. Consequently the person of Christ in itself is never made an issue in the debate between Paul and the

Judaizers.¹ However, the logical consequences of their system forced them to deny in principle what they probably accepted in theory (Gal. 2:21; 5:1-4). Evidently they did not truly understand the teachings of Christ. They wanted a totally Jewish Messiah who would perpetuate the prerogatives of Israel by making the Mosaic Law permanently valid.²

The Law

With regard to the observance of the Law, they believed it to be still applicable. This is evident from several passages (Gal. 3:1-5; Acts 15:1,5). They could not conceive of the possibility that the coming of Christ would result in the annulment of their system. They believed that the rites that had distinguished Israel as the people of God from the rest of mankind would also distinguish the disciples of Christ from the rest of mankind.³ Thus, they taught that the moral and ceremonial laws including circumcision were still binding upon those who claimed to be followers of God.⁴ In support of their beliefs they may

¹J. Gresham Machen, The Origin of Paul's Religion (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1947), p. 129.

²Ibid., p. 127.

³Richard Watson, "Judaizing Christians," A Biblical and Theological Dictionary (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1837), p. 548.

⁴Philip Schaff, History Of The Christain Church. Vol. I: Apostolic Christianity (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), pp. 565-66.

have referred to the example of Christ Himself who adhered to the main principles of the Law and even declared that He had not come to destroy the Law but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17). Moreover, the example of the disciples during the early years of the church conformed to this standard. They continued to observe the Jewish fasts and feasts and to attend the services at the synagogue. Outwardly, therefore, the disciples were devout Jews and their practice furnished the Judaizers with the support that they needed for their belief.¹

Salvation

Concerning the doctrine of salvation, their teaching seems explicit: "Unless you are circumcised . . . you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). Whether or not this represents the opinion of all Judaizers is debatable. It would seem that believing the circumcision is necessary for salvation would not necessarily be a prerequisite for becoming a Judaizer. It is possible that some Judaizers regarded circumcision merely as a requirement that believers should submit to out of obedience to the Mosaic Law. However, it is most likely that the majority of full-fledged Judaizers, as these were, regarded circumcision as necessary for salvation. In this the Judaizers went far beyond the teachings of Christ and the practices of the disciples. Some seemingly did make the

¹Machen, The Origin Of Paul's Religion, pp. 126-27.

blunder of basing their salvation on the observance of the Law. To them, salvation apart from the observance of the Law was impossible. They insisted that all believers must come to God through Judaism. Unlike the unbelieving Pharisees they did not base their salvation entirely upon works, but neither did they base it entirely on faith. It seems evident that they felt that both faith in Christ and the observance of the Law was necessary for salvation.¹ To Paul this was utterly impossible. Either a man is justified by faith alone or not at all (Gal. 2:16). To seek to be justified by the Law makes Christ's death vain (Gal. 2:21). Such a teaching reduces the person of Christ to a mere prophet and disregards His divine nature.²

Circumcision

No other doctrine of the Judaizers was emphasized more than circumcision. This was their chief interest with regard to the Gentiles (Gal. 5:12-13; Acts 15:1,5). To the Judaizers, the outward circumcision of the flesh was just as important as an inward faith in Christ. It was chiefly on this point that the conflict between Paul and the Judaizers centered. They opposed Paul and sought to undermine his work by teaching his converts that Paul did

¹John J. I. Dollinger, The First Age Of Christianity And The Church, trans. by Henry Nutcombe Oxenham (London: Gibbings and Company, 1906), pp. 59-60.

²Schaff, History Of The Christian Church, p. 565.

not preach the same gospel as the other apostles. On the other hand, Paul denounced their doctrine as being "another gospel" and labeled them as "false brethren."

Their Character

Schaff describes the Judaizing tendency as "the heretical counterpart of Jewish Christianity."¹ That their teaching was heretical is clear. They had truly perverted the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:7), but what about their own spiritual standing? Were they truly born-again believers or were they simply impostors?

A more complete description of the character of the Judaizers can be derived from various statements about them. In Galatians 1:8-9 Paul indicates that any one who preaches a different gospel than the one he preaches is under the threat of being accursed. The word *ἀνάθεμα* refers to the act of being delivered up to the judicial wrath of God.² According to Galatians 2:4 Paul describes them as "false brethren." In Galatians 5:12, Paul says concerning the Judaizers: "I would they were even cut off which trouble

¹Ibid.

²Behm, "ἀνατίθημι, προσανατίθημι, ἀνάθεμα, ἀνάθημα, κατὰ θεμα, ἀναθεματίζω, καταθεματίζω," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, I, 354.

you." This almost unavoidably refers to physical castration.¹ In still another passage, Paul impugns both the integrity and the motives of the Judaizers (Gal. 6:12-13). In this passage he also charges them with not keeping the Law, which probably refers to the spirit of the Law. Another passage that probably refers to the Judaizers is Philipians 3:2: "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." Although these passages do not directly relate to whether they were saved or not, they do reveal that, according to Paul, the Judaizers were not first-class believers.

The only evidence of their salvation is Acts 15:5: "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed" From this reference many have drawn the conclusion that they were true believers. Lenski labels them as misbelievers rather than disbelievers.² Others have felt that this indicates that they were merely superficial believers. In support of this latter conclusion it is possible to allude to the example of Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9-24). It is recorded that he also believed (8:13). Whether his later actions demonstrated that his faith was only superficial or not is debatable, but it is highly probable that this was the case. Thus, in the case of these

¹Frank Stagg, "Freedom and Moral Responsibility Without License or Legalism," Review and Expositor, LXIX (Fall, 1972), 487-88.

²Lenski, Galatians, p. 77.

Judaizers it is possible that the record of their belief was merely a way of expressing their identification with the Church. According to Schaff they were Christians only in appearance and in name, but narrow-minded and narrow-hearted Jews in fact.¹

It is the writer's present conviction that the Judaizers as a group cannot be put into categories of saved and unsaved. Both views have problems and neither one can really be substantiated. This writer prefers to think that the Judaizers probably consisted of both unsaved and saved. From their teaching that the observance of the Law is necessary for salvation it would appear that they must have been trusting in their works for salvation and would, therefore, be unsaved. However, the fact that they believed that circumcision was necessary for salvation does not by itself mean that they must have been unsaved. It must be remembered that they did not discount altogether belief in Christ for salvation, and that is what saves. Therefore, there could have been a mixture of saved and unsaved within their group. It must also be kept in mind that the act itself of Judaizing (compelling Gentiles to observe the Law) does not indicate that the person is unsaved. Either a saved or unsaved person could be a Judaizer.

¹Schaff, History Of The Christian Church, pp. 338,565.

In conclusion, it must be stated that the Judaizers as a group should be considered heretical. However, like many heretical groups, it is impossible to say that they are all saved or unsaved. Their individual salvation is indeterminate and must be left in God's hands (Gal. 5:10).

Early Success of the Church

The Growth Of The Gentile Classes

The success of the early Church is certainly one of the most remarkable phenomena in history. During the early stages of the establishment of the Church an amazing unity of purpose and doctrine was evident in their midst (Acts 2:41-47). This remarkable unity, however, was short-lived. All Christians of the first generation were converts from either Judaism or paganism.¹ That there would ultimately be a schism between these two groups was not inevitable, but nevertheless, not surprising. The success of the gospel was a cause for rejoicing to all within the confines of the Church, but the problems that might develop had not really been anticipated. With the great success of the gospel among the Gentiles the balance between the ratio of Gentiles to the Jews was quickly beginning to tip towards the Gentiles.² The fact that the Gentiles were not

¹ Ibid., p. 136.

² W. F. Bruce, New Testament History (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1969), p. 372.

CHAPTER II

INITIAL CONFLICTS

Early Stages Of The Conflict

The Growth Of The Gentile Element

The success of the early Church is certainly one of the most remarkable phenomena in history. During the early stages of the establishment of the Church an amazing unity of purpose and doctrine was evident in their midst (Acts 2:41-47). This remarkable unity, however, was short-lived. All Christians of the first generation were converts from either Judaism or paganism.¹ That there would ultimately be a conflict between these two groups was not inevitable, but nevertheless, not surprising. The success of the gospel was a cause for rejoicing to all within the confines of the Church, but the problems that might develop had not really been anticipated. With the great success of the gospel among the Gentiles the balance between the ratio of Gentiles to the Jews was quickly beginning to tip towards the Gentiles.² The fact that the Gentiles were not

¹Ibid., p. 336.

²F. F. Bruce, New Testament History (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1969), p. 279.

as zealous for the Mosaic Law as the Jews were threatened to divide the Church into two groups, one Gentile and one Jewish.

Peter's Visit To Cornelius

The problem of the relationship of the Gentiles to the Mosaic Law came up for the first time in connection with the conversion of Cornelius around A. D. 35 about five years after Pentecost.¹ Prior to this, other Gentiles had in all likelihood been evangelized, but until now the issue of Gentiles' admittance to the Church had not been fully brought to an issue. The incident involving Cornelius provided somewhat of a test case for the matter.² Cornelius was evidently a Gentile who had become a "proselyte of the gate." He is described as a man who "feared God." In all probability he practiced some Jewish rites but was uncircumcised and still considered a Gentile by Jews. The fact that Peter required a supernatural vision to motivate him to take the gospel to the Gentiles reveals that he had not yet realized the full significance of the Great Commission. The vision that Peter saw signified a truly radical change for Christian Jews. Prior to this, certain meats had been deemed unclean and were off limits to Jews (Lev. 11; Dt. 14). Now Peter is informed

¹Kent, Acts, p. 20 (chart).

²Ibid., p. 89.

that these regulations were only temporary under the old covenant and were not to be a part of the New Testament economy.¹

The full importance of this vision did not hit Peter right away (Acts 10:17). Further revelation was necessary to clarify exactly what was included in this revelation of new truth. The fact that Peter was summoned to enter into the house of Cornelius is very significant. In verse 28 Peter relates how it is unlawful for a Jew to keep company or come unto one of another nation. This specific prohibition was not contained in the Mosaic Law and was probably enacted as a matter of interpretation of it or added to it by the Jews themselves.² The relationship of this regulation of Peter's vision is expressed well by Bruce:

The relationship of this regulation to Peter's vision on the housetop at Joppa taught him to call no food common or unclean if God pronounced it clean; but he was quick to grasp the analogy between ceremonial food laws and the regulations affecting intercourse with non-Jews. It was largely because of their carelessness in food matters that Gentiles were ritually unsafe people for a pious Jew to meet socially. Intercourse with Gentiles was not categorically forbidden; but it did render a Jew ceremonially unclean, as did even the entering of a Gentile building or the handling of articles belonging to Gentiles.³

¹R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation Of The Acts Of The Apostles (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1934), p. 398

²Joseph Addison Alexander, Commentary On The Acts Of The Apostles (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1956) p. 408.

³F. F. Bruce, Commentary On The Book Of Acts (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p.222.

Evidently Peter had now fully comprehended the significance of his vision. On the basis of what God had shown him concerning not calling any man common or unclean, he was willing to shun this particular regulation and enter Cornelius' home (10:27-29).

Near the end of Peter's brief summary of the gospel message, the Holy Spirit fell upon those he was speaking to (Acts 10:44). The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles caused astonishment to the party of the circumcision who had accompanied Peter from Joppa (10:45-46). They had not anticipated that this gift would be poured out upon uncircumcised Gentiles. The miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit was clear proof that Gentiles could be saved without being circumcised.

The news of this event preceded Peter's return to Jerusalem where he was immediately confronted by the "ones who were of the circumcision" (11:1-2). This term is also used in Acts 10:45 of those who had accompanied Peter on his journey. Exactly what group this may refer to can only be guessed. Lenski suggests that this group here is the beginning of a Judaizing party.¹ Although this is possible, it is probably stretching the evidence. In view of the fact that they did not press the point, but rather gave in suggests that they were not completely sympathetic with

¹Lenski, Acts, p. 438.

Judaizing principles. Moreover, the use of the word "brethren" in Acts 10:23 suggests that they were considered true believers. Most likely they were simply Christian Jews or Christians Jews who were especially zealous for the observance of the Mosaic Law.

According to Acts 11:3 the primary concern of this group had to do with social relations with Gentiles rather than their admittance into the church. This reveals that these legalists were not against the evangelization of Gentiles per se, but they did disagree with Peter's method of evangelizing them. They felt that circumcision was a necessary preliminary to their receiving the gospel. To be able to receive the gospel they must first be in a position to have fellowship with Jews and the necessary requirement for this was circumcision. Thus their argument was a fortiori. If mere association with uncircumcised Gentiles was unlawful, how much more unlawful would be their admittance into the church?¹

Following Peter's irrefutable defense of his action, the circumcision party was forced to acquiesce and relinquish their position. The fact that they even glorified God suggests a complete withdrawal of their previous objections. They seem to have realized that even uncircumcised Gentiles could be granted eternal life. However, later

¹Alexander, Commentary On The Acts Of The Apostles, p. 421.

when large-scale Gentile evangelization began, the issue was again raised, but this time it assumed such great and serious proportions that a whole church council was required to suppress it.

Paul's Journey To Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1-10)

The Identity Of This Journey

The location of Paul's visit to Jerusalem as recorded in Galatians 2:1-10 has occasioned an extreme amount of critical investigation and controversy. The placing of this subject at this particular place in the writer's paper divulges his position in the matter. However, it is not his desire to do so without some basis. According to one view, Galatians 2:1-10 should be identified with the famine visit recorded in Acts 11:27-30, and would therefore have taken place before Paul's first missionary journey. According to another view, Galatians 2:1-10 should be identified with the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15, and would therefore have taken place after Paul's first missionary journey. The problem, therefore, centers around whether Paul is describing his second or third visit to Jerusalem.

Galatians 2:1-10 = Acts 15

In support of this view it should be noted that Acts 15 bears some close resemblances to the account in Galatians. Lightfoot notes several resemblances between

the two accounts. Among them are the geography, the time, the persons, the subject, the character of the conference, and the result.¹ Concerning the geography, no definite conclusions can be drawn since both visits entail a journey from Antioch to Jerusalem. Likewise, concerning the time, it is only slightly more convenient to identify Galatians 2 with Acts 15.² The problems connected with identifying it with Acts 11 can be easily rectified if the inclusive method were used. According to this method, the three years of Galatians 1:18 and the fourteen years of Galatians 2:1 overlap. Thus the fourteen years could refer to fourteen years after his conversion rather than seventeen years. The fact that only parts of years were counted as whole years could lessen the time even more. Thus, there would be plenty of time for the famine visit to come early enough before the Jerusalem Council. With regard to the persons involved, both Acts 11 and Acts 15 mention Paul and Barnabas involved in the journey. The fact that Acts 15 agrees with Galatians 2 concerning the presence of Peter and James while Acts 11 mentions only elders is not too significant. The fact that

¹J. B. Lightfoot, The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), pp. 123-24.

²Machen, The Origin Of Paul's Religion, p. 80.

the apostles are not mentioned does not mean that they must have been absent from Jerusalem at this time. The mention of the elders only may have been due to the fact that they were responsible for the proper dispersion of the relief that had been sent by the church at Antioch. Moreover, the failure of Acts 15 to mention John who appears in Galatians 2 would by the same line of reasoning argue against Acts 15. It is further argued that the reference to Titus fits Acts 15 better since he could conceivably be one of the "certain others" mentioned in Acts 15:2. However, Titus was probably not an official delegate and would not be put on an equal plane with Paul and Barnabas. His omission in Acts 11, therefore, is not surprising. The fact that Galatians 2 is silent about the "certain others" argues against Acts 15.

Concerning the matters of the subject and the character of the conference, Acts 15 may have a slight advantage over Acts 11. Both Galatians 2 and Acts 15 deal with the matter of Gentile circumcision. Galatians 2 seems to indicate that the primary purpose of the visit was to determine the attitude of the Jerusalem apostles towards his ministry to the Gentiles in the face of opposition while the primary purpose of the visit recorded in Acts 11 seems to have been the matter of famine relief for the believers in Jerusalem. However, this difference can be explained by the contexts of these passages. In Acts, the primary significance of the

visit was to send relief to the believers in Jerusalem. Luke was not so much concerned with the details or theological implications of the visit as he was with the purpose of it as it affected the personal welfare of the Jerusalem church. Paul, on the other hand, was being attacked on a doctrinal issue so he was more concerned with the theological significance of the visit than why he had been sent there. Moreover, Paul's reference to a revelation as being the motive of his visit fits in quite well with the account in Acts 11. There the prophet Agabus is said to have had a revelation concerning a future famine. It was evidently this famine that precipitated the famine visit recorded here. Although it is possible that Paul himself had a personal revelation, such is not necessary from the wording of the text. Nevertheless, a choice between the two cannot be made on this issue alone.

Finally, the results of the Jerusalem council appear to coincide with the results of the meeting in Galatians 2, namely, the Gentiles were made exempt from circumcision and Paul's apostolic mission was fully recognized. It is frequently asserted that if the subject had been discussed and decided upon in Acts 11, then it would not have arisen again in Acts 15.¹ However, it has already been observed that when Peter returned from his mission to

¹Ibid., pp. 82-83.

Cornelius the opposition he faced acquiesced when they heard his defense. To have the problem arise again at the Jerusalem Council after the famine visit is not any more surprising than when it arose at the famine visit after Peter faced his opposition in Acts 11:1-18. Moreover, the problem would be much more apt to arise after a private meeting of a small group of apostles than after a whole church council when an official decree stating the conclusions had been issued.¹

It is also contended that the recognition of Paul's mission to the Gentiles was not likely to occur at a time when he had not yet commenced his missionary work.² According to Galatians 2:7-9, the apostles recognized that Paul had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision and they perceived the grace that was given to him. Moreover, Galatians 2:2 records that he had been preaching the Gospel among the Gentiles. The only ministry recorded by Luke that Paul had been engaged in prior to this was his teaching ministry in Antioch for one year (Acts 11:26). However, very little is known of Paul's activities during the fourteen years after his conversion. It is impossible

¹Homer A. Kent Jr., "Greek Exegesis Of Galatians" (unpublished class syllabus, Grace Theological Seminary, 1974), p. 4.

²Everett F. Harrison, Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 277.

to imagine that he was not actively engaged in preaching the gospel during this time also. This is quite evident, in fact, from Galatians 1:23 which reveals that his ministry of preaching was well known by the churches of Judea.

Thus, a discussion of the similarities between Galatians 2 and Acts 15 fails to substantiate their identity. The fact that they are similar does not in itself prove they are identical. A consideration of the arguments in favor of identifying Galatians 2 with Acts 11 will now be in order.

Galatians 2:1-10 = Acts 11

One of the major arguments that support Acts 11 being identified with Galatians 2 is that the Jerusalem decree is not mentioned in Galatians. One would think that the decree itself would have been enough to stifle Paul's opposition. In view of the fact that his opponents had attacked him for falsely representing the message preached by the Jerusalem apostles, why did he not refer to the decree which supported his position if it had already been made? Dollinger seeks to answer this question by asserting that the decision of the Council was already known and recognized, even by the false teachers.¹ He assumes their primary motive for preaching circumcision was to avert the persecutions of the Jews despite the fact that what they were

¹Dollinger, The First Age Of Christianity And The Church, p.69.

doing was going against the decision of the Council. He further states: "These men accordingly recommended circumcision and observance of certain legal usages, partly for the sake of security, partly on religious grounds."¹ It seems absurd to this writer that the Galatian Christians would have been so quick to follow these men if they knew that these men were not claiming to represent the views of the Jerusalem church and that they were going against an official decree that had actually favored Gentile believers like themselves. In any case, they still would have been going against the decision and a simple appeal to it should have answered them. Guthrie, who admits that it would be surprising for Paul not to mention the decree, attempts to answer the argument by explaining that Paul was not the kind of man to appeal to authoritarian decrees.² He further states: "To him the enunciation of theological principles was of much greater value than ecclesiastical pronouncements."³ To this statement there is perhaps a great deal of truth. However, it must be noted that Paul himself had a part in that decision and an appeal to it would

¹Ibid., pp. 69-70.

²Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), p. 460.

³Ibid.

certainly not be out of place, especially if it is true that these false teachers were claiming to represent the Jerusalem church.

The fact that Paul declares emphatically in Galatians 2:6 that the apostles "added nothing" to him seems to ignore the requirements that were added on to the decree in Acts 15. Since these requirements were not a part of Paul's original message, they must be considered as an addition. On the other hand, the only thing that was "added" to Paul's ministry in Galatians 2 was that he should remember the poor, which Paul was already doing.

Another argument that is of great significance is that if Galatians 2 describes Acts 15, then Paul completely omits any reference to the famine visit. This is objectionable to Jones, who writes:

Now the whole point of the Apostle's arguments in the first two chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians is to prove that the Gospel that he preached is his own, received by direct revelation from Christ Himself, and owing nothing to the authority and direction of the other Apostles. In order to make this all the more definite, he asserts that during the whole period of his Christian career, previous to his mission to the Galatians, he had had personal intercourse with the other Apostles on two occasions only, and these during two short visits to Jerusalem. Now the theory generally advocated requires us to believe that the Apostle . . . deliberately omits all mention of one visit, and this in the face of his own positive declaration in Gal. 1:20, 'Now touching the things which I write unto you, behold, I lie not'¹

¹Maurice Jones, St. Paul The Orator (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), pp. 113-14.

Thus, to omit one visit to Jerusalem would in reality seem to undermine his argument and leave himself open to the attack of his opponents.¹ This argument, however, is not quite as fool-proof as it might seem. Machen observes that Paul is not giving a complete enumeration of his visits to Jerusalem, but is singling out the details upon which the Judaizers had formed the basis of their attack.² According to him the only visits that were relevant to his discussion were the first and the third. Harrison believes that the second visit was omitted because on that visit Paul probably had no contact with the apostles.³ It is assumed that since elders only are mentioned the apostles must have been out of town. However, it has already been pointed out that the reason why the elders only are mentioned is probably because they were the ones who would have been in charge of distributing the gifts. Whether or not the apostles were in Jerusalem cannot be proven, but it still remains that Paul would have been omitting his second visit. Since it is the significance of that visit that is being debated it would be futile to argue that it was too insignificant to consider.

Another argument that is used to support an Acts 11 identification concerns Paul's conflict with Peter. It would seem that Peter would be much more likely to falter

¹Kent Jr., "Greek Exegesis of Galatians," p. 3.

²Machen, The Origin Of Paul's Religion, p. 85.

³Harrison, Introduction to the New Testament, p. 276.

after the private meeting in Acts 11 than a whole church counsel in Acts 15. It would certainly be a glaring case of inconsistency for Peter to act the way he did in Antioch following his strong public stand at the Jerusalem Council. Most scholars have attempted to answer this argument either by denying that the Jerusalem decree directly related to the incident at Antioch or by simply pointing to Peter's inconsistent nature. It is possible, as Guthrie suggests, that the decisions of the council needed time to be worked out into actual practice.¹ However, it would seem that Peter would not have been so uncertain of his position if the relation of Gentile Christians had already been settled.² It is quite possible that Peter's strong public stand in Jerusalem was strengthened by his previous rebuke from Paul who so valiantly challenged him. Thus, the difficulty of explaining Peter's inconsistency would be greatly reduced if his rebuking took place prior to the Jerusalem Council.

It is impossible to be dogmatic on such a controversial issue as has been discussed. The writer has chosen to adopt, with reservations, the view that Galatians 2 should be identified with Acts 11 primarily on the weight

¹Guthrie, New Testament Introduction, p. 461.

²Merrill C. Tenney, New Testament Times (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), p. 246.

of the three previous arguments. Consequently, the remainder of this paper will proceed on that basis.

The Nature Of This Journey

Following the conversion of Cornelius, Gentile evangelization had been officially approved by the Jerusalem church and many efforts had been made to reach them. The first phase had begun at Antioch where the gospel had been well received by them (Acts 11:20-21). Barnabas had been sent out to Antioch, and he in turn had sought the assistance of Paul. Evidently the reference to Paul being in Tarsus and Antioch (Acts 11:25-26) coincides with Galatians 2:21 where Paul says he went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. Although he had been unknown personally in Judea they had at least heard that he was preaching the gospel (Gal. 2:22-24).

On the assumption that Galatians 2:1-10 describes Paul's second visit to Jerusalem, very little opposition to Paul's ministry is recorded. The only hint of any opposition this early would be what is described in Galatians 2:1-10. Paul's distinct Gentile ministry had evidently given him enough cause to see his need of contacting the Jerusalem apostles and of seeking their opinion of his ministry. It is not necessary to think that Paul was afraid that he was not on the right track when he said "lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain" (Gal. 2:2). It is perfectly

possible, as Lenski suggests, that *μήτις* introduces an indirect question, so that in reality Paul was not expressing a personal doubt concerning his ministry but was simply inquiring for their opinion.¹ It is possible that Paul had experienced some opposition from Jewish Christians which prompted his meeting with the apostles to decide the issue. According to verse three, Titus, who was a Gentile, was not "compelled" to be circumcised. This could be taken two different ways. It could mean that Titus was circumcised voluntarily without pressure, or it could mean that Titus was not circumcised even though he was pressured to do so. The latter view seems preferable in view of the context. It would seem that Paul's whole purpose for referring to him would be futile if he had not been a successful test case against circumcision. Titus represented Paul's gospel, so he had to refuse in order not to compromise his gospel with those with whom he differed.² While Paul later yielded by circumcising Timothy in order not to offend weaker brethren, here he could not yield for false brethren were looking for an opportunity to slander his doctrine.³

¹Lenski, Galatians, p. 73. ²Ibid., pp. 75-76.

³John Calvin, The Epistles Of Paul The Apostle To The Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, And Colossians, in Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, trans., by T. H. L. Parker (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), p. 26.

In not yielding, he was able to preserve the dignity of his gospel.

The identity of the "false brethren" in verse four poses some difficulty. Evidently it was this group that had attempted to have Titus circumcised. They are described as those "who came in secretly" (παρεισῆλθον). They did not openly proclaim their position or make it known who they were. Their chief mission was "to spy out" (κατασκοπήσαι) Paul's liberty. Thus, not only was the way they went about their mission wrong but their motive was wrong also. Their identity is more clearly seen by what they wanted to accomplish: "That they might bring us into bondage." They must have been legalists who sought to impose circumcision and other Mosaic rituals upon Gentile converts as a necessity for salvation. If so, this would be the first conflict between Judaizers and Paul. To say that they were part of the same group mentioned in Acts 11: 1-3 who later relinquished their opposition to the salvation of uncircumcised Gentiles does not seem plausible. These are not described as being so enlightened. They were subtle spies who used devious tactics to accomplish their diabolical purposes. Paul did not submit even for a moment to these false brethren (Gal. 2:5).

The result was that Paul was heartily accepted by the Jerusalem apostles. They could find nothing in Paul's ministry that was defective (2:6). His divine commission

as an apostle to the Gentiles was fully recognized (2:7-9). The expression "the right hand of fellowship" symbolizes acceptance, approval, and equality.¹ Paul was not made nor could he be a subordinate to the Jerusalem apostles. His authority as an apostle was equal to the authority of any other apostle as he has already indicated (Gal. 1:11-12). The only exhortation they gave to Paul and Barnabas was that they should "keep on remembering the poor" (2:10). The whole tenor of this meeting appears to be quite different from the official nature of the Acts 15 meeting. Here Judaizers received a temporary setback in that they failed to have Paul's ministry curtailed by the addition of their legalistic rituals to it. However, another phase in the controversy was not far off.

The Conflict At Antioch

The Setting Of The Conflict

The historical setting of this conflict is difficult to determine. The conflict would have had to arise either before or soon after Paul's first missionary journey. The incident is not mentioned in the book of Acts and there is no indication in Galatians when it took place. It is not known exactly how long Paul and Barnabas stayed in

¹Morris Ashcraft, "Paul Defends His Apostleship Galatians 1 and 2," Review and Expositor, LXIX (Fall, 1972), 467.

Antioch following their visit to Jerusalem. However, it seems likely that the incident would not have taken place before Paul's first missionary journey, so soon after their private meeting. Furthermore, it seems better to place it after Paul's first missionary journey when the Judaizing controversy became more developed.¹ According to Acts 14:28, Paul and Barnabas dwelt a long time at Antioch after their journey. The conflict with Peter could have taken place sometime during this period.

The Basis Of The Conflict

Most likely, news about the great success of the ministry of Paul and Barnabas had spread to Jerusalem where Peter was. He may have wanted to go to Antioch to confer and rejoice with them. Peter had already had his eyes opened concerning Gentile salvation in connection with his mission to Cornelius, so he evidently did not have any guilty feelings about eating with the Gentiles (Gal. 2:12). Something happened, however, that changed his mind. The arrival of the delegation from Jerusalem which claimed the authority of James disturbed the harmony of the group.² Whether they had actually been sent by James or they merely claimed to have been sent by James is very difficult to

¹Tenney, New Testament Times, p. 206.

²Philip Carrington, The First Christian Century, I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 89.

determine. It is possible that they only claimed to have been sent by James and were simply name-dropping in order to gain support for their teaching. Most likely they had either been sent and authorized by James or they were from the group who were followers of James.¹ If James had sent them it seems doubtful that they would have been sent to spy on Paul, especially in view of his approval of Paul's ministry earlier. Probably the best solution is that they had been sent by James to handle some official business or to do some evangelizing work. When the matter of the observance of the Law came up they may have abused their authority by teaching things that they had no authority to teach.

There is good reason to believe that the group sent by James is the same group mentioned in Acts 15:1. This is possible since both accounts deal with essentially the same issue and they are both described as coming from Judea. Otherwise we must assume that two different envoys came to Antioch from Jerusalem: One group who had been sent by James on a special mission and another group who were Judaizers. While it is clear that the group in Acts 15 are Judaizers there remains a question about the group in Galatians 2:11-14. Paul does not use the strong language

¹Johannes Weiss, Earliest Christianity. Vol. I: A History of the Period A. D. 39-150 (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1970), p. 273.

with them that he used of the group in Galatians 2:4-5. However, the fact that Paul does not denounce them as vehemently as one would think may be due to the fact that he has centered his attention on Peter and his actions. It is not necessary to take "them which were of the circumcision" as referring to the group that had been sent by James. The same phrase appears in Acts 10:45 and Acts 11:2 where it does not appear that Judaizers are in view. The text does not state that it was this particular group that Peter feared when he withdrew from the Gentiles. Possibly he had been deluded into thinking that this group represented the opinion of the Jerusalem church. This writer prefers the view that the ones from James are the Judaizers who are mentioned in Acts 15:1 while the ones of the circumcision should not necessarily be classed as Judaizers although they may have been somewhat legalistic in their views.

The question remains concerning why Peter would be afraid of the circumcision party whom he had formerly stood up to under similar circumstances. The most common answer given to this is that Peter felt that his withdrawal from Jews might endanger his position with the Jerusalem church.¹ He must have felt that they exerted a strong enough influence in Jerusalem to jeopardize his association with the other apostles. Although this might be true, it

¹Tenney, New Testament Times, p. 206.

seems incredible that he would fear opposition to what he already knew was divinely approved. Perhaps he felt that he would be offending them by separating himself from them. We must keep in mind exactly what issue was involved here. Although it had been revealed that certain foods were no longer to be shunned by the Jews, some Jews still held on to these religious traditions which were inseparably connected with their national customs. Although the matter of circumcision itself was not made the issue, it was certainly involved in the issue. Perhaps they did not want to appear disloyal to the teachings of Moses before their fellow countrymen whom they were trying to convert to Christ.¹ Indeed, James himself may have felt this way, although not to the extreme of the Judaizers.

The Nature Of The Conflict

According to the text, the result of Peter's fear was that he "began to withdraw and separate himself" from the Gentiles. The use of the imperfect tenses denotes a progressive action. It was a gradual separation. It was, nonetheless, effective in creating a split in the church into two separate groups.

While Peter was concerned about the effect his eating with Gentiles would have upon the leaders in Jerusalem,

¹George T. Purves, Christianity In The Apostolic Age, Vol. VIII of The Historical Series for Bible Students, ed. by Charles F. Kent and Frank K. Sanders (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), p. 156.

Paul was concerned about the effect his withdrawal from the Gentiles would have upon the Gentile believers. In reality, he implied that they were second-class Christians.¹ Thus Paul accuses Peter and the ones who followed him as being hypocrites. The word *συν-υπο-κρίνομαι* implies "play-acting." It does not necessarily indicate a false motive, but a false impression.² F. F. Bruce further states:

He uses the word 'play-acting' because, as he saw it Peter and Barnabas and the others were acting a part which did not reflect their personal convictions. They gave up table-fellowship with Gentiles not because they believed it to be wrong but because they judged it in the circumstances to be inexpedient.³

The fact that Barnabas himself was drawn away by them suggests how strong an influence Peter's action produced. The seriousness of the incident was immediately recognized by Paul and he confronted Peter face to face with the issue (verse 11). The fact that Paul described Peter as having "stood condemned" shows that he had no doubts about his guilt. He knew that none of them were pursuing a course that was in harmony with the truth of the gospel (verse 14). To Paul the quarrel was much more than a mere difference of opinion for it affected the message of the gospel itself.

1F. F. Bruce, New Testament History, p. 284.

2Lightfoot, The Epistle Of St. Paul to the Galatians, p. 113.

3F. F. Bruce, New Testament History, p. 284.

Bornkamm says:

According to Paul's account, Peter's inconsistency was tantamount to a denial of the truth that men are justified not by doing what the Law commands, but solely through faith in Christ, because his second attitude made clear that, for himself and Jewish Christians, the prescriptions of the Jewish Law were obligatory, thus forcing Gentile Christians, too, to submit to Jewish customs. For Paul, any relapse into legality could only mean that faith based on Christ alone was declared to be sin, and Christ an agent of sin. In reality, however, sin consisted in harking back to the Law which Christ's death on the cross had nullified, and in abandoning the new life which he made possible.¹

The situation was critical enough to elicit a public rebuke. Since the problem faced here affected the whole group it is fitting that the whole group should have a part in its outcome. Whenever a grave doctrinal truth was in jeopardy, Paul was not a man to be overcome by timidity.

The basic accusation that Paul charged Peter with was inconsistency. Peter was a Jew yet he had adopted Gentile customs and practices before these emissaries from Jerusalem arrived. When they arrived he began living like a Jew again. By this action he had in fact excommunicated the Gentile Christians by insisting that they would have to comply with legalistic observances in order to regain fellowship.² They either had to refuse to submit to the conditions

¹Gunther Bornkamm, Paul, trans. by D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row Pub., 1969), p. 46.

²Alexander Balmain Bruce, St. Paul's Conception Of Christianity (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), pp. 58-59.

of the law and thus cause a split in the church or accept the legalistic regulations and lose their freedom. If he had not previously communed with the Gentiles, he could not have later been charged with being inconsistent.¹ It was by Peter's example that he was compelling the Gentiles to live like the Jews. In fact, his conduct was similar to the conduct of the Judaizers. Paul's criticism was all the more severe because he knew that Peter was not a Judaizer by conviction, but was merely acting like one.² The difference was that Peter did not personally believe in his head what he taught by his actions. Paul did not reprove him because they disagreed on principles but because Peter's actions were inconsistent with the principles on which they both agreed.³

Although there is a question as to whether the remaining verses of this chapter should be considered as an extension of Paul's address of Peter, the content of it fits in well with the issue. Paul relates that both Jews and Gentiles must depend on faith in Christ alone for their salvation and not on works of the Law. Paul then asks the question, "If a Jew gives up the works of the Law to be justified

¹Purves, Christianity In The Apostolic Age, p. 156.

²F. F. Bruce, "Galatian Problem 1. Autobiographical Data," Bulletin Of The John Rylands Library, Vol. 51 (Spring, 1969), 309.

³Carrington, The First Christian Century, p. 90.

in Christ alone is Christ a minister of sin by making him like a Gentile?" The fact that his question would have to be answered in the negative implies that the works of the Law are of little importance. Yet their assumption that they were important does make Christ a minister of sin. Paul further states that to him personally the Law was only a burden that inhibited his relationship to God. by dying to the Law Paul was given a whole new life based on faith. To insist that righteousness comes as a result of observing the Law is to nullify the grace of God and declare Christ's death vain.

The effect of Paul's rebuke is not stated and we must assume that the dialogue is incomplete. There is no reason to believe that it caused a lasting dissension between the two apostles. It would seem that the success of Paul's rebuke would have been the basis for including the incident in his discussion. Peter's later speech during the Jerusalem Council resembles what Paul said in Galatians 2:16-20. This implies that Peter fully submitted and subscribed to Paul's doctrine of freedom.¹

The Writing Of Galatians

The Date

The problem of the time of writing of Galatians is closely associated with the problem of which visit Galatians

¹Tenney, New Testament Times, p. 207.

1:10 describes. If Galatians 2:1-10 describes the Jerusalem Council, then the book of Galatians would have to have been written after the council. While it is not necessary for one who identifies Galatians 2 with Acts 11 to date Galatians before the Jerusalem Council, most scholars do so. The primary basis for doing so is because the decree made by the Jerusalem Council is not mentioned in Galatians and it would seem peculiar for the decree to have been omitted if it had already been issued.

One objection against an early date for Galatians concerns the epistle's literary and doctrinal affinities with the book of Romans and the Corinthian epistles. Lightfoot, for example, argues strongly that the similarity of content and style between these letters necessitates placing them in the same general period.¹ Machen, however, disagrees by saying that "reconstructions of an author's development, unless supported by plain documentary evidence, are seldom absolutely certain."² Another objection is that an early date of Galatians demands a South Galatian destination. Since it is not within the scope of this paper to make a detailed defense of the South Galatian view, suffice it to say that the evidence in favor of this view is quite

¹See Lightfoot, The Epistle Of St. Paul to the Galatians pp. 42-56.

²Machen, The Origin Of Paul's Religion, p. 82.

substantial. One of the leading exponents of this view is F. F. Bruce.¹

Exactly when and from where was Galatians written then? If the conflict between Peter and Paul occurred after the first missionary journey, the writing of Galatians must have taken place from Antioch shortly afterwards or en route to Jerusalem. The time of writing would have been approximately 49-50 A. D.²

The Occasion

The churches of Galatia were founded on Paul's first missionary journey. They had been very receptive to Paul and his message, even though Paul had been afflicted with an infirmity at the time he preached to them (Gal. 4:13-15). It appeared that Paul's mission to the people in Galatia had been a great success, especially among the Gentiles (Acts 13:48). However, trouble erupted soon afterwards and Paul was astonished that they could have defected so quickly (Gal. 1:6). Exactly how or where Paul heard of their defection is a mystery as nothing is revealed to us concerning these details. Evidently soon after Paul left Galatia, Judaizers arrived there preaching a different message than Paul preached (Gal. 1:6-7). Even now they were

¹F. F. Bruce, "Galatian Problems 2. North or South Galatians?," Bulletin Of The John Rylands Library, Vol. 52 (Spring, 1970), 243-66.

²Guthrie, New Testament Introduction, p. 463.

troubling them and desiring to pervert the gospel of Christ. The use of the present tenses indicates that Paul had received notice of their agitators while they were still with them. The result was that they were now "deserting" (μετατίθεσθε) the gospel.

It is very probable that, like the Judaizers Paul was now facing at Antioch, these Judaizers in Galatia claimed the authority of the Jerusalem church for their teaching. It appears from Paul's defense of the source of his gospel and his apostleship that the Judaizers had centered their attack on these things. They probably contended that Paul was a false apostle for he was preaching a different gospel than the one proclaimed by the Jerusalem apostles. According to verse ten it is even possible that they accused Paul of being a "men-pleaser." They may have suggested that Paul had purposely omitted the legal requirements of the Mosaic Law from his message in order to make the gospel attractive to the Gentiles.¹ They, on the other hand, like the Judaizers at Antioch (Acts 15:1), taught that circumcision was necessary for salvation.

In Paul's defense, he asserts that the gospel he preaches did not have a human origin, but was received directly from Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:22-12). Closely associated with the source of Paul's gospel was the trustworthiness of

¹Lenski, Galatians, p. 43.

his apostleship. Paul relates how his own salvation experience and the circumstances that surrounded his becoming an apostle proves that he received his message from God. Therefore, Paul recounts his own personal history since his conversion to show that despite the independent character of his apostleship in relation to the other apostles, they added nothing to his gospel (Gal. 2:6). Thus, contrary to the contention that his gospel was out of harmony with what the other apostles taught, Paul was one of the foremost champions of the gospel.

Having seen the subtle attack of these Judaizers more clearly, it is easier to understand the defection of the Galatian congregation. They were the victims of a false teaching that claimed to give them superior spiritual insight into the way of salvation while in reality, it threatened their spiritual lives by imposing burdens that were neither necessary nor beneficial. Thus, the epistle of Galatians was written at a time when the Judaizing controversy was at its peak.¹ The conflict at Antioch with Peter was still fresh in Paul's mind and the debate with the Judaizers from Jerusalem may have been still going on when Paul heard of the trouble among the Galatian churches.

¹Ashcraft, Review and Expositor, p. 459.

CHAPTER III

THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL

The Basic Issue

The events leading up to the Jerusalem Council were both dramatic and critical. The first event was the conversion of Cornelius which had revealed that Gentiles should no longer be considered "unclean" and therefore off limits for a Jew. Paul's meeting with the pillars of the church in Jerusalem certified his mission to the Gentiles. The arrival of Judaizers at Antioch precipitated a conflict between Peter and Paul and a big dispute within the church. It is difficult to say how long this dispute went on in Antioch or exactly what proportions it reached, but the text implies that something more than a minor skirmish developed.

At first glance it appears that Luke is not describing the same conflict that Paul describes in Galatians 2:11-14. However, the issue is essentially the same. Both accounts imply that the relationship of Gentiles to the Mosaic law is the essential issue. The issue does, however, appear to be viewed from a more critical standpoint by Luke. Perhaps Luke is viewing the issue at its most critical stage when it came to a head. Evidently Peter felt that his

continued presence might do more harm than good and concluded that the best policy for him would be to return to Jerusalem. Paul continued the dispute, however, and by this time Barnabas regained his spiritual faculties and vigorously aided him in thwarting the uncompromising demands of the Judaizers.

The church at Antioch had been put in an awkward position. If they tried to resolve the issue themselves no solution would have been sufficient. A compromise was impossible. To join sides with the Judaizers would not only impose a heavy burden on themselves but would also discredit Paul. On the other hand, to join sides with Paul would seem to ignore the authority of the Jerusalem apostles whom the Judaizers claimed to represent. The only way out was to send a delegation to Jerusalem and let the question be decided there. This later proved to be the right decision. The issue after all, not only affected the Gentile Christians at Antioch but Gentile Christians everywhere. Since these Judaizers claimed the authority of the Jerusalem church it was very appropriate that the issue should be resolved there.¹

Paul must have felt very pleased with this decision. He already knew that he was right and that the Jerusalem

¹Kent Jr., Jerusalem To Rome Studies in the Book of Acts, pp. 121-22.

apostles favored his position. His confidence is further evidenced in verse three which relates the joyful response of other churches to his ministry among the Gentiles. This must have greatly encouraged him. The contention by Lenski that "Judaistic ideas were foreign to all these brethren" hardly seems likely.¹ Since these Judaizers had come from Jerusalem it is quite probable that they would have spread their doctrine to other churches on their way to Antioch.

The arrival of the delegation from Antioch was well received by the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:4). Their report of "all things that God had done with them" probably engendered the same response that came from the other churches. The time for rejoicing, however, was not the present. The Judaizers were eager to have the question resolved. Whether the Pharisees mentioned in verse five include the group of Judaizers that began the conflict is uncertain. It seems likely that at least some of them would have tagged along with the delegation to make sure their position was clearly presented and to find out what the conclusion of the conference would be. Here is presented the first glimpse of their religious background and character. Before this, they had been designated merely as "certain men" or "false brethren." This reveals that they were "believers" who had a strong background in the Mosaic law. They were quite

¹Lenski, Acts, p. 597.

hesitant to leave their background behind as Paul had done. They had become champions of a strong pro-circumcision party which had decided concerning Gentiles "that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15:5). Even though these same ones may have formerly approved of Gentiles being admitted into the church, the rapid growth of an independent Gentile church that considered itself to be on an equal plane with the church in Jerusalem where the Jewish element of Christianity had its headquarters may have given them second thoughts on the issue.¹

A decision had to be made one way or the other. The basic issue concerned the terms on which the Gentiles should be admitted into the church. Although the whole Mosaic law was involved, the basic issue centered on the matter of circumcision. The Judaizers contended that a Gentile must come through Judaism to the gospel and this involved the rite of circumcision. It was only through circumcision that a Gentile could be incorporated into the family of Abraham.² Paul, on the other hand, insisted that faith in Christ alone was sufficient for salvation. Circumcision and the Mosaic

¹Arthur Cushman McGiffert, A History Of Christianity In The Apostolic Age, The International Theological Library, ed. by Charles A. Briggs and Stewart D. F. Salmond (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), p. 193.

²A. Sabatier, The Apostle Paul, trans. by A. M. Hellier (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906), p. 125.

law were insignificant to him as a means of gaining God's favor. The success of his past and future missionary endeavors depended to a great extent on the outcome of this decision. Thus, as Schaff puts it: "Upon the decision of this question depended the peace of the church within, and the success of the gospel without."¹

The Solution

The Speeches Made

A complicated issue is rarely solved by a simple answer. The various factions must be heard from all of the relevant data must be collected and considered, and finally, the possible solutions must be given careful consideration before a final solution can be arrived at. So it was with the Jerusalem Council. Since verse six implies the apostles and elders met together privately, it is assumed that the whole church was involved later (Acts 15:12-22). The early part of the council was characterized by "much disputing" (15:7). There appeared to be a deadlock in the proceedings. Three key speeches, however, served to turn the tide and bring about a final solution. There had probably been several different speeches made by various individuals. but Luke, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, selected the three that were the most influential and significant.

¹Schaff, History Of The Christian Church, p. 335.

Peter

Peter's speech was brief, but to the point. Earlier he had been led astray, but now he was prepared to stand firmly for the truth. There are essentially four points in Peter's speech: (1) God has already saved some Gentiles without circumcision (15:7-8); (2) There is no difference between a Jew and a Gentile in God's eyes (15:9); (3) The Mosaic law is a burden that is unbearable (15:10); (4) Salvation is totally by God's grace (15:11). Peter related how his own personal experience with Cornelius many years earlier had convinced him that circumcision was not necessary for salvation. Peter saw evidence with his own eyes that uncircumcised Gentiles were able to receive the Holy Spirit the same as Jews were. This surely was a sign of God's approval and proved that they had truly been saved.¹ The only conclusion was that God had put Jews and Gentiles on the same plane. Peter does not reason that the Mosaic law should be done away with simply because it was unbearable, but because it was insufficient. Its observance never saved anyone. It had been shown to be in conflict with God's new policy of saving sinners apart from its observance. Therefore, it was merely a burden. To require its observance would be to disagree with God's plan of salvation.

¹Tenney, New Testament Times, p. 247.

Alexander says:

When God had so explicitly declared that faith, with its effects, entitled men to be received into the church it would be tempting him to look for other evidence or prescribe other terms of admission.¹

Thus, according to Peter the Law was an intolerable burden that unnecessarily distinguishes between Jews and Gentiles and therefore should be done away with. Peter, therefore, shows himself to be in complete agreement with Paul.

Paul and Barnabas

The address by Peter was followed by a period of silence. Evidently the opposition had been silenced. Barnabas and Paul took this opportunity to again recount the great things that God had done among the Gentiles by them. Their purpose was to further demonstrate the truth of Peter's address. What God had accomplished with Peter in his mission to Cornelius was even more enhanced by what He did with Paul and Barnabas in their work among the Gentiles. The reference to "miracles and wonders" probably included such things as the healing of the crippled man at Lystra (Acts 14:8-10), Paul's recovery from being stoned (Acts 14:19-20), and the multitude of converts that were made. These miraculous events served to demonstrate that God approved of their work.

¹Alexander, Commentary On The Acts Of The Apostles, p. 540.

James

The next to speak was James who is usually thought of as the leader of the church at Jerusalem. Very little is known about this James, the Lord's brother. The Judaizers may have had some reason to believe that James would be in sympathy with their views. Here, however, he takes a strong stand with both Peter and Paul. He shows his agreement with Peter by alluding to his speech in which Peter recounted how God first began to take out of the Gentiles a people for his name (15:14). This inferred that Gentiles as well as Jews would be a part of God's new program. He enforces this statement by alluding to Amos 9:11-12. This prophecy is clearly a reference to the millennial age when Israel will be restored to God's favor and will be given a place of prominence. At that time many Gentiles also will seek the Lord and be accepted by Him. James did not mean to infer that this prophecy was now being fulfilled as Lenski suggests.¹ He simply meant that God had anticipated the salvation of Gentiles as Gentiles, and not as Jews. Since He had anticipated receiving uncircumcised Gentiles in the future, it could not be wrong to do so now.

Following James' allusion to the prophecy of Amos, he gives his own personal opinion about what the final conclusion should be. It is quite probable that James, as the

¹Lenski, Acts, p. 610.

leader of the church, was proposing a resolution to be adopted by the assembly.¹ His resolution was not to burden the Gentiles by imposing legalistic observances upon them. James recognized that they had truly turned to God and had been converted. He does, however, suggest that certain practices be abstained from in order not to offend the Jews. The first one is "pollutions of idols" (τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδύλων). This is explained in verse 29 as referring to defilement incurred from eating meats that have been sacrificed to idols.² The prohibition regarding fornication (τῆς πορνείας) has been taken by some to refer to degrees of consanguinity and affinity prohibited in Leviticus 18:6-18.³ However, the fact that fornication was a common practice among the Gentiles suggests that a special prohibition against it would not be out of order. Other prohibitions of this nature are common in the New Testament. This prohibition is omitted from P⁴⁵. The final two on the list are "a thing strangled" (τοῦ πνικτοῦ) and "blood" (τοῦ αἵματος). These basically refer to the same thing. Eating animals that had been strangled or that still contained blood was forbidden by Mosaic Law. These practices were especially abominable to Jews and one who engaged in them would naturally offend them. There are considerable textual difficulties regarding these last two items

¹Ibid., p. 606. ²Ibid., p. 608.

³F. F. Bruce, New Testament History, p. 287.

and this problem will be dealt with later when verses 28 and 29 are discussed. Verse 21 is commonly taken as an admonition to Jewish Christians who wished to follow the Mosaic Law to attend the synagogues where it was proclaimed.¹ However, it is better explained as being the motive for the previous suggested prohibitions, namely, that there are Jews everywhere who are constantly under the teaching of the Law of Moses who would certainly be offended if these Laws were neglected or abused.² To do so would, in the mind of James, hurt the testimony of the church.

The Decree Approved

The approval of the decree

The time for debate and discussion had ended. It was now time for appropriate action to be taken. James had proposed that a letter be written to the Gentile converts consisting of his proposed resolution. This pleased the assembly and they put their approval upon what James had recommended (15:22). Whether or not this resolution was adopted by a vote of the assembly cannot be established by the text. Nevertheless, it was given complete approval by the three groups mentioned in verse 22. Scholars have debated whether or not this included the Judaizers. Nothing is said of their reaction to this resolution. Evidently if they did openly oppose it, their opposition to it was not significant enough

¹Tenney, New Testament Times, p. 249.

²Alexander, Commentary On The Acts Of The Apostles, pp. 548-49.

to mention. They suddenly discovered that they had become a small minority in the church.

The assembly decided to send a small delegation from the Jerusalem church to accompany Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch. This would negate any possible allegations that Paul and Barnabas had falsely reported the outcome of the council.¹

The text of the letter is given in verses 23-29. It was addressed to the Gentile brethren in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Evidently the churches in these areas were the most infected with the false teaching of the Judaizers. The fact that it was later delivered to other churches indicates that it was not meant to be limited to these churches alone. The letter completely disavows any association of the Judaizers with the council. Not only were their views rejected, but they were completely discredited by the council (15:24). They had claimed to possess authority that they did not really have. For the Jerusalem church to be silent about this would leave the false impression that the Judaizers' claim was true and would make it possible for them to continue to represent them falsely in the future. Not only did the letter disavow any association with the Judaizers, but it also gave full approval to the ministry of

¹Kent Jr., Jerusalem to Rome Studies in the Book of Acts, p. 127.

Paul and Barnabas (15:25-26). The firm conviction of the assembly had been to lay upon the Gentiles "no greater burden than these necessary things" (15:28). The burden of circumcision and observance of legalistic observances had been lifted. They added no burdens upon them simply because they were Gentiles. The "necessary things" were to be observed by all believers, whether Jew or Gentile.¹ In no sense could these regulations be taken as being legal rules necessary for salvation.²

The nature of the decree

The list of prohibitions has already been dealt with briefly in the writer's discussion of verse 20. They are reiterated in verse 29 in a slightly different form and in a different order. The textual problems basically center around the fact that the Alexandrian and the Western authorities differ with each other. The Alexandrian text lists the four prohibitions that were discussed earlier. The Western text omits "things strangled" and adds the golden rule at the end. Either the inclusion of "things strangled" in the Alexandrian text is a marginal gloss which has been

¹Lenski, Acts, p. 620.

²F. V. Filson, A New Testament History (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), p. 222.

interpolated or it is genuine and has been omitted by the Western text.¹

This textual problem is closely associated with the problem of whether these regulations were intended to be ceremonial or moral in nature. Those who think that these regulations were primarily moral naturally favor the Western text. They would take the reference to meats offered to idols as being a prohibition against idolatry. The reference to blood could be taken as a prohibition against murder.² Thus, the three regulations would all deal with moral laws rather than ceremonial laws. Those who hold this view explain that the reason why "things strangled" was written into the text was to remove the ambiguity of the meaning of blood. The copyists regarded it as a ceremonial regulation and fixed its meaning by writing in $\pi\upsilon\kappa\tau\omega$.³ Thus, according to Smith, "the Alexandrian corruption of the text originated in a natural failure to perceive the consistently ethical intention of the decree."⁴ Another argument frequently advanced in support of the Western text is that if the four-fold list was adopted, the result of the conference was nothing more than a faltering compromise that released the Gentiles from some ceremonial laws but required

¹David Smith, The Life And Letters Of St. Paul (New York: Harper and Bros., n. d.), p. 671.

²Machen, The Origin of Paul's Religion, p. 88.

³Ibid., p. 89.

⁴Smith, The Life And Letters of St. Paul, p. 673.

them to submit to others. Therefore it would have satisfied neither party.¹

In view of the fact that according to the principles of textual criticism the shorter reading is to be preferred to the longer, the Western text does seem to have an advantage over the Alexandrian text. However, aside from the fact that the Western text of the book of Acts is not very trustworthy,² there are other factors that should be considered. One must assume, for example, that prohibitions against moral sins were more likely to be given than regulations concerning ceremonial laws. Although ceremonial regulations do seem to be out of mood with the New Testament principle of freedom, it also seems almost redundant to think that prohibitions against such things as murder, idolatry, and fornication were needed for born-again believers. Concerning the reading of the Western text, Metzger says:

But this reading can scarcely be original, for it implies that a special warning had to be given to Gentile converts against such sins as murder, and that this was expressed in the form of asking them to 'abstain' from it—which is slightly absurd!

This argument has much to commend it. Certainly such elementary moral requirements as these would not need to be

¹Ibid., p. 674.

²Machen, The Origin of Paul's Religion, p. 90.

³Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary On The Greek New Testament (London and New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), pp. 431-32.

enjoined by a church council. Furthermore, what motive would there be to change a moral prohibition into a ceremonial one? It seems more likely that an original ceremonial prohibition was altered into a moral law than to suppose that an original moral law was altered into a ceremonial prohibition.¹

Metzger further observes that "the fact that in 15:20

πρὸ τοῦ precedes *καὶ τοῦ αἵματος* is hardly compatible with the theory that it was added in order to clarify and extend the meaning of *αἵματος*."² Moreover, the fact that the four prohibitions consist of a combination of ceremonial and moral should not upset us. Our strict division between moral and ceremonial laws would be quite foreign to a Jew.³

Upon the completion of the written decree, the council was dismissed and the delegation was sent on its way to Antioch (15:30). The multitude was gathered together and the letter was promptly delivered to them. The results of the council were quite pleasing to the Gentile converts in Antioch and they rejoiced when they heard that their freedom had been maintained.

The Relationship Of Paul To The Decree

Paul's relationship to the decree has been a subject of much controversy. It seems impossible to some

¹Ibid., p. 432.

²Ibid., p. 433.

³Jakob Jocz, The Jewish People And Jesus Christ (London: S P C K, 1949), p. 68.

that Paul could have accepted a compromise that declared mere points of ritual to be compulsory.¹ Some have theorized that Paul chose to ignore the decree or that he never knew about it since it is not mentioned by him later in his epistles. McGiffert is of the opinion that Paul must have regarded the decision with great dissatisfaction since it impaired the freedom of believers.² These explanations, however, threaten the credibility of Luke as an historian and do not consider the possible explanations of these apparent difficulties.³ According to Luke's account Paul not only knew about the decree but also played a role in its adoption (15:22,25). Furthermore, we must keep in mind that Paul had secured the approval of his main point. Gentile converts had been made exempt from circumcision and the Judaizing party had been emphatically discredited. In no way could the decree be described as a compromise with the Judaizers.⁴ This would have been contrary to Paul's basic doctrine of salvation. The approval of the observance of certain ceremonial laws was not necessarily based on doctrinal grounds, but simply on grounds that their defiance would

¹W. M. Ramsay, St. Paul The Traveller And The Roman Citizen (London, New York and Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, n. d.), p. 172.

²McGiffert, A History Of Christianity In The Apostolic Age, p. 201.

³Purves, Christianity In The Apostolic Age, p. 151.

⁴Ibid., p. 148.

unnecessarily give offense to the Jews. Thus, the theory that Paul would not be willing to make a compromise appears to under-estimate Paul's adaptable character on some issues. In matters pertaining to doctrinal matters Paul was unyielding. Outside the realm of basic doctrinal issues, however, he was quite concessive especially if it concerned the spiritual well-being of others.¹ That he would refuse to do his part toward preserving peace would be contrary to what we know about Paul from other passages. Especially relevant is 1 Corinthians 9:19-22 which relates how Paul was willing to bring himself under the bondage of the Law in order to win those under the Law and to become free from the Law in order to win those without the Law. Thus Paul's accommodation to the decree "was simply a particular case of becoming to the Jews as a Jew that Jews might be gained."² Since the observance of the Law could no longer be regarded as a means of salvation, Paul was willing that these Laws be observed in order not to offend the Jews.

Although Paul does not mention the decree in his epistles, there is no reason to suggest that he disagreed with it. Although when dealing with the matter of eating meat sacrificed to idols Paul does seem to suggest that it

¹F. F. Bruce, New Testament History, p. 289.

²Machen, The Origin of Paul's Religion, p. 92.

would be permissible to eat in some cases, the situation that developed in Corinth was different from the one in Antioch. Ramsay suggests that the prohibitions of the decree were not necessarily compulsory, but should be taken as a recommendation strongly advised in the interests of peace and unity.¹ This would appear to give Paul some liberty in this matter. Another suggestion is that since the decree was addressed only to the churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, it was not imposed on all Pauline churches.² Nevertheless, Paul maintained the same basic principle that motivated the addition of the ceremonial laws to the decree, namely, that one should avoid giving offense to his brother (1 Cor. 8:7-13; 10:31-33).

The Effectiveness Of The Decree

The effectiveness of the decree formulated by the Jerusalem Council to accomplish what it intended to has been heartily debated. Many scholars have charged that it was too much of a compromise to offer an effective solution to the problem. Many of these have been forced into this position because of their assumption that the Jerusalem Council took place before the conflict between Peter and Paul at Antioch. It is assumed that rather than having solved the problem, the resolutions of the council merely served to precipitate

¹Ramsay, St. Paul The Traveller And The Roman Citizen, p. 172.

²Machen, The Origin of Paul's Religion, p. 95.

the struggle and become the occasion of a fiercer and more serious contest.¹ It is easy to see why this charge could be made on this basis. However, it is only a problem if the conflict at Antioch is viewed as having taken place after the Jerusalem Council. It is further argued that each side could claim a victory. The Gentiles gained their freedom but were still required to observe part of the Law. On the other hand, the Jewish Christians were permitted to observe the full application of the Law. Such an arrangement would place the Gentile in an inferior position.²

Although the Jerusalem Council may have offered somewhat of a compromise, it is probably true that the proportions of this compromise have been vastly over estimated. The basic issue involved the question of whether or not the circumcision of Gentiles was necessary for their salvation. This issue was resolved in a manner acceptable both to Paul and the leaders in Jerusalem.³ However, there were other matters that needed attention. One unfortunate incident had already occurred which involved relationship of Jews and Gentiles concerning table-fellowship. If Jews continued to observe the regulations regarding food-laws while Gentiles were made free from them, a schism would naturally develop.

¹Sabatier, The Apostle Paul, p. 129.

²Ibid., pp. 129-30.

³F. F. Bruce, New Testament History, p. 286.

Even the love-feast could not be properly observed in a mixed community. The decision of the council seemed to be that Gentiles should not disregard their Jewish brethren by offending them unnecessarily. The traditional custom of avoiding certain types of food had implanted in the Jews a natural revulsion against these types of food. This problem could not be expected to be overcome by all Jews as quickly as it had with such Jews as Peter and Paul.¹ A compromise was offered, therefore, on this minor issue. The decision of the council concerning the circumcision of Gentile converts inferred that they were not to be considered off-limits to Jews ("unclean"). This was for the Jews a big concession. It was assumed that the Gentiles also could make a concession which would make this arrangement as easy on the Jews as possible.

The decree made at Antioch was far from being a doctrinal compromise. The unity of the church was not the primary concern. If so, the Judaizers would not have been so emphatically defeated. True doctrine was rigidly defended and upheld. Salvation was declared to be entirely a matter of faith, not works. A schism was avoided without the compromising of doctrinal issues. Jews and Gentiles were brought closer together than ever before. It was a tremendous victory for Gentile freedom. It opened up a new era

¹Ibid.

for church expansion. One shudders to think of the consequences if the decision of the council had favored the Judaizers. Schaff discusses the consequences that would have prevailed in this manner:

With circumcision, as a necessary condition of church membership, Christianity would forever have been confined to the Jewish race with a small minority of proselytes of the gate, or half-Christians; while the abrogation of circumcision and the declaration of the supremacy and sufficiency of faith in Christ ensured the conversion of the heathen and the catholicity of Christianity.¹

Although the Jerusalem Council appeared to solve the issue, the conflict that had been waging still continued to a certain degree. Glimpses of a remaining conflict are still seen in some of Paul's later epistles. Henceforth, however, the Judaizers could not claim the authority of the Jerusalem church. To what extent it continued to be an issue is unknown, but it certainly must be granted that it became less of an issue than it was before the Jerusalem Council.

¹Schaff, History Of The Christian Church, pp. 335-36.

CHAPTER IV

AN ANALYSIS OF RELATED PASSAGES

Acts

The only passage remaining in the book of Acts that may have some application to the subject of the Judaizers is Acts 21:17-26. This is a record of Paul's final visit to Jerusalem. He had just completed his third missionary journey and was anxious to give a report of its success to the Jerusalem leaders. They were glad to hear about the things God had done, but they had one special request to ask of Paul (21:23-24). Their request of Paul was that he would take part in the fulfillment of some vows that had been taken by four men. His part would be to have himself sanctified with them and provide the necessary funds for their sacrifices.¹ It is clearly indicated that their motive for making such a request was Paul's seemingly bad reputation concerning the observance of Jewish laws. The reference to the vast number of Jewish believers who were zealous of the Law is almost certainly not a reference to Judaizers. The idea that there were this many Judaizers in Jerusalem at this time is quite improbable. If they

¹Lenski, Acts, p. 879.

were Judaizers, Paul surely would not have yielded to the request to pacify them nor would the request have been made. They had heard that Paul had completely disregarded the Mosaic Law and was teaching the Jews to do the same. The rumor was completely false for nowhere is there any evidence that Paul taught such things. Although Paul fervently opposed any effort of Jewish Christians to force the observance of the Mosaic Law upon Gentile Christians, he never forbade Jewish Christians to observe it themselves. It is possible that these rumors had been spread by Judaizers, but this is only conjecture. At this time the influence of the Judaizers had in all probability become greatly reduced. They had suffered a major setback at the council in Jerusalem and had been discredited.

It should not be thought that Paul was violating his own principle of freedom from the Law when he consented to the request of the Jerusalem leaders. It was merely another example of Paul sacrificing his own personal scruples in order to win others for Christ (1 Cor. 9:19-22). Verse 25 sheds even further light on the decision made at the Jerusalem Council. The Gentiles were to be made entirely exempt from the Law, with a few minor exceptions, while the Jews were permitted to go on observing the whole Law. Although the performance of this ritual may have satisfied the Jewish Christians that Paul respected the Mosaic Law,

it served to precipitate another incident that resulted in Paul's arrest and later voyage to Rome.

Fortunately the observance of the Jewish ceremonial laws later passed away from the Christian Church. The primary reason for this was the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70 when the temple was also destroyed. This was God's way of teaching Jewish Christians that the old system had passed away and has been replaced by the new system.

Galatians

The identity of Paul's opponents in the book of Galatians has already been discussed. They were legalists who falsely professed to be believers and who sought to enforce the observance of the Mosaic Law on the Gentiles. Most of the book deals with this issue. The first two chapters, which have been dealt with previously in this paper, deal with Paul's defense of his message and his apostleship. The third chapter opens with a personal rebuke to the foolish Galatians who had been deluded concerning the truth (3:1). They had evidently been taught by the Judaizers that belief must be accompanied by the rite of circumcision which is the outward sign of belonging to the elect children of Abraham.¹ Paul appeals to their own experience as a testimony to the truth of the gospel which

¹Sabatier, The Apostle Paul, p. 146.

he preached to them. Paul's question in verse two needs no answer. Naturally it was by faith that they had received the Spirit. This was further verified by the many miracles that were done in their midst (3:5). Neither of these things had been accomplished by the works of the Law. Both had been accomplished while they were yet Gentiles.¹ To turn to the Law now would hinder their further progress in the Christian life. In order to establish his point, Paul uses the example of Abraham to show that his salvation was based on faith rather than works (3:6,8). It was on the basis of faith, not works, that the true children of Abraham are recognized (3:7,9). In fact those who place themselves under the Law are subject to the curse of the Law (3:10). On the other hand, on the basis of Christ's death on the cross, which freed us from the curse of the Law, the blessing of Abraham has come upon the Gentiles (3:13-14). This point is yet strengthened by an illustration of the unchangeableness of the covenant made with Abraham. The promise was made to Abraham's seed, namely, Christ (3:16). The Law did not come until 430 years after the covenant was ratified (3:17). Paul's point is that the Law could not change or alter the covenant with Abraham which was based on faith.

The rest of the chapter deals primarily with the positive value of the Law. According to Paul the purpose

¹McGiffert, A History Of Christianity In The Apostolic Age, p. 223.

of the Law was to serve as a temporary discipline to make men realize their sin (3:19).¹ It had no effect in producing righteousness (3:21). As long as the Law was in effect it merely demonstrated the sinfulness of man, which was its only function until Christ came (3:22-23). Therefore its chief and only purpose was to point men to Christ (3:10, 22,24). After the coming of faith, the Law lost both its purpose and its effect (3:25).

Paul now returns to the tremendous blessings that are afforded those who put their faith in Christ. Unlike the Jews under the Law, those in Christ enjoy a remarkable unity wherein all such distinctions as nationality, class, and sex have passed away (3:28). Moreover, they have been made the true children of Abraham who will be the rightful heirs of the promise given to his seed (3:29).

Paul's discussion continues along much the same line in chapter four as it did in chapter three. He uses the figure of a child heir in a family to further illustrate the difference between law and grace. The application of the figure concerns the Jews' relationship to the Law. They were kept under the provisions of the Law as slaves unable to enjoy the freedom in Christ (4:1-3). When God sent His Son into the world, He redeemed them from the curse of the Law so that they might enjoy the freedom in Christ as true sons (4:4-7).

¹Purves, Christianity In The Apostolic Age, p. 211.

From Paul's further description of the Galatians, it appears that they were now beginning to be enslaved by legalism all over again. Verse eight probably refers to the Galatians' past experience of being enslaved to the deities of paganism. Now by their inclination to accept the teaching of the Judaizers, they were again in danger of being enslaved by chains of legalism (4:9). In fact, they had already begun to observe some Jewish rituals (4:10). Their relapse caused Paul both concern and amazement that they could so soon disregard Paul's efforts on their behalf (4:11-14). Their reception of the gospel had given them so much joy that they would have made any sacrifice for Paul (4:15). They were now making Paul their enemy by rejecting the gospel he preached (4:16). The next two verses are difficult, but they reveal the ulterior motive of the Judaizers in seeking to win the Galatians. Evidently they had been courting the Galatians in order to enslave them to the Law and thereby exclude them from Christian liberty. Paul does not say it is a bad thing to be courted for he had been courted himself but now it seems he is being shut out from them (4:18).

Paul's allegory of Sarah and Hagar serves to illustrate that believers are meant to be free from the Law. The basic application is that we also are children of promise rather than bondage and are therefore free from the Law since both cannot be heirs together (4:28-31).

The fifth chapter opens with a dramatic declaration that one cannot be justified by law and grace. To accept the law makes Christ worthless (5:2,4). Moreover, it makes you a debtor to the whole law (5:3). The only thing that really counts is faith working through love (5:6). The Galatians had been progressing well when Paul was with them but now something has happened to hinder them. Verse seven is not a picture of halting the runner, but throwing them off course.¹ Certainly this did not come from God. It is the product of an infectious growth (5:8-9). Yet Paul is confident that they will come back. Nevertheless, whoever is behind their trouble will surely be judged (5:10). If Paul had been charged with preaching circumcision among the Jews, he denies that he has done so. Otherwise why would he be persecuted by the Jews (5:11)? Paul's anger reaches its highest point when he wishes the Judaizers to be castrated (5:12). Although this seems harsh to us, castration was probably a common practice to the Galatians. Verse fifteen has often been used to prove that Paul was also combating libertine living. However, it is better understood as prohibition against over-reacting to the doctrine of liberty he is setting forth. The cure for this is to love your neighbor and serve him (5:13-14). It is unclear whether the biting

¹Lenski, Galatians, p. 261.

and devouring in verse fifteen was already in practice. It is probably best to be taken as a warning what would happen if the previous two verses were not heeded. The teaching on the fruit of the Spirit contrasted with the fruit of the flesh serves to further illustrate the preeminence of the life of freedom. Only by being led by the Spirit is it possible to overcome the temptations of the flesh and thereby crucify its affections and lusts.

Chapter six deviates from the main topic briefly, but later returns to it. In verse 10 Paul verifies the truthfulness of what has been written by stating that he has written it with his own hand. One final time Paul questions the motives of the Judaizers. He infers that they were acting out of selfish and dishonest motives (6:12). By preaching circumcision they would be able to avoid persecution by the Jews which Paul himself endured. Verse thirteen does not necessarily mean that they did not attempt to keep the whole Law. Paul was probably charging them with not keeping the spirit of the Law. Their only basis for preaching the Law was pride. On the other hand, Paul cringes at the thought of glorying in anything but the cross of Christ for that is what makes a man a new creature, not circumcision (6:14-15). After invoking a blessing on those who accept Paul's teaching (6:16), he closes with a plea not to trouble him any further for he has suffered enough (6:7).

Corinthians

Some scholars have seen much evidence of anti-Judaizing teaching in the Corinthian epistles while others have seen little. It is quite evident that the church at Corinth was not affected as badly as the church at Galatia. There are very few hints in 1 Corinthians that any particular opponents or false teachers are attacked by Paul. A few have identified the Peter faction as Judaizers or as a group sympathetic to the Judaizers. This identification assumes that Paul and Peter were still at odds with each other and that legal demands could still be made in Peter's name.¹ This assumption, however, over-emphasizes the seriousness of the factions. Although the Peter faction may indicate the presence of a Jewish element at Corinth, it certainly does not prove the existence of a Judaizing tendency of any serious proportions. The evidence is against the notion that the Corinthian church was divided into Jewish and Gentile factions as the church at Antioch was (Gal. 2:11-14). Thus, there is very little evidence of any Judaizing teaching behind the writing of 1 Corinthians.²

The evidence of Judaizing teaching behind the writing of 2 Corinthians is much stronger than behind the writing of 1 Corinthians. The possibility exists that

¹Weiss, Earliest Christianity, p. 338.

²McGiffert, A History Of Christianity In The Apostolic Age, p. 294.

Judaizing teachers came to Corinth during the interval between the writing of 1 Corinthians and the writing of 2 Corinthians. According to Sabatier, the Judaizing controversy was very indirect in 1 Corinthians, but occupies the whole of 2 Corinthians and becomes more urgent.¹

Barrett goes too far when he says that the opponents were Judaizers who "constituted a rival apostolate to Paul's backed by all the prestige of the mother church."²

Most of the evidence is usually drawn from the third, tenth, and eleventh chapters where allusions to a hostile party are evident. The fact that Paul always speaks of them in the third person indicates that they were outsiders to the church at Corinth. It can be inferred from 2 Corinthians 11:22 that they were strict law-abiding Jews. The fact that the book of 2 Corinthians has many parallels with the book of Galatians suggests that Paul is fighting the same kind of opponents in both. Among these are: the claim of the false teachers to possess authority as the ministers of Christ (3:1; 11:13,23); the inclination of the false teachers to glory in their flesh (10:12; 11:12, 18,22); the reference to the superiority of the new covenant over the old covenant (3:6-18); the inference that the

¹Sabatier, The Apostle Paul, p. 178.

²C. K. Barrett, "Paul's Opponents in II Corinthians," New Testament Studies, Vol. 17 (April, 1971), p. 251.

false teachers were preaching another gospel (11:4); and the manner in which Paul defends his apostleship (11:5-9; 12:11-12).

This common identity is not absolute, however. There are many issues that Paul does not discuss in 2 Corinthians that he did discuss in Galatians, such as circumcision, justification by faith, and the freedom of the Gospel. The only place that circumcision is discussed in either of the epistles is 1 Corinthians 7:18-19 where it is treated in such a way as to show that it was not a subject of serious controversy.¹ It is possible that these Judaizers did not teach the necessity of circumcision for salvation in compliance with the decision of the Jerusalem Council. Moreover, it must be remembered that the teaching of circumcision in itself is not an indispensable mark of Judaizing.² However, there is little indication that these Jewish Christians were attempting to impose any legal demands upon the Gentiles in Corinth. On this basis McGiffert argues that Paul's opponents were simply Jewish Christians who opposed Paul on the grounds that he taught Jews to neglect the Law and therefore endeavored to destroy his credit and undermine his influence.³ He points out

¹Weiss, Earliest Christianity, p. 338.

²Barrett, New Testament Studies, p. 252.

³McGiffert, A History Of Christianity In The Apostolic Age, pp. 315-16.

the fact that there is no hint of the existence of any legalistic tendency among the Corinthians. In fact it is the opposite of legalism that concerns Paul the most.¹

Whether these Jewish Christians were Judaizers or simply Jewish Christians who opposed Paul's ministry may be impossible to determine. While there is very little evidence of a Judaizing tendency in 1 Corinthians there is enough evidence in 2 Corinthians to suggest the possibility of a Judaizing tendency.

Romans

There is no substantial evidence that Judaizers ever influenced the church in Rome to any great extent. The problem of ascertaining the composition of the church is difficult in view of the fact that Romans appears to be addressed to both Jews and Gentiles. On this basis it is probably best to assume that it consisted of mixtures of these groups. Which group was larger may be impossible to learn. Some have proposed the idea that the book of Romans deals with the final phase of the Judaistic controversy.² This phase concerns the primacy of Israel, which is dealt with in chapters 9, 10 and 11. It is thought that the Judaizers were making a last effort to win a predominantly Gentile

¹Ibid., p. 315.

²A. B. Bruce, St. Paul's Conception Of Christianity, p. 93.

church possible out of jealousy. On this basis, the epistle was written to thwart the final manifestation of Judaistic sentiment.¹ Although others have used similar arguments to substantiate a Judaistic tendency in the church in Rome, none are too convincing. Paul does deal with the matter of circumcision and the Law briefly in the second chapter, but there is no evidence that circumcision was being pushed on the Romans by Jewish Christians. The church itself was not founded by Paul so the Judaizers could not have been attempting to thwart Paul's work as they had done in other churches which had been founded by Paul.

There is no real need to see some ulterior motive for Paul's writing. The tone of the letter shows that he was writing to instruct rather than to refute. The only evidence that false teachers had been causing any trouble in Rome is Romans 16:17-19. Here however, there is no indication that these trouble makers caused any serious difficulty.²

Philippians

Although there is some evidence that Judaizers are referred to in Philippians, that evidence is by no means absolute. The degree of alleged reference to Judaizers is greatly varied. Some have attempted to prove that the ones who were preaching Christ out of envy and strife were

¹Ibid., p. 101.

²Guthrie, New Testament Introduction, p. 400.

Judaizers (Phil. 1:15-16). This is hardly possible, however. Paul would certainly not give his approval to the teaching of Judaizers. Paul does not impugn the message they proclaimed, only their motives. It would have been against Paul's principles to rejoice that the Judaizers were preaching their doctrine, even if Christ was a part of that doctrine.

Another passage that some relate to Judaizers is Philippians 3:17-19. Although it could seemingly be applied to Judaizers or Jews, the language seems to suggest yet another group. The reference to their god being their belly in verse 19 resembles the conduct of the antinomians more than the Judaizers or the Jews. Although Lenski contends that the Judaizers made their belly their god by demanding only kosher food,¹ it seems better to take it as a reference to sensuality.

The primary evidence that Judaizers are mentioned in the book of Philippians is found in Philippians 3:1-16. Here Paul describes false teachers as being "dogs, evil workers, mutilators" (Phil. 3:2). These terms could readily be applied to Judaizers. The fact that the issues of circumcision (3:2,3,5) and justification by faith (3:9) are discussed are other factors in this passage that would

¹Lenski, Philippians, p. 860.

suggest that Judaizers are being attacked. Furthermore, both Philippians and Galatians develop an antithesis between the enemies who promote circumcision and boast in the flesh and the true believers who inherit the promises and boast in Christ.¹

On the other hand, McGiffert presents a fairly strong case that these false teachers were simply unbelieving Jews. He points out the fact that these false teachers did not seem to profess Christ or claim to be His ministers.² Furthermore, nothing is said about the possible effect of the teaching of the Judaizers upon the readers, such as their separation from Christ, etc., as he had done in Galatians.³ Evidence that they were Jews is drawn from the fact that he emphasizes the superiority of Christianity over Judaism and considers his past life in that religion as nothing.⁴ Although these objections might be valid, they are not fool-proof. It is hard to imagine that these believers would have been in danger of adopting Judaism. Furthermore, it is possible that these Judaizers were teaching circumcision as a means of becoming perfected in

¹Robert Jewett, "Conflicting movements in the early church as reflected in Philippians," Novum Testamentum, XII (Oct., 1970), 384-85.

²McGiffert, A History Of Christianity In The Apostolic Age, p. 390.

³Ibid. ⁴Ibid., p. 392.

the Christian life rather than as a means of justification.¹ Nevertheless, there is nothing stated that would deny the possibility that Judaizers could have been in view. If so, it is probable that they would have modified their former teaching, but this is only speculation. In any event, it is clear that the Judaizing influence that was exerted at Philippi did not reach the serious and dangerous proportions that it reached at Galatia.

Colossians

The nature of the false teachers that are mentioned in the book of Colossians is also difficult to identify. The problem is complicated by the realization that several different kinds of false teachers are evidently discussed. Certain passages indicate that the readers themselves were Gentiles (Col. 1:21; 2:13). Part of the false teaching, at least, concerned the observance of certain Jewish rituals:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath day (Col. 2:16).

Verse 21 could also apply to Jewish teaching: "Touch not; taste not; handle not." The lack of teaching concerning the significance of circumcision or concerning other signs of the teaching of Judaizers makes it doubtful that this is what Paul is refuting.² No serious doctrinal issue seems

¹Jewett, Novum Testamentum, p. 387.

²McGiffert, A History Of Christianity In The Apostolic Age, p. 367.

to be in question. The teaching seems to have consisted of an addition to Paul's gospel rather than a complete refutation of his gospel.¹ The issues are primarily related to ethical teachings and philosophical speculation (Col. 2:8,18,22,23). The complicated variety of teachings, therefore, makes it difficult to establish the Judaizers as being very significant in the conflict presented.

¹Ibid., p. 372.

CONCLUSION

This paper has been an attempt to examine the teaching and the activity of the Judaizers in the New Testament. It has been established that a Judaizer was a professed Christian Jew who attempted to compel Gentile Christians to observe the Mosaic Law. Originally they were Pharisees whose teaching they still continued to follow closely. The distinguishing mark of their teaching was their emphasis on circumcision which they felt was necessary for salvation. An examination of their character revealed that they were heretical, although not necessarily unbelievers.

Peter's vision and subsequent trip to the house of Cornelius was the first event in the conflict that ensued. The beginning of the conflict between the Judaizers and their chief opponent, Paul, took place during Paul's second trip to Jerusalem, which was identified with Galatians 2:1-10. The conflict at Antioch was significant because it involved a conflict between two chief apostles and could have resulted in the split of the church into two groups. The infiltration of the Judaizers into the church at Galatia caused Paul great concern and necessitated the writing of Galatians just before the Jerusalem Council.

The basic issue faced at the Jerusalem Council was whether or not circumcision and the Mosaic Law should be enforced upon the Gentiles. The decision of the council guaranteed the freedom of the Gentiles and for all practical purposes solved the problem. Although the Judaizers probably continued to spread their teaching after the council, no substantial evidence of the presence of their teaching was found in Paul's later epistles, with the possible exceptions of 2 Corinthians and Philippians.

The ultimate rejection of the teaching of the Judaizers was a tremendous success for the early church and was a remarkable display of its purity from doctrinal error. Understanding and appreciating the way that the early church dealt with this problem should inspire and instruct the church today in its never ending struggle with doctrinal error both within and without its confines. Only by identifying and dealing with it directly can the church continue to remain pure.

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